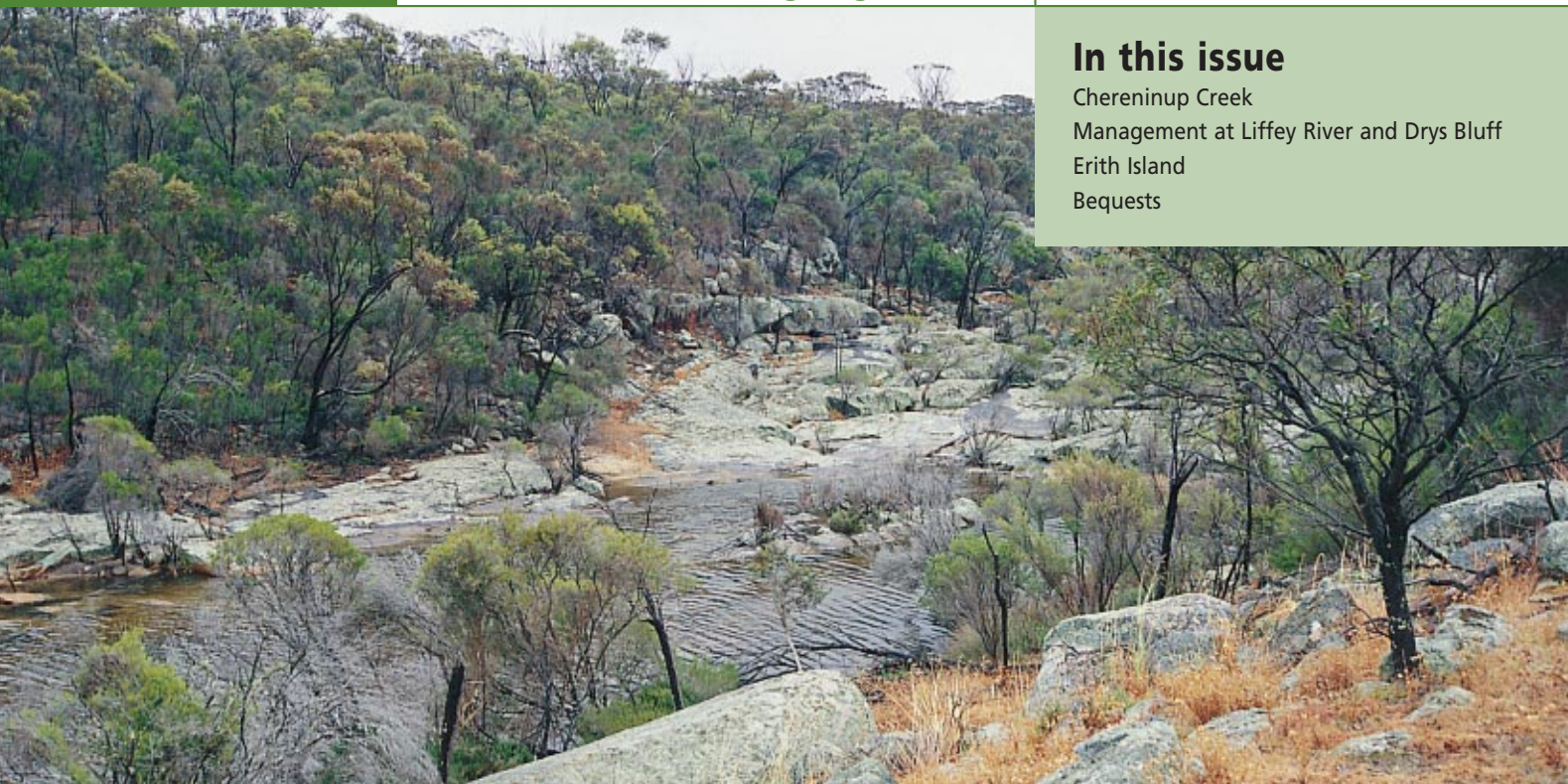




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Chereninup Creek – a new reserve

Bush Heritage's Phil Cullen reports on the new reserve

Chereninup Creek bushland will be the next Bush Heritage purchase. This outstanding 877 ha property lies between the Fitzgerald River National Park and the Stirling Range National Park, 140 km north-east of Albany in WA (see map).

