



## In this issue

Hunter Island  
Carnarvon three years on  
Memorandum of understanding  
Liffey interpretive walk

## From Outback to ocean – a new island reserve

Bush Heritage Conservation Programs Manager **Stuart Cowell** reveals the newest Bush Heritage reserve

*With your help, Bush Heritage has just completed the purchase of Ethabuka Station in Australia's Outback, protecting 214 000-ha of vital small-mammal habitat, arid-zone wetlands, grasslands and woodlands. Now, nearly 2000 km to the south, we have contracted to purchase the grazing lease on Hunter Island in Bass Strait, a 7300-ha jewel safeguarding threatened vegetation communities and bird and plant species at risk.*

Flying along the coastline of Hunter Island for the first time, I could hardly believe that we might be allowed the opportunity to protect this spectacular place for conservation. Its breathtaking scenery of rocky coves and white sandy beaches, wetlands, woodlands and heath surrounded by the surging power of the southern ocean, and its importance for conservation, made it seem like a jewel of inestimable value.



Rocks and sand patterns on the beach at Hunter Island.

Orange-bellied parrot. PHOTO: DAVE WATTS



## LOCATION AND HISTORY

Hunter Island, the largest island in the Hunter Group, lies six kilometres off the north-west tip of Tasmania. The island is 7330 ha in size, approximately 25 km long, and 6.5 km wide at its widest point. Three Hummock Island, another island in the group, is already managed for conservation.

The highest point of the island lies at 90 m above sea level, from where low undulating hills roll away to the coast. The native vegetation is largely intact with only 860 ha cleared for grazing and residential use. Heathlands and coastal scrub make up nearly 80 per cent of the native vegetation, with swamp forests, buttongrass moorlands, native grasslands, woodlands, muttonbird colonies, saltmarshes and lichenfields providing a wide range of habitats.

Hunter Island shows evidence of 23 000 years of continuous occupation by Aboriginal people and has been inhabited by non-Aboriginal people for approximately 170 years. Many different owners have grazed cattle on the island lease since 1853.

## WILDLIFE

As can often be the case, despite its history of occupation, clearing and grazing, Hunter Island still retains its significance for conservation. The island is important for



six threatened bird species, including the orange-bellied parrot, swift parrot, white-bellied sea eagle, shy albatross, Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle and fairy prion.

The orange-bellied parrot is nationally endangered with only 200 mature individuals remaining. The birds use Hunter Island as a resting and feeding place each year on passage to King Island and the Victorian and South Australian coasts. However, in recent years there has been significant damage to the island's saltmarsh and coastal dune communities on which the parrots depend.

Erosion and inappropriate burning have allowed the spread of marram grass, *Ammophila arenaria*, and sea spurge, *Euphorbia paralias*, both of which aggressively swamp many of the native plants favoured by the parrots. Vegetation management, through fire and revegetation, will help to restore the quality of these habitats for this endangered species.

White-bellied sea eagles, recently listed as vulnerable in Tasmania, nest on Hunter Island in numbers greater than anywhere else in the state.

Now, over a year later, following a lot of hard work, even more determination and a bit of good fortune, our hopes for Hunter Island have nearly become a reality.

There is something about an island that touches us all at a fundamental level. Perhaps it is the isolation, perhaps the opportunity to feel apart from the rest of the world, that attracts us. Maybe it is an understanding of the significant role that islands play as arks for endangered species or the importance of islands in the evolution of varied, even bizarre, forms of life.

Hunter Island is all of these things, and with your generous support this Bass Strait jewel will soon be protected for all Australians.



## VEGETATION

Hunter Island supports six ecological communities that are of priority for conservation at state level: *Eucalyptus viminalis* coastal forest, muttonbird colony, *Leptospermum/Melaleuca* swamp forest, *Melaleuca ericifolia* forest, dune vegetation and shrubby coastal heath.

There are eight plant species of conservation significance, including one of the most spectacular of the greenhood orchids, the endangered leafy greenhood, *Pterostylis cucullata*. This amazing, ancient plant was thought to be lost to science until rediscovered on Hunter Island in about 1970. The leafy greenhood grows only along the very old (Holocene) sand dunes that transverse certain sections of the island, unfortunately the same areas where cattle grazing has been concentrated.

## THREATS

Over the past few years some of the island's values have been degraded by cattle, inadequate fire management, poor weed control and lack of infrastructure maintenance. The destructive soil fungus *Phytophthora* has also been recorded on the island. Our active management of these threats should result in immediate improvement and with time it is likely that the threats can be mostly eliminated. On the positive side, rats and mice appear to be absent.

## THE FUTURE

The skills learnt in the past from managing both Erith and Deal islands on the eastern side of Bass Strait will be invaluable in the effective management of Hunter Island. One key difference will be that Hunter Island will have a full-time reserve manager who will be supported by volunteers assisting through our Conservation Partners



program. We hope to have volunteers working on the island by late 2004. The lease terms for Hunter Island are for ten years, like those on all Bass Strait islands. The current lease expires in 2005. Bush Heritage is pressing the Tasmanian Government to guarantee the leases for at least the next twenty-year period.

Now we need your help to ensure that we can secure this wild, beautiful island and manage it to preserve its wildlife and unique ecosystems. Please send your donation today and help us to protect this jewel in the south.

Facing page clockwise from top: Surging seas break on the rocky coast. Cape Barren geese. White-bellied sea eagle. BIRD PHOTOS: DAVE WATTS *Eucalyptus viminalis* woodland is a threatened community.

This page clockwise from top: View over the spectacular coast and orange lichen-encrusted rocks. Endangered leafy greenhood orchid. