

# BUSH HERITAGE NEWS

Autumn 2011

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## Extinct no more

It's not every day that land managers get to pluck a species from the extinct list, but with your help, Jeroen van Veen became a part of rewriting the history books at Nardoo Hills reserves. Lynn Clark reports

Who would have expected that a field trip to Bush Heritage's Nardoo Hills reserves in spring 2009 would uncover the robust greenhood, an orchid long presumed to be extinct? Certainly not Bush Heritage Field Officer Jeroen van Veen.

The robust greenhood was last sighted near Maldon, Victoria, in 1941 – and it had never been recorded in the Nardoo Hills vicinity. It was the last thing that Jeroen ever expected to find on a normal day at Nardoo.

As Jeroen recalled, "Ian Higgins, one of the botanists with the North Central Catchment

Management Authority, had come to Nardoo Hills to see the work that Bush Heritage was doing here. We walked through the reserve, Ian took photos of various plants and that was that."

It was only later, as Ian was struggling to identify one of the plants that he showed the photo to orchid expert, Julie Whitfield from the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE). When Julie looked at the image she was convinced that this was indeed something very special.

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"When we find rare species like... the robust greenhood, it means our land management is worthwhile. It confirms everything that Bush Heritage and our supporters are doing."

## The Robust Greenhood

**Scientific name:**  
Pterostylis Valida



**Distribution:** Seems to have been a narrow range, confined to granite hills around Maldon.

**Last collected:** In 1941 at Mt Tarrengower, Maldon, after which it vanished for 70 years and was declared extinct.

**Appearance:** Two to six translucent white and green striped flowers up to 2 cm long on short, stout stalks. The flower petals curved inwards to mimic the look of a hood.

**Flowers:** In October and November.

**Threats:** Weed invasions, grazing and foraging by introduced herbivores have altered much of this species habitat.



### Help the robust greenhood population grow strong!

Did you know that without your support, the robust greenhood might have stayed on the extinction list forever? Reserve staff like Jeroen rely on your support to allow them to look after the habitat of many of our precious species like the robust greenhood, the northern golden moth orchid and many others at Nardoo Hills and your other reserves. To continue your support, go to: [www.bushheritage.org.au](http://www.bushheritage.org.au)  
Jeroen thanks you for your wonderful support so far!

Positive identification of the orchid proved somewhat challenging due to the limited records made about the orchid around the time the orchid vanished some 70 years ago.

Julie suspected that the flower in Ian's photo was the robust greenhood. But since no photos of the orchid existed, Julie and her colleague, Geoff Nevill, had to rely on written descriptions and illustrations sketched from dried samples in the National Herbarium.

As the DSE is very interested in many of the rare plants at Nardoo Hills, Julie is in regular contact with Jeroen and mentioned the robust greenhood to him. Jeroen, in turn, told Bush Heritage colleague, Dave Baker-Gabb. But that was as far as it went.

"We tend to keep things like this a tight secret till we know more. You don't want to create a big fuss about something that may turn out to be nothing," Jeroen emphasised.

But Julie was on the trail of something exciting and asked Jeroen to show her the flowers. Sounds easy, perhaps, but in reality, presented a whole new challenge for Jeroen.

"There were no GPS readings from the earlier field trip," says Jeroen. "So I needed to retrace our steps." And by this time, the orchid would just be a bulb concealed under the soil. So Jeroen had to wait months, until late October when the orchid would be flowering again.

As Jeroen explained, "You have to get on your hands and knees. You also need very good eyesight. The orchid is green so it doesn't stand out. And because of the rains, this year the grass is higher than ever before."

When the orchid was finally located and confirmed, Jeroen was thrilled. "This is what we work for. After years and years of slogging away and restoring natural bushland, these are the kinds of things that keep you going. These are the big motivators."

Bush Heritage donors, volunteers and staff have been doing a wonderful job in controlling Patterson's curse, horehound, saffron thistle and the wheel cactus at Nardoo Hills. Weeds like this compete with native plants for water, light and space, crowding and smothering native species like the robust greenhood. Without careful land management, including weed control, the robust greenhood and other native species cannot survive or flourish.

Now Bush Heritage, together with the DSE and the Royal Botanic Gardens, is researching the orchid. "We need to find out which insects pollinate the robust greenhood and also what fungus triggers seed germination," says Jeroen. "We'll also do some research to see where else this fungus exists on our Bush Heritage reserves."