It represents a fantastic opportunity for Bush Heritage supporters to contribute to conservation at many levels. The property will protect part of a global 'hotspot' for biodiversity where plant genera such as *Banksia*, *Grevillea*, *Dryandra*, *Verticordia*, *Acacia* and *Eucalyptus* achieve maximum species richness. It will protect vulnerable and endangered species and plant communities. It will assist the amalgamation of two existing nature reserves and contribute to a conservation project of national significance.

GEOLOGY

It is estimated that our new reserve will support up to 500 plant species. One reason for this remarkable species diversity is that the new reserve lies on the interzone between two ancient landforms, the Yilgarn block and the Esperence coastal plain. The Yilgarn block is one of the oldest blocks of continental crust to be found anywhere in the world and is thus a foundation stone of the Australian continent.

By contrast, the Esperence plain is a relatively recent geological feature made up of continental shelf sediments that were laid down in the ocean along the southern edge of the Yilgarn block

during the Eocene epoch some 54 – 38 million years ago.

Erosion over millions of years has cut down through the coastal sediments into the ancient granites of the Yilgarn block, creating a relatively deep valley in the undulating plain. The Chereninup Creek now flows down one of these eroded channels as a series of permanent pools and granite cascades. Higher on the valley slopes, ancient sediments protrude as low breakaways at the edge of sandy plains. These landforms now support a wide range of soils, and thus vegetation types.

Above: Granite cascades on the Chereninup Creek.

Below: Sediments of the Esperence plain form breakaways, now topped with Blue Mallee

PHOTOS: BARBARA MADDEN



WESTERN AUSTRALIA



HABITAT CORRIDORS

In a world where native bushland, whether it be large national parks or small bushland remnants, is rapidly being reduced to isolated patches, there is increasing awareness of the need to provide corridors of native habitat which link these patches together. Habitat corridors can provide vital opportunities for species to migrate from one 'reserve' to another. This has a two-fold benefit. Populations of relatively rare species become more robust to catastrophic events such as large wild fires or disease outbreaks, and there is an opportunity for genetic exchange between populations that would otherwise exist in isolation.

The new reserve at Chereninup Creek is a critical part of a visionary project known as the 'Gondwana Link'. 'Gondwana Link' aims to recreate a corridor of native

vegetation between the temperate forest wilderness around Walpole in south-west Western Australia through the Stirling Range and Fitzgerald River National Parks and on to the rangelands in the Norseman region. From there, native vegetation extends all the way to the Gulf and Cape York, the Top End in the Northern Territory and the Kimberley in north-western Western Australia. 'Gondwana Link' will involve the cooperation of many community groups and government departments at all levels. It will require the reservation of many existing bushland remnants and replanting of considerable areas to recreate vital habitat. It is a project for the long term that will require an ongoing commitment from participants. The new reserve at Chereninup Creek is one of the first links in the chain in achieving this most important national goal. The value of the reserve will thus extend far beyond its physical boundaries.

Our current endeavours in Western Australia would not have been possible without the help, generosity, and hard work of the following people: Margi Weir and 'Stinger' Ray, the Horwitz family, Keith Bradby, Nathan McQuoid, Denise True, Chris Robinson, Steve Newby, Lesley Thomas, Ben Carr and many others in the Western Australian 'conservation community'. Thank you for all your help with this great conservation project. It has been great fun.





VEGETATION COMMUNITIES

So far we know of at least 12 major plant communities on the property. They include woodlands of York Gum, Yate and Granite Sheoak in the drainage lines, dense thickets of Blue Mallee that cloak the breakaway country, and elements of the Kwongan heath - bizarre shrub lands of *Dryandras* and *Banksias* - on the sandy plains. Four of these woodlands have been almost eliminated from the Western Australian wheat belt.

These plant communities occur within a mosaic of other native vegetation types rather than as isolated stands in otherwise desolate fields of wheat. As such the contribution that they make to conservation is far greater than if they existed in isolation. The number and variety of animals and plants that they support, and the lack of weeds attests to this. With such an abundance of plants the wildflower displays are very spectacular, and a significant number are likely to be undescribed scientifically. With this number of plant species and communities on a relatively small area, this new reserve will be the most diverse of all of the Bush Heritage reserves to date.

