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## Ethabuka – through the lens

**Bush Heritage ecologist Murray Haseler and photographer Wayne Lawler spent ten days at Ethabuka in late September assessing future management issues and taking photographs**

While rain in the desert is always reason for celebration, the next rain that falls on Ethabuka should, by any reckoning, cause a riot.

Many years of cattle grazing, a long, dry spell and fires ignited by electrical storms have left their marks on the landscape, but before long Ethabuka will have its first wet season without cattle in over

a century. The landscape and its wildlife will respond with exuberance.

For ten days in late September, photographer Wayne Lawler and I traversed hundreds of kilometres of Ethabuka, recording on film and on paper the property as it is now. We moved camp each day to allow Wayne to capture the dawn and dusk light and the patterns of sun and cloud across a variety of landscapes.

Wayne's tasks were to record Ethabuka's plants, animals and landscapes, and to provide a visual record of the property as its era of pastoralism comes to an end.

Despite his astonishing energy and devotion to the task, ten days and one season were

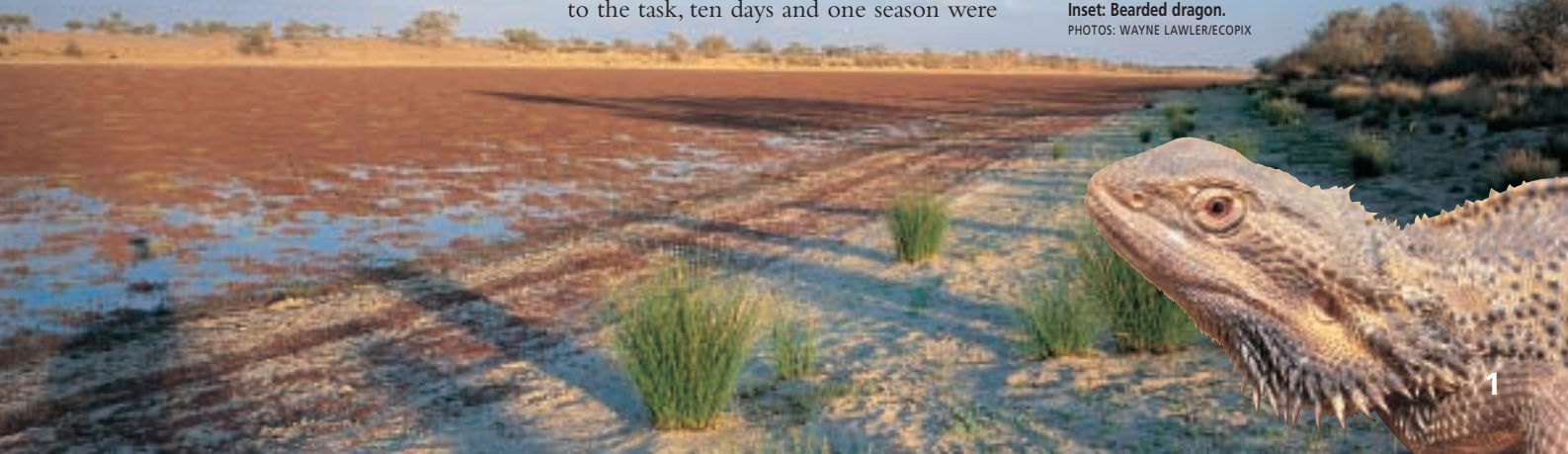
insufficient to capture adequately such a large and diverse place. Wayne chased that perfect combination of light and subject across the landscape, interrupted only by chance opportunities to catch images of animals from the minute to the majestic.

My task was more pragmatic. I photographed and documented infrastructure and erosion, and took 'before' photos in as many locations and vegetation types as I could. I documented the wildlife wherever we went as a start to the management and monitoring tasks ahead. I also caught animals for Wayne to photograph, both cursing and praising the protective, prickly spinifex.

**Above:** Dune crest overlooking *Acacia* shrubland.

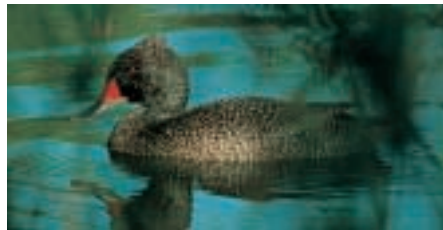
**Below:** Morning sun on the sandy beach of Pulchra Waterhole.