By understanding these critical factors we are better placed to manage this species and safeguard its future.

"Our experience has been that two to three years after we've undertaken weed and feral animal control, we see rare species, like the northern golden moth orchid (another rare orchid found on Nardoo Hills), multiply," Jeroen said.

"When we find rare species like the northern golden moth and now the robust greenhood, it means our land management is worthwhile. It confirms everything that Bush Heritage and our supporters are doing."

*Nardoo Hills reserves were acquired between 2004 and 2007 with assistance of the R E Ross Trust, Judith Eardley Save Wildlife Association and the Australian Government under the Natural Heritage Trust's National Reserve System Programme. Thanks also to Annie Danks Charitable Trust, Bjarne K Dahl Trust and The Gary White Foundation for their support of vital conservation work at Nardoo this year.*

*Top Right: Jeroen van Veen at work on Nardoo Hills reserves. Top Left: The robust greenhood, found on your Nardoo Hills reserve for the first time since 1941 Field Office  
Photograph by Catherine Hunt*

# The yellow-footed rock wallaby

Karen Graham takes a closer look at the beautiful yellow-footed rock wallaby, spotted recently at Boolcoommatta Reserve for the first time since 1924, thanks to you.



The yellow-footed rock wallaby is one of the most attractive and colourful mammals in Australia with its thick rust-coloured fur coat and its golden yellow limbs.

It has distinctive white stripes on its cheeks, flanks and hips, and a yellow tail with light and dark rings, which you might think would make it easier to spot. Instead, its colourings are the perfect camouflage for blending into the rocky environment it calls home. The wallaby also has an uncanny ability to remain motionless to avoid being seen by predators and, if disturbed, can flee at extremely high speeds. It's hard to believe it could be so agile in such difficult terrain.

Yellow-footed rock wallabies live in colonies in the steep, rocky outcrops of the Flinders Ranges, the Gawler Ranges, and the Olary Hills (which extend into Bush Heritage's Boolcoommatta Reserve) in South Australia, as well as parts of New South Wales and Queensland. The terrain is sparse and uninviting and only the hardiest vegetation survives: little trees and shrubs that manage to push their roots down between the rocks, as well as short-lived herbs and grasses that appear after good rainfall. These are important food sources.

Life isn't easy for these hardy little wallabies. They live in a hot climate, taking refuge during the day in small caves or hollows in rocky outcrops before emerging at dusk and dawn in search of food. Unfortunately, feral goats enjoy a similar diet – feeding on grasses, plants

and shrubs – so competition for food is intense, particularly during drought.

The yellow-footed rock wallaby was once hunted for its beautiful fur coat and, while this is no longer a threat, it impacted dramatically on their numbers. Today, foxes are one of the biggest threats, as they prey on young wallabies.

The good news is that life is slowly improving for the nationally vulnerable yellow-footed rock-wallaby. In 1993, the South Australian government began a conservation project aimed at protecting the species and reducing threats such as foxes and feral goats.

"When counts were first conducted in South Australia in the 1970s there were ongoing reductions in wallaby numbers and distribution," says Bush Heritage Ecologist, Sandy Gilmore. "But since active management has been implemented there has been a dramatic turnaround in its viability and fate."

## A new home at Boolcoommatta Reserve?

Last November, Boolcoommatta Reserve Manager Peter Ashton was out collecting seed at a rocky outcrop behind the homestead when he spotted a wallaby with a white cheek stripe.

"I could see clearly it was a yellow-footed rock wallaby and I was staggered it was there, as their populations at Bimbowrie Conservation Reserve are 20 km away," says Peter. "But this location is perfect

for the yellow-foots – it's a small rocky outcrop, with lots of nooks and crannies. The vegetation is acacia shrubs over numerous herbs and grasses."

Evidence found in the caves here indicates that yellow-footed rock wallabies lived in this area previously but the last reported sighting on Boolcoommatta was in 1924. Now it seems they may be returning. Thanks to the wonderful support of people like you, our ongoing predator and goat control programs have played a big part in nurturing the health of the habitat this beautiful creature likes to call home. Hopefully it won't be too long before Peter and his family witness a permanent colony of yellow-footed rock wallabies moving in at Boolcoommatta.