WILDLIFE

The Chereninup Creek Reserve will provide protection for a wide suite of native fauna, some of which is of



conservation concern. Such species include the malleefowl (nationally vulnerable), the western whipbird (near threatened), the tammar wallaby and the western brushtail possum (both of which are of conservation significance). Suitable habitat exists for the chuditch or western quoll (nationally vulnerable), the southern dibbler (endangered), and the crested bellbird (near threatened) all of which live in nearby bushland. There is the potential for up to 14 small to medium-sized native mammal species to be recorded on the property.

From top left: Morning light on the leaves of *tallerack*, *Euc. tetragona*, *Banksia caleyi*. PHOTOS: BARBARA MADDEN
Honey possum, western pygmy possum, tammar wallaby, chuditch (western quoll), malleefowl, dibbler. PHOTOS: JIRI LOCHMAN/LOCHMAN TRANSPARENCIES

Opposite page, from top right: Eucalypt trunks sport vibrant colours, granite honey myrtle, bronzewing pigeon nest, lichen on broombush,, common net-bush, everlastings beneath sheoak woodland. PHOTOS: BARBARA MADDEN



Management at Liffey River & Drys Bluff

Nathan Males manages the on-ground works and volunteer participation on Bush Heritage reserves

Every five years, the management plans of Bush Heritage reserves are reviewed and overhauled. The outcomes of the past management actions provide feed back into the review process and guide future management and new initiatives in the schedule of works.

The management plans for Drys Bluff and Liffey River Reserves, located close together in northern Tasmania, have recently undergone this process.

Through the review we looked at each management action, ticked some off the list as complete and noted progress made on others. However, it is interesting to reflect on two management actions that haven't been attempted.

One called for the opportunistic removal of kookaburra nests and the other for the removal of European wasps and their nests. Both of these species are introduced to Tasmania and appear to have a negative impact on the local reptiles and other insects, respectively.

The reasons that I haven't attempted these seemingly worthwhile jobs are two fold. Firstly, the opportunity hasn't arisen. Secondly, I intuitively felt that the occasional destruction of an individual nest would not deliver a worthwhile conservation benefit for the effort required.

Dr Steven Mellick, from Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, agreed that opportunistic removal of European wasp nests would not deliver a long-term solution. His recent studies found that wasps recolonise an area in the season following removal and only a constant

effort across the landscape, placing baited traps in 100m grids, would permanently remove them. If wasps cannot be realistically controlled it is interesting to reflect on what might be an acceptable level of management.

Bush Heritage reserves are either actual or conceptual islands in the matrix of the wider landscape and are subject to all kinds of pressures from outside the boundaries. Deciding how best to protect the values of the reserves from external pressures is difficult.

Should we undertake extensive feral baiting, trapping or hunting programs? Should we erect feral animal proof fencing? Should we remove all the weeds or just some? How much of it can we afford? If we start a program, how will we continue it for the long term? Do we have to accept that reserves may never be 'pristine'?

To avoid lengthy navel gazing we have decided to adopt a practical approach - doing what we can with the limited resources. This means working to alleviate the threats to those ecosystems or species with the highest conservation values and stretching the tight budget as far as it will go with the help of volunteers.

A recent example of this has been the use of Greencorp teams in the two Tasmanian reserves. Once again braving the rain, they have done great work against the foxgloves in the rainforest valleys of both Drys Bluff and Liffey River Reserves. For a week, a team of Bush Heritage friends and supporters volunteered alongside the Greencorp teams, giving specialist advice, assisting with other weed control and documenting the progress with photos. The wasps and kookaburras remain.



Special thanks go to Jeremy Price who contributed both botanical and practical conservation management knowledge and has since been in the Hobart office assisting with the publication of the revised management plans. We have included an excerpt from his reflection on the week in the Liffey valley.