**Inset:** Bearded dragon.  
PHOTOS: WAYNE LAWLER/ECOPIX





Despite its long pastoral history, it is with good reason that Ethabuka retains its claim to fame as a property that supports a great diversity of furtive reptiles and small mammals. While the spinifex hides these species from cats, foxes and photographers, their abundance is evident from the myriad tracks in the red sand. Ethabuka's waterholes are also alive with waterbirds and waders. We saw flocks of threatened freckled duck and even a red-necked phalarope, which is rarely seen in Queensland and should have been off breeding in the Arctic at that time of year.



It was reassuring to see evidence, at many locations throughout the reserve, of the Sydney University small-mammal research team. With ten years' research having been carried out at multiple sites on the property, Ethabuka may yet become our best-understood reserve as far as the fauna is concerned. Sharing information with the research team, as it continues its work, will be exciting and rewarding.

I look forward to showing the 'before' photos to supporters when they are able to visit Ethabuka and see for themselves the abundance and splendour of the 'after' environment.

*Murray Haseler, September 2003*

**Clockwise from above: Freckled duck.**  
PHOTO: GRAEME CHAPMAN/COURTESY BIRDS AUSTRALIA  
**Ningai. Dawn over a stunted old coolibah.**  
**Milfoil in Pulchera Waterhole. Aboriginal grinding tools beside the Pulchera Waterhole. Knob-tailed gecko. Snake 'tracks' in the sand.** PHOTOS: WAYNE LAWLER/ECOPIX

**ETHABUKA**, because of its size (2140 sq km) and complexity, has many characters. Extending for 80 km across its diagonal (a distance equivalent to that from Melbourne to Torquay, Hornsby to Wollongong, or Hobart to Lake Pedder) it is a monumental conservation area that defies a simple description. It can have you revelling in the splendour of a panoramic dune-top vista in the morning and covering in the shelter of a gidyea tree by mid-afternoon as superheated dust swirls around you.

Ethabuka is part of the desert world, yet encompasses Channel Country wetlands of national significance. Flocks of duck rise from Pulchera Waterhole and wheel over an intricate landscape of swamps, channels, wooded floodplains and expansive ephemeral lakes, all part of the Mulligan River system. These flooded areas are interspersed with sand dunes of glaring white and blazing red.



A rocky range of classic desert mesas forms a spectacular boundary between these wetlands and the vast dune fields of spinifex ridges and woodland swales that march in parallel columns away to the west and the Northern Territory border. Even here is the miracle of a shady riverbed lined with coolibahs, which runs its course among the dunes.

This is the Simpson Desert, yet Ethabuka is most 'un-desert-like' in the diversity



and abundance of its wildlife. By day, reptiles darted across the track in front of us and birds sang and wheeled above. We encountered a flock of fifty rainbow bee-eaters. At night, in one short spotlighting foray, we counted six knob-tailed geckos, a small marsupial called a 'ningai', and several skinks and other geckos. The camp lantern attracted more weird and wonderful insects in one evening than an entomologist could study in a lifetime. Ethabuka is brim full of wildlife, including rare and threatened species.

This hub of biodiversity is a meeting place of arid-zone ecosystems. Each habitat, and its specific flora and fauna, interacts with each of the others through flood and drought, plant germination, flowering and decay, and animal migration, breeding and dispersal. Such ecological complexity in an arid climate functions best when grazing pressure is minimised, and fire managed.

My lasting impressions of Ethabuka, having visited prior to its protection, are of the floral gardens of a drying lake-bed pugged by cattle, and a dustbowl of drifting sand. These are poignant images of an injured beauty in need of rescue. We can help nature to restore Ethabuka's grandeur.

*Wayne Lawler, September 2003*

**Clockwise from top: Brolga. Coloured rocks in a dry drainage line. Mesas on the escarpment. Carpet of flowering herbs. Field River. Murray cooling off. Encountering a thorny devil.**

PHOTOS: WAYNE LAWLER/EKOPIX





Fortunately, in such cases, ‘total-exclusion fencing’ is generally not required (except when dealing with rabbits) and fences can usually be designed to allow native fauna relatively free movement.