*Boolcoommatta Reserve was acquired in 2006 with the assistance of the Australian Government under the Natural Heritage Trust's National Reserve System Programme and the Nature Foundation SA. Thanks also to the Native Vegetation Council of South Australia for their support of vital conservation work on Boolcoommatta.*

*Above: The yellow-footed rock wallaby blends easily into rocky outcrops at places like Boolcoommatta Reserve  
Photograph by Jiri Lochman/  
Lochman Transparencies*



# Bush Blitz at Bon Bon

**In 2008, you and your fellow supporters helped us buy Bon Bon Station Reserve. Now, two years later, Charlotte Francis reports back on the wealth of species your support is protecting.**

In October 2010 Bon Bon Station Reserve was abuzz with activity as 20 scientists including experts in reptiles, mammals, plants and invertebrates joined forces to conduct a multi-species survey – a Bush Blitz – of the scenic desert property.

Variouly equipped with harp traps, sweep nets, malaise traps, light traps, spotlights, Elliott and pitfall traps, the team of scientists and volunteers spent a week surveying most of the reserve: not bad going for a property the size of Sydney. They found a wealth of species – known and unknown – from bees to beetles, dunnarts to dragons and a staggering number of plant species.

Volunteer Kate Holmes from conservation organisation Arid Recovery describes Bon Bon as a beautiful and diverse property with rolling sand dunes and salt lakes in the south and vast bluebush and saltbush plains to the north. One of the highlights for her was collecting native bees, wasps and other insects. “It was a real eye opener for me. I’m allergic to bees but found it really exciting catching something in a sweep net and then identifying it.” Over 80 species of bee’s were recorded in the survey, two thirds of which could be new to science.

Another of Kate’s jobs was to check the pitfall and Elliott traps each morning. “The recent rainfall meant the seasonal conditions for trapping were excellent

although the week itself was a bit cool,” says Dr Jim Radford, Bush Heritage’s Science and Monitoring Manager.

“However, on the last night it was very humid and warm and all the animals and insects were out and about.”

The 47 reptile and five small mammal species recorded at Bon Bon will provide valuable data to add to distribution records which when analysed at broad geographic scales, may reveal new species.

“It often turns out that what we thought was a single widely-distributed species is actually several closely-related but different species that superficially look very similar,” explains Jim. “It’s only when the experts run the genetic analysis that we discover they’re different, and often previously undescribed, species.” For example, unusual forms of a slider – a skink with no front legs that slides through the sand – warrant further study.

Of the five mammals recorded, the spinifex hopping mouse was found at the southern edge of its range, whereas the little long-tailed dunnart was on the northern margin of its South Australian range.

Nocturnal light trapping for moths, beetles and other insects proved particularly rewarding. “There are very few samples of invertebrates from this region, so it was exciting for the invertebrate taxonomists to see what species are out there and begin to catalogue them,” says Jim.

After winter rains, conditions were perfect for the botanists who were busy pressing and cataloguing plants for the South Australian Herbarium. And they worked closely with the bee experts, identifying which plants the bees were pollinating and getting a better idea of the associations between bees, plants and other invertebrates.

“That’s what was so special about this Blitz. Not only were we able to increase our knowledge of what’s out there and establish a baseline for future monitoring, one of the highlights was having experts in different fields all working together,” explains Jim.

*Your support allows Bush Heritage to manage this former sheep station to protect its diverse populations of plants, animals, insects, reptiles and birds. Thank you!*

*Bon Bon Station Reserve was acquired in 2008 with the assistance of the Australian Government under the Natural Heritage Trust’s National Reserve System Programme, the Government of South Australia and the Besen Family Foundation. Thanks again to the Besen Family Foundation for their support of vital conservation work at Bon Bon this year.*





# Stranded

**Drenching rains on Ethabuka and Cravens Peak reserves in August last year provided a unique experience for two Bush Heritage volunteers, and some extra challenges for reserve managers. Fiona Rutkay reports**

Matt Dahlberg and Brett Steers are no strangers to extreme weather conditions they met in Antarctica working for the Australian Antarctic Division. Both share a love of adventure, a passion for the environment and a background in the building trade, so when the opportunity came up to volunteer on Ethabuka Reserve, they jumped at the chance. “I looked on the map and thought, ‘it’s somewhere you wouldn’t go as a tourist,’” says Brett, by way of explanation.

Their desert trip soon turned to drama when the rain started falling. All roads leading off the property turned into an ocean and the bulldust became very sticky mud. “Just running back to cover makes you four inches taller because the mud’s stuck to the bottom of your shoes,” says Matt.