'The cabin sat amidst Arcadian splendour, the Craggs of the Great Western Tiers looming majestically, though quite ominously in the background. The velvet green of lush pastures a mark of a more settled era and the ceaseless flow of water occasionally accompanied by wind through the trees a pleasant sound if ever there was one. The valley of Liffey was silent though something was building far west, it allowed its presence to be felt on the winds ... and the land waited, anxious for its tidings.

And then the rain came...'

From top right: Pulling foxgloves at Liffey reserve, *Olearia* sp.

Tree fern gully at Liffey River Reserve. Fencing with the Greencorp team at Drys Bluff, Drys Bluff forest.

PHOTOS: IAN WILLIAMS



From the CEO

Thank you for your generous support of our appeal to raise funds to acquire and manage a new reserve in south-west Western Australia. I am delighted to report that we have selected an outstanding property, featured in this newsletter. This new acquisition will increase the number of significant ecosystems protected by Bush Heritage by 20%, an indication of the very high biodiversity of the land. As I write we are finalising the terms of the sale.

With this and subsequent acquisitions we are enforcing the discipline of raising funds for the land, and its estimated management costs, at the time of purchase. Currently, we are also building additional funds for the future protection of all our existing reserves. In this way we will not over-extend ourselves with consecutive property purchases.

Increasing the Friends of the Bush, who provide regular support for both acquisition and conservation management activities, is particularly important to achieve these goals. In 2001 the number of 'Friends' increased by 20%, mainly from existing supporters either beginning or increasing regular contributions. Thank you.

To strengthen these efforts, a concerted campaign to build our supporter base and increase our profile in the community has begun. In the next few months you may see specially trained recruitment teams working on our behalf in some capital cities.

Invitation to Sydneysiders

Supporters and friends of Bush Heritage are invited for drinks and a short presentation on current Bush Heritage activities at a private home in Randwick, Sydney, on Friday 22 March at 6.30 pm. You are welcome to bring friends who may be interested. For details please ring Kalina Koloff on 02 9290 8548.

The Tasmanian Government's decision in late 2001 to provide National Park status for the entire Kent Group of islands in Bass Strait, including over our Erith Island Reserve, caused us mixed emotions. We were pleased to have been a catalyst for National Park protection for the whole island group but sorry to be relinquishing the lease on this fine reserve. Over the last five years we have developed a close working relationship with the groups and individuals involved with Erith and especially the 'Erith Mob'. We thank them for their support and encouragement of our work. Details of the changes concerning Erith follow.

Earth Sanctuaries Limited has experienced well-publicised difficulties. This is unfortunate news and we share founder John Wamsley's disappointment. The company and/or its assets are for sale and we are assessing individual properties that may fit with our reserve selection criteria. I must reiterate our confidence that Bush Heritage's future is secure. Our growth and development are being underpinned by securing and investing funds for future land management.

We welcome Rick Farley to the Board. Known to many for his role with the National Farmers' Federation and National Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, Rick has brought with him a new set of skills and experience which are particularly valuable as we develop our capacity to acquire larger properties.

I wish you all a happy and productive new year.

Joey Newman

Erith Island

As mentioned in the CEO's comments, the Tasmanian Government has declared a National Park over Erith Island and the entire Kent Group of islands in Bass Strait.

Prior to 1996, when Bush Heritage purchased the lease, Erith was grazed and faced threats from weed infestation. In the last six years Bush Heritage has been conducting flora and fauna surveys, eradicating weeds and introduced animals and improving the infrastructure and amenity of the Island. This has elevated the Island's importance for conservation.

The whole island group will now be managed under a comprehensive National Park management plan coordinated by Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service. Bush Heritage has handed its recently completed Plan of Management for Erith Island to the Minister and urged the Government to adopt the goal of maintaining stewardship of Erith Island (and the Kent Group) in perpetuity, as Bush Heritage intended. We will be urging the Government to make available the resources required to continue our level of care.

We are now negotiating the terms of relinquishment of the lease including a financial adjustment for the unexpired portion. Any such adjustment will be added to the endowment for management of our four other Tasmanian reserves.

Bush Heritage believes that, with National Park status being established, it is in the interests of the long-term management of the Kent Group, that the State assume control of all the islands. We will be sorry not to have this fine reserve under our care and thank all the people involved with the island who have supported our work there.

PHOTO: JOSS BENTLEY