Pre-existing fences have their uses, too. The old fences at Carnarvon, built to keep cattle in the native bluegrass pastures, are now protecting these threatened habitats from the feral horses outside the fence. Rather than removing these fences as originally planned, Bush Heritage is repairing and strengthening them to ensure the continued protection of these grasslands.

## Fencing in and out

**Stuart Cowell, Leigh Whisson, Murray Haseler and Kate Fitzherbert report on the strategic use of fencing in feral-animal control**

In Bush Heritage reserves, as in many protected areas, controlling introduced or feral animals is an important activity. Which species cause the greater problem, and which management strategies are used, depend on the conservation values of each area, its regional location and the surrounding land uses. For example, at the Charles Darwin Reserve (WA) goats and foxes will require ongoing control; at Carnarvon Station Reserve (Qld) pigs and horses are the main problem; at Tarcutta Hills Reserve (NSW) deer are of concern; and at the new Ethabuka Reserve (Qld) the eradication of foxes and camels is the highest priority. Cats are an issue everywhere.

A multi-pronged approach to control these species is usually the most effective. Fencing is one tool that can be used to great effect, but it is not without its problems.

### EXCLUDING HERBIVORES

Protecting habitats by using fencing to exclude herbivores such as pigs, horses, goats, cattle, sheep, deer and rabbits is a useful and cost-effective strategy, particularly in the case of small, sensitive areas such as bodies of water or creek-line vegetation.

The effectiveness of this strategy is evident at many of the springs at Carnarvon Station Reserve (Qld). Over the past two years, volunteer rangers have been fencing these unique and important habitats. Where there had been formless, muddy wallows, now clear water, healthy fringing vegetation and aquatic life have returned. Fig Tree Spring has been the latest to be protected in this way.

### EXCLUDING PREDATORS

Fencing to exclude predators such as foxes and cats is valuable for protecting highly threatened animal species. However, in comparison with other types of fencing it can be extremely expensive to construct (about \$10 000 per kilometre) and, once in place, requires a higher level of maintenance.

This type of fencing also comes with inherent problems, most of which result from enclosing populations of native animals. The problems occur even when the area enclosed is as large as hundreds or even thousands of hectares. A fence that will exclude a cat or a fox will also exclude any non-flying native species. Thus total-exclusion fencing prevents natural migration and the seasonal dispersal of young animals.

The inability of animals to migrate into and out of a fenced area means inbreeding can become a problem, so enclosures of



this type must be carefully and actively managed. Excess animals must be regularly released and, over time, new animals introduced so that genetic variability in the population is maintained.

### PROVIDING HABITAT

In a healthy environment, a healthy population can support a certain level of grazing or predation whether by introduced or native species. By ensuring that there is sheltering low vegetation, especially around critical areas like drinking sites, we can help to provide a healthy environment for those native species most vulnerable to foxes and cats. At Carnarvon Station and Ethabuka reserves in particular, controlling introduced herbivores, which consume and trample this vegetation, will help to re-establish the protective ground cover and keep small mammals safe from predators.

Fences, used strategically, can enhance any program of feral-animal control. They can help to protect specific ecosystems from further degradation by feral animals, and enable natural recovery to occur. They can also protect rare species from predators, at least until other control measures begin to have an impact.

Opposite, clockwise from top: Heavy grazing by feral horses stops at the fence at Carnarvon Station Reserve. The old Carnarvon fence allows the passage of native animals. Volunteer rangers Margaret and Peter Calder fencing Carnarvon springs with Wayne Lawler.

This page from top: The majestic fig tree at Fig Tree Spring, Carnarvon, recently protected by fences. Fencing effectively protects precious spring ecosystems. Fences like this one at Ethabuka, Qld, are better removed. Emus can nest undisturbed by horses in the fenced bluegrass downs at Carnarvon.

PHOTOS: WAYNE LAWLER/ECOPIX



## Visiting the reserves

With exciting new properties being purchased, Bush Heritage is creating more opportunities for supporters to visit the reserves. You can experience for yourself the wonderful diversity of the landscapes and ecosystems that you have helped to protect.