But that didn’t stop them working. Among other things, the two volunteers installed a hot water system, fitted and plumbed a grey-water pit, reconfigured a bathroom and replaced old plumbing.

“We both brought a book with us,” says Matt. “In Antarctica we used to call it a bliz book because you’d get caught in a blizzard and have to sit it out and read your book.” As it turns out Matt never got to read his book. “It was too much fun trying to work out ways to get your washing to dry and how to get things clean.”

Meanwhile reserve managers Nella and Mark Lithgow were trying to work out how to get the pair out. Eventually the “local” publican came to the rescue in his light plane. “Flying out over it was amazing,” says Matt. “We both knew we’d witnessed the country in rare and fantastic form.”

**“For reserve managers the wet seasons means new life, as well as hard work”**

*Cravens Peak and Ethabuka reserves were acquired in 2004 and 2005 with the assistance of the Australian Government under the Natural Heritage Trust’s National Reserve System Programme and The Nature Conservancy. Thanks also to Andyinc Foundation, the Hutchinson Foundation, The Nature Conservancy’s David Thomas Challenge and Peter Edwards for supporting vital conservation work on Cravens Peak and Ethabuka this year.*



## Stocking up

The wet season in northern Australia usually runs from December to February each year. That means having enough food, equipment and hardware supplies to last for months. “We’ve never resorted to baked beans,” says Nella. “When you’re really down to the last of it – your dried foods, like rice, pasta and lentils – I use my massive spice collection to put variety into everything.”

## Reserve management

With the extra vegetation the rains produce, more work must be put into fire management. The heavy rains also wash away fences, allowing the neighbours’ cattle to stroll through the property. Normally Mark and Nella do their repairs after the summer wet season, but with the high number of rains this year, the repair of fences and roads has been an ongoing priority.

## Sticky bulldust

Travelling anywhere in the wet season is a challenge. As always, the reserve managers need to be well prepared. For every trip, no matter how small, they make sure they have their snap straps, winches and recovery gear with them. The rains also cause erosion, washouts and ruts along the road, which they add to their long “to do” list.

*Although Matt and Brett’s story occurred in August 2010, some of our reserves and reserve staff were also affected by the damaging rainfalls over much of Australia in early 2011 and by Cyclone Yasi in February. We are thankful that our staff are safe, however, and we extend our deepest sympathy to all Australians affected by the devastating floods. Bush Heritage CEO Doug Humann reflects on the impact of these events for Australia and for Bush Heritage on the back page of this newsletter.*

*Above: Matt and Brett’s trip to Ethabuka turned out quite differently to what they had expected. Photograph by Nella Lithgow*

*Opposite Page, Top: Sunset over a saltbush at your Bon Bon Station Reserve. Middle: The fat-tailed dunnart: safer thanks to you. Bottom: The bearded dragon Photographs by Annette Ruzicka*

# Around your reserves in 90 days

As you get home at the end of the day, think of the Bush Heritage team who are wrapping up their day too. They've been busy making a difference on the land, thanks to the support of thousands of Australians just like you, all around the country. Lucy Ashley shares a few of the ways that your support has made a difference.

## Great expectations



Everyone at Bush Heritage is feeling like anxious aunts and uncles as we await news of red-tailed phascogale newborns at Kojonup Reserve. You may remember our Winter newsletter cover story about our first-ever involvement in a translocation program of phascogales onto Kojonup. A Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) inspection in November revealed that five of the 30 nesting boxes showed signs of phascogale activity. A phascogale was found in one of these boxes with 'movement under her', assumed to be young. DEC is due back at Kojonup any time now for a follow-up survey and its fingers and toes crossed for good news! Thanks to your support and the commitment of our on-ground team, we have been able to manage the threats associated with this program.



## Carpet of many colours

It's hard to believe it's a year since we shared the great news about the acquisition of your 32nd and newest reserve, Monjebup North. In October, the reserve turned on a spectacular display for visiting Bush Heritage staff and volunteers. "We were treated to the most amazing carpet of wildflowers," says Bush Heritage Ecologist Angela Sanders. "They were growing in areas that had been cleared and now that clearing has been stopped. It's incredible to see how the land is responding." Angela is intrigued by the species that have sprung up here and describes it as a 'novel ecosystem' compared to the surrounding growth.

### All fired up

Thanks to the generous response from supporters like you to our recent fire management appeal, we are well on the way to reaching our \$350 000 target. Across the country this has helped us to complete and maintain approximately 650 km of fire breaks across our reserves, undertake planned burns across 20 000 ha of our properties, and put 2,700 hours of staff time into planning and implementing fire management. It also meant that when a lightning strike caused a wildfire on our Cravens Peak reserve over the Christmas break, managers Mark and Nella had the skills, plans, safety gear and equipment necessary to manage the fire, and minimise its impact.

### An unwelcome visitor at Yourka

The 3rd of February 2011 is a day the Hales family will never forget. As Reserve Managers at Yourka, Leanne and Paul found themselves and their three children in the path of Cyclone Yasi. Thankfully, after a sleepless night, the Hales reported they are safe and sound. It's too early to know how the reserve fared though, with roads still impassable. "We're keen to get back out," says Paul. "I'll have to take my chainsaw on the quad bike and cut my way through the fallen trees blocking the road. We might find out we don't have a shed anymore – and there will definitely be plenty of fencing and roads work to do." Thanks to all our supporters for your messages of support.



### Working together

Bush Heritage and the North Australian Pastoral Company (NAPCO) have reached agreement to work together to preserve the ecological treasures of the Mulligan River floodplain in western Queensland. Last year Bush Heritage Fish Ecologist, Dr Adam Kerezszy, made several visits to NAPCO's Glenormiston and Marion Downs properties to monitor aquatic species, including a 'show and tell' with NAPCO's local land managers. The NAPCO team were excited to share their management expertise and conservation knowledge with the Bush Heritage team. "There's a long-term social and cultural outcome to partnerships like this," says Charlie Sherwin, Bush Heritage Conservation Partnerships Manager. "It's about coming together to share our vision, understanding and aspirations for the land that we all love."

### Place of spirits

The Ngunawal people are the traditional owners of the land where Bush Heritage's Scottsdale Reserve is located. Don Bell, a Ngunawal member, is also our Indigenous Partnerships Officer. "Budjabulya, a creative being, made this land. Its water areas are very significant to us and the platypus – the mulagun – is our clan totem. When you are here you can feel the spirits." A recent Cultural Values assessment on Scottsdale found evidence of the presence of the Ngunawal in many places. It also pinpointed items of cultural significance such as 'scar trees' which can only be approached by appropriate members of the Ngunawal. This assessment will help Bush Heritage to protect and preserve the cultural heritage of the Ngunawal. It also enables the sharing of traditional land management practices.

Bush Heritage anchor regions



Bush Heritage partnerships



Bush Heritage reserves



*Carpet of Wildflowers by Angela Sanders*

*Red-tailed phascogale by Jiri Lochman / Lochman Transparencies*



## Desert wanderings

**As a Bush Heritage Ecologist, Max Tischler has journeyed across the Simpson Desert plenty of times. But in July 2010, Max experienced the desert in a way he never had before. Max tells his story.**

Imagine driving into a city the size of Sydney or Melbourne that you've never been to before. You're keen to visit all its major tourist attractions and its well-kept secrets, but after reaching the CBD you find that not a single suburban road is open – you can only drive on a couple of arterial roads from one side of the city to the other. How could you possibly get to know this new city?

As Ecologist for Cravens Peak and Ethabuka Reserves, I face a similar scenario every time I arrive at these vast properties in western Queensland's Simpson Desert. Although there are a handful of tracks on the reserves, the majority of these properties is inaccessible. So how do you find your way through 430 000 remote hectares of isolated ironstone ranges, over endless sand dunes, across expansive

gibber plains and down ephemeral river systems for weeks on end in often challenging conditions?

In June and July last year, a solution to this challenge was presented to me: with camels. I followed in the traditions of many Simpson Desert surveyors, like Charles Winnecke (1884) and Cecil Madigan (1939), by travelling through the desert with a string of 20 camels in tow, as part of Australian Desert Expeditions' (ADE) annual trekking schedule. ADE is a registered environmental company whose mission is to undertake and facilitate exploration and research in the central Australian deserts, and last year was the first time they trekked through Ethabuka and Cravens Peak.

The treks gave us an opportunity to access some of the remotest parts of our reserves. Our teams comprised of 20 pack camels led by five cameleers, a dozen or so paying guests and three ecologists, including some from The Desert Ecology Research Group at the University of Sydney, a collaborating partner. Our trek ran for twelve days, and the route was dictated by both conditions and curiosity, under the watchful eye of ADE's founder and expedition leader Andrew Harper, who has been working with camels in the desert for sixteen years.