Wherever we can we provide marked walking tracks and opportunities for you to camp so that you can enjoy the reserves in your own time. At Carnarvon Station Reserve (Qld) you can spend up to a week camping and exploring.

Fantastic new opportunities are on the

way. The Charles Darwin Reserve should be available to campers for the 2004 wildflower season, while the new Ethabuka Reserve will open in 2005. At all reserves we ask that you 'leave only footprints and take only photos'.

Visiting some reserves is not possible for a variety of reasons. For example, access to Friendly Beaches Reserve in Tasmania is limited due to the presence of the plant pathogen *Phytophthora cinnamomii*.

Karen Harrland, in the Hobart office, is happy to answer your enquiries and take bookings for the reserves.

Please phone 1800 677 101 or email to [kharrland@bushheritage.asn.au](mailto:kharrland@bushheritage.asn.au)

## Volunteers needed

Volunteers! We are now taking bookings for our volunteer programs in 2004. Volunteer rangers are an essential part of the reserve management teams on our large reserves. For Carnarvon Station and Charles Darwin reserves we need volunteer rangers with a fortnight or more to spare. On other reserves volunteers are required to assist with fencing, weeding, monitoring and surveys.

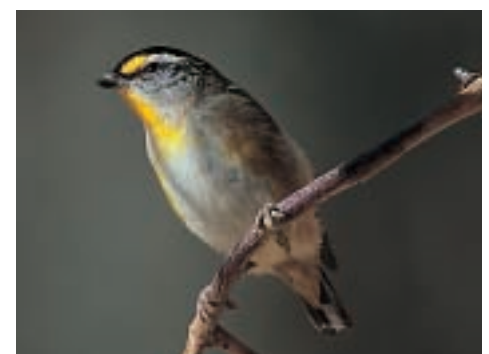
If you would like to get involved with Bush Heritage reserve management please contact [volunteers@bushheritage.asn.au](mailto:volunteers@bushheritage.asn.au) or speak to Nathan Males on 1800 677 101.

## Annual report

The Australian Bush Heritage Fund annual report for 2002-2003 is now available. It will soon be up on the Bush Heritage website at [www.bushheritage.org/about/annual\\_report\\_2002\\_3/index.html](http://www.bushheritage.org/about/annual_report_2002_3/index.html) To receive a printed copy please contact Janine Derks at the national office on 1800 677 101.

Reserve	State	Camping available	Unaccompanied access	Field trips for 2004
Liffey River	Tas	X	✓	✓
South Esk Pine	Tas	X	✓	X
Friendly Beaches	Tas	X	Restricted to lagoon area	X
Coalmine Creek	Tas	X	X	X
Drys Bluff	Tas	X	X	X
Carnarvon Station	Qld	Booking required	Booking required	✓
Currumbin Valley	Qld	X	✓	X
Ethabuka	Qld	Planned for 2005	Planned for 2005	X
Fan Palm	Qld	X	✓	X
Goonderoo	Qld	X	X	X
Brogo	NSW	X	✓	March 14
Burrin Burrin	NSW	X	X	April 18
Tarcutta Hills	NSW	X	X	April 24-25
Charles Darwin	WA	Planned for mid-2004. Booking required	Planned for mid-2004	✓
Chereninup Creek	WA	X	✓	✓
Kojonup	WA	X	✓	X

Clockwise from below: Spotted pardalote at Tarcutta Hills, NSW. PHOTO: WAYNE LAWLER/ECOPIX Wildflowers regenerating after fire at Charles Darwin Reserve. PHOTO: KATE FITZHERBERT Old zamia palm at Carnarvon Station Reserve, Qld. PHOTO: WAYNE LAWLER/ECOPIX



## From the CEO

The Australian bush in all its forms inspires me to strive for its protection, as I know it inspires you. Each Bush Heritage reserve, regardless of size or aesthetic appeal, shows what we can collectively achieve for the long-term protection of threatened Australian landscapes and species.

In recent months I have promoted our work to audiences across the length and breadth of Australia and North America. I have received assistance from many people strongly committed to our work and used many compelling arguments including those of the threats faced by our natural environment. With beautiful images of the land that we are buying and Bush Heritage's proven record of protecting intact landscapes, it made a powerful story. The fact that land in

Australia can be purchased for less than US\$2 per acre reinforced the case.