*Above: Camels allowed Max and his fellow ecologists get to know your Ethabuka reserve in a way Max had never experienced before.*

*Right: Max Tischler takes measurements from a mulgara, a species which has been steadily increasing in numbers since the rains of 2010.*

*Photographs by Andrew Harper, Australian Desert Expeditions*



Pack camels can carry well over 300 kilograms. They provide the perfect vehicle for taking adequate provisions, as well as an armory of sampling equipment into remote areas. Each afternoon, after a day's trekking, we would spend the hours before sunset establishing trapping lines, pressing plant specimens and recording the myriad encounters of the walk. This made for a very busy and often exhausting few weeks, but what was discovered on both treks far exceeded every one of our expectations.

Some people may be surprised to hear the camel, a feral animal in Australia, has become a mode of transport at Cravens Peak and Ethabuka; uncontrolled camels can cause substantial damage to fencing infrastructure, and I have witnessed large herds spoiling and trampling waterholes and plant communities. But the camels on our trek are domesticated pack animals, led by skilled cameleers and so these threats are mitigated. The positive outcomes far exceed any possible negative impacts.

Camels are fascinating animals to travel with: their endurance and stamina are second to none. Like all working beasts they perform best under familiar routines, and the daily tasks of shepherding, loading and unloading are all done with this consideration. Camels each have their own unique personality, and it was enjoyable watching them express themselves. You inevitably find your favourites, going out of the way to feed them your discarded orange peel at smoko and giving them a scratch behind the ear at the end of the day.

These impressive creatures gave us unfettered access to parts of Ethabuka and Cravens Peak during a time when we had so much to learn. Extensive rains

made last year an exceptionally good season, and recording the response of plants and animals to the flooding rains of February 2010 was an important priority toward our conservation efforts.

We were able to document the presence and condition of many plants and animals during a period of increasing abundance after many years of dry conditions: a once-in-a-generation opportunity.

Identifying the huge array of plants and animals on our reserves, and how their populations respond and shift through time is one of the key tasks to empower Bush Heritage in making appropriate management decisions for conservation now and in the future.

There were many great moments I recall from the treks, but the most notable highlights include capturing the first Desert short-tailed mouse (*Leggadina forresti*) after an absence of eighteen years; discovering a small cave in the Toomba range used by Echidna, bats and a species of skink not seen before on the reserve; recording a total of 97 bird species; increasing the reserve plant species list from 375 to over 550 (we are still going through the specimens!); and finding extensive and fabled stands of the culturally important narcotic Pituri bush (*Duboisia hopwoodii*).

**“The desert deserves to be approached gently, so its mood is revealed. The way people have always approached these waterholes was on foot, as we do on our camel treks. That reveals the country – the continuum of country.”**

**Andrew Harper, ADE Founder**

These camel treks have allowed us to learn much more about the vast isolated areas of our desert reserves, and are doing so by approaching them as people had been for millennia... on foot. The outcomes from our research were exceptional, and are the result of being able to access remote pockets of our reserves, while absorbing the intricacies and subtleties of their landscapes at a slow pace. These treks have, and will continue to provide valuable and essential information about how natural ecosystems and their species respond to both favourable and lean conditions. These results will feed back into our management plans, supported by the generosity of our donors, and ensuring the continued conservation of our remote desert reserves in perpetuity.

## **Your very own Desert Discovery**

Would you like to join Max, or other ecologists, on a camel expedition in the vast Simpson Desert? Australian Desert Expeditions will be exploring Bush Heritage's Cravens Peak and Ethabuka reserves, where your support has helped to make such a difference. Trips range from five to sixteen days, find out more from Australian Desert Expeditions: [www.australiandesertexpeditions.com](http://www.australiandesertexpeditions.com) or **1300 669 780**.

*Cravens Peak and Ethabuka reserves were acquired in 2004 and 2005 with the assistance of the Australian Government under the Natural Heritage Trust's National Reserve System Programme and The Nature Conservancy. Thanks also to Andync Foundation, the Hutchinson Foundation, The Nature Conservancy's David Thomas Challenge, Peter Edwards and all our generous supporters for supporting vital conservation work on Cravens Peak and Ethabuka this year.*

# Bush bliss

As a Bush Heritage supporter, you can feel fantastic about what you've helped to protect. Come and see it for yourself, on a visit to any of these reserves in 2011.