Please take the time to look at our annual report for 2002-2003, which will soon be up on the web at [www.bushheritage.org/about/annual\\_report\\_2002\\_3/index.html](http://www.bushheritage.org/about/annual_report_2002_3/index.html) or can be mailed to you in print if you prefer. Bush Heritage has again demonstrated responsible financial management and land stewardship.

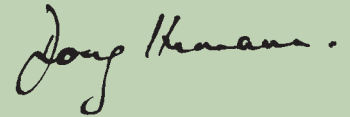
The annual report, and an accompanying document providing background information about Bush Heritage, will inform any interested friends and associates who may wish to support our work. These documents may also encourage you to increase your support if you are able to do so.

We at Bush Heritage are entering another new phase and embarking on our largest

fundraising campaign yet. Its purpose is to protect habitats from 'Outback to Ocean' and also to provide for the long-term management of the new properties.

At the same time we are ever broadening our network of support, from a local level to a broad-based national and even international level. More and more people are helping, including many who take on critical roles but give their time or expertise as volunteers. These are exciting times!

Thank you for your commitment to and support of Bush Heritage. On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff I wish you all a happy and safe summer period and look forward to another year full of promise and opportunity.



## The gift of a lifetime

### Bush Heritage bequest officer Anne Peedom spoke with a special supporter

Over the years Bush Heritage has been very fortunate to have received special gifts from supporters who have included the organisation in their wills. These bequests, whether modest or sizeable, have allowed us the extra margin of financial security that has enabled us to seize conservation opportunities as they have arisen. Importantly, these funds have also provided a foundation for our work well into the future.



One supporter who has notified us of his bequest to Bush Heritage is Mr Warwick

Evans from Manly in Sydney's northern suburbs. Warwick feels strongly about responsible stewardship of our landscape.

'We are tenants on this planet,' Warwick says, 'and we are not here to degrade it. By destroying the only thing we have, we destroy ourselves, our future, and the future of our kids.'

On a recent trip to Canada, Warwick visited formerly productive fishing grounds. 'Now they are fished out,' he says. 'We can't let that happen here. It's a job of education and funding. The good news is [the] increased awareness. I have noticed an increasing consciousness of husbandry within industry and farming practices in Australia.'

When asked about his interest in conservation, Warwick said, 'Basically, it's self-interest. The more we put into

the earth the more we benefit – every one of us. I've been given so much by this universe; the least I can do is to give something back.'

And why did he choose Bush Heritage to carry out his vision?

'Because you're professional,' said Warwick.

There is something very special about a gift that will help to purchase and protect Australia's majestic landscape well into the future. If you would like more information about how you can give such a gift in your will, please contact Anne Peedom on 02 9264 1566 or email [apeedom@bushheritage.asn.au](mailto:apeedom@bushheritage.asn.au)

From left to right: Morning dew glistens on a spider web at Burrin Burrin Reserve, NSW. A regent skipper butterfly at Currumbin Reserve, Qld. PHOTOS: WAYNE LAWLER/ECOPIX



### CHRISTMAS GIFT FOR THE BUSH

Give a meaningful gift to a family member or friend this Christmas by donating to Bush Heritage on their behalf. Please contact Julie Marshall by email [jmarshall@bushheritage.asn.au](mailto:jmarshall@bushheritage.asn.au) or by phone on 1800 677 101. We will send you a card and information about Bush Heritage, which you can present to the gift recipient.

## Getting involved

### INFORMATION GATHERINGS

You are warmly invited to join us at one of the following gatherings. Come and meet the staff and hear about Ethabuka Station and our activities around Australia. Light refreshments will be provided.

#### Sydney: March

Wednesday 10, 12.30 - 2.00 pm.

Thursday 11, 5.30 - 7.30 pm.

Venue for both events: Bush Heritage Sydney office, Level 2, 149 Castlereagh St, Sydney.

#### Brisbane: April

Thursday 1, Kedron Room, Brisbane City Hall, adjacent to King George Square between Adelaide and Ann Sts, Brisbane, 5.30 - 7.30 pm.