## Scottsdale Reserve, NSW

Saturday 2 April, 2011 (9am – 4pm)

Peregrine falcons, gang-gang cockatoos, hooded robins and the golden sun moth are just a few of the threatened species that make their home at Scottsdale Reserve, a unique 1328-hectare property just 45 minutes south of Canberra. The Murrumbidgee River winds for four kilometres along Scottsdale's northern and western boundaries, cascading over natural rock weirs, through deep tree-fringed pools and around river-sculptured rocks.

**Transport** Make your own way to Scottsdale (2WD access), then you'll be on foot.

**Facilities** There is a composting toilet on site.

**Food** Morning tea provided. BYO picnic lunch.

**Nearest town** Bredbo (4km)

**Cost** \$30 for supporters / \$40 for non-supporters

*Photograph by Lauren Van Dyke*



## Eurardy Reserve, WA

3, 24 September and 1 October 2011 (morning departures time TBA)

This is a rare chance to see one of the top wildflower destinations along Western Australia's Batavia coast. Eurardy Reserve is located about 6 hours drive north of Perth, within an area recognised internationally as a biodiversity hotspot, known to support 12.6% of the world's rare and threatened flora. Spring is a beautiful time to visit with spectacular displays of wildflower colours. Join Reserve Managers Matt and Elizabeth on one of three wildflower tours and learn about the property's flora and fauna, and elements of a working conservation reserve.

**Transport** You'll need a 4WD to travel in convoy with the group. Make your own way to the reserve, where you'll meet up with your guide.

**Facilities** Toilets and tea and coffee facilities available

**Food** Morning tea provided. You are welcome to bring a picnic lunch and stay to enjoy the self-guided walk.

**Nearest town** Northampton (100km)

**Cost** \$30 for supporters / \$40 for non-supporters

*Photograph by Katrina Blake*



## Dates for your diary

New trips have just been announced for 2011. We welcome you to join us on tours of the following reserves: Edgebaston (Qld) in July, Bon Bon Station (SA) in August and Nardoo Hills (Vic) in September. Dates and details will be available at [www.bushheritage.org.au/getting\\_involved\\_visit](http://www.bushheritage.org.au/getting_involved_visit) soon and in the next newsletter. Watch this space!

## Self-guided camping and daytrips

You can visit some of our reserves as a self-guided camping trip from the beginning of April to the end of September each year or a daytrip any time of year (pending management activities).

See the map (below) to plan your visit.

For information go to

[www.bushheritage.org.au/getting\\_involved\\_visit](http://www.bushheritage.org.au/getting_involved_visit).

Bookings are essential – contact us on **1300 628 873** or **(03) 8610 9100**

or email [visits@bushheritage.org.au](mailto:visits@bushheritage.org.au)

*Photograph by John Deer*



# Bag of tricks

What would you do if you were alone on a remote 200 000 hectare property and something went wrong? How would you get help and stay safe? The answer, writes John Sampson, is in our new “safety grab bag”, a one-stop-shop for bush survival.

Managing nearly a million hectares of land across Australia has its perils. Just ask our reserve managers who are often stationed on remote properties across the country and who work in a range of temperatures and conditions. Vehicles can break down or get bogged, wildfires can threaten, storms can bring down communication lines and flood roads, the list could go on forever.

Bon Bon Station Reserve is in the South Australian outback. It's the size of Sydney, stretching 70 km north to south and 30 km east to west. It's also both home and office for reserve manager Glen Norris.

Instead of negotiating snarling traffic on his way to work, Glen has to contend with Bon Bon's bumpy dirt tracks. When out in the field it's not buses and trams he keeps an eye out for but potentially deadly snakes and stakes that could take out a tyre.

In the past, if Glen's vehicle broke down or he got stuck, his only option would have

been to hike long distances back to the homestead. These remote reserves aren't the kind of places you want to be stranded.

Dave Whitelaw is Bush Heritage's National Operations Manager and is responsible for making sure our staff stay safe in the field.

He's just overseen the rollout of a “lone worker communications protocol”, which – with the help of Bush Heritage supporters like you – will ensure that if any of our staff, volunteers or contractors get into a sticky situation, help will only be a phone call away.

At the heart of the new protocol is a “safety grab bag”, a snug little daypack that provides workers with the tools they need to stay safe in the bush, that is small enough to throw into the back of a car or ute.

It has a first aid kit, water bottle, safety blanket, ration pack, satellite phone and emergency SPOT transmitter, which, at the click of a button, can notify Bush Heritage that a field worker has safely finished work for the day, or put out an alert signal if they are in trouble.

“The grab bag ramps up our standard safety procedures to make sure we are on top of what we do,” says Dave. “It gives us two-way communication, a backup through

the SPOT device, and ready access to emergency responses.

“It also gives our staff the ability to survive in the bush until help arrives through the provision of emergency water and food rations, and the ability to shelter if they need to spend a night in the scrub.”

Bush Heritage has never had a situation arising out of serious injury and our new grab bag offers another layer of safety to this excellent record. Bush Heritage supporters can rest assured that the people you support in the bush will come home safe, ready to do their important work again tomorrow.



The safety grab bag provides reserve managers with a quick and easy solution to staying safe on your reserves.

## In celebration

Thanks to **Catherine Costello's** colleagues at Biosis, who wished Catherine well in her retirement by donating to Bush Heritage. Mrs Jean Clarke donated to celebrate the 14th birthday of her grand-daughter **Jessica**, who lives near Gondwana Link in WA. **Mrs Leonie Voorhoeve** celebrated her 78th birthday with a donation to Bush Heritage. Many friends donated in celebration of **Brian Martin's** birthday.

## In memory

Family members donated in memory of **James (Jim) Peate**, who was passionate about the value of the natural environment and did all he could to preserve it, maintain it and restore it. Jenny Stokes made a donation in memory of **Dr Ken McPherson**, an Indian Ocean historian and dear friend. Friends and family rallied together to raise money in memory of **Catherine Arnold**, a wildlife lover who was passionate about conservation. Sonia Laws donated in memory of **Susan Butler**.



Our heart & soul

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# FROM THE CEO



“It is difficult to imagine the power of the water, like that which Cathy heard at Carnarvon, running through our creek systems and across our grasslands, wrecking bores and roads.”

Photograph by becwalton.com.au

In most parts of Australia, 274 mm of rain is not a bad total for six months. At your Ethabuka and Cravens Peak Reserves, this amount exceeds the annual average rainfall of about 200 millimetres.

But on 27 December, I was astonished to learn that Bush Heritage’s Carnarvon Station Reserve saw, heard and felt 274 mm in just one day. This incredible event set a new record for the property and for Queensland on that day. Cathy Zwick, our Field Officer at Carnarvon was alone on the reserve with her dog and described to me the sound of water roaring down the creeks, and trees crashing down from the force of the water.

Over the coming weeks, news reports told us that Cathy was just one among many Australians who endured difficult, and sometimes heartbreaking, times in early 2011. Although we can gladly report that Cathy and all our staff are safe, we know others have not been so lucky. I would like to offer my deepest sympathy to any of our supporters, and all Australians, affected by these devastating flood, and by Cyclone Yasi, which also affected our Yourka Reserve as you’ll see on page six.

To those of you who have lost friends or family members, I offer my sincere condolences. All of us at Bush Heritage are thinking of those who have lost

property, possessions, livestock and pets. We wish you all the very best with the clean-up and recovery process.

On some of our reserves, there is also much clean-up work to be done. At Carnarvon and Yourka, we won’t know the extent of the damage until the water recedes and our staff can return to the properties, but we do know there will be erosion damage, trees uprooted, and some animals will have perished.

Other reserves across the country have also been affected by flooding, including Eurardy in WA; Yourka, Reedy Creek and Edgbaston reserves in Qld; Boolcoomatta Reserve in SA; and Liffey Valley Reserves in Tasmania.

However, the news is not all bad. The rains have replenished water sources, and the benefits will flow up through the food chain. Of course, when conditions are good for native plant species, weeds will also thrive, so we have much work to do. But with so many Australians facing challenges, Bush Heritage also has so much to be thankful for, especially your wonderful and ongoing support.

Doug Humann, CEO

**Yes, I want to make a difference!**

Title \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

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**I want to join Friends of the Bush and give \$ \_\_\_\_\_ each month by automatic deduction.**

I will give via:  the credit card below until further notice  bank debit (Bush Heritage will send an authority form)

**I would rather give a single gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ I am paying by:**  Cheque/money order  Visa  MasterCard

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All donations of \$2 or more are tax-deductible.

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Please return to: Bush Heritage Australia, Reply Paid 329, Flinders Lane VIC 8009

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