#### Canberra: April

Thursday 15, Public Meeting Room, Canberra Museum and Gallery, London Circuit, Civic, Canberra, 5.30 - 7.30 pm.

#### Melbourne: April

Wednesday 28, ANU House, Level 11,

52 Collins St, Melbourne, 5:30 - 7:30 pm.

Thursday 29, venue to be advised, 12:30 - 2:00 pm.

### FIELD DAYS 2004

Come on a guided visit to some of our reserves. You will hear about the management of these special areas, and experience for yourself their particular beauty. Places are limited so please register your interest soon.

**March:** Brogo River Reserve day trip, Sunday 14.

**April:** Burrin Burrin Reserve day trip, Sunday 18.

Tarcutta Hills Reserve weekend trip, Saturday 24 to Sunday 25.

For information on attending field trips, or to RSVP, please contact Kalina Koloff on 02 9264 3377, fax 02 9264 0811 or email [kkoloff@bushheritage.asn.au](mailto:kkoloff@bushheritage.asn.au)

## In memory

Mrs D Gilan donated in memory of her husband **John Gilan**, and Hank Van de Pol in memory of his wife **Luberna**.

Danielle Rankin remembered her late husband **Neil Rankin** who produced *The Birds of Wollli Creek*, and also her son **Peter Rankin** who died in a tragic accident off the coast of Tasmania. 'Both men are a sad loss to the preservation of wildlife in Australia'.

Professor Alan Sandison sent a gift to remember **Dr Betty Powell**, 'a much-admired and much-loved friend', and Greg Holding remembered **Professor Godfrey Tanner**, 'a decent man and human being loved by many people'.

Jennifer and Ed Deyzel remembered **Keith Morris**, 'a good friend who will be sadly missed'. J and M Moon sent a gift for **Ian Johnson** as 'a tribute to his life'. Mr P Goldsmith donated in memory of his cousin **Bill**, and Carl Martens in memory of **Rob Walton**, 'a good friend'.

Mrs Scott of Tarooma remembered **Len Johnson**, and Ken and Elizabeth Mellor, **Matheus Antonius Josephus le Duc**.

Shirley Pryor sent a gift as a birthday remembrance of her grandson **Noah Domen Skaberne-Pryor**.

**You can visit Bush Heritage reserves.  
See details Page 6.**

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## In celebration

Stuart and Leah Brooks sent a gift to celebrate the birthday of their daughter **Dr Roslyn Brooks**. 'Many happy returns, Roslyn!'

Shan Callow donated to celebrate the 21st birthday of **Philippa Davenport**. 'Congratulations, Philippa!'

## Thanks

Our sincere thanks to office volunteers **Sue Wright, Deb Calder, Maxine Bowerman** and **Alice Robertson** who have recently donated many hours to assist the Bush Heritage fundraising department.

## New staff

Janine Derks has joined Bush Heritage as Fundraising Assistant after working as a volunteer. Her previous work has been in hospitality and retail.



Karen Harland is Bush Heritage's new Visitor Information Officer. She has a degree in Environmental Management and, for the past three years, has coordinated and led groups doing practical conservation work, including work on Bush Heritage reserves.



buying back  
the bush

Return to: **Australian Bush Heritage Fund, Reply Paid 101, Hobart TAS 7001**

Freecall: 1800 677 101 Fax: 03 6223 2680 Email: [info@bushheritage.asn.au](mailto:info@bushheritage.asn.au) Website: [www.bushheritage.org](http://www.bushheritage.org)

Office address: 2 Kelly Street Battery Point TAS 7004 Phone: 03 6223 2670

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### I wish to join the Friends of the Bush and give a tax-deductible monthly donation.

Please deduct monthly donations of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ from the credit card below until further notice

Please deduct monthly donations of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ from my bank account by Direct Debit. (ABHF will forward an authority form)

### I would rather give a single, tax-deductible donation of:

\$50

\$100

\$360

\$500

Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I am paying by:  Cheque/Money Order  Bankcard  Mastercard  Visa  Diners Club  American Express

Card number: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry date: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Card holder's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Card holder's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

I have pledged \$30 or more per month or enclosed a gift of \$360 or more. Please put my name on the commemorative plaque at the new Ethabuka Reserve.

Name (Please print) Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (h) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (w) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

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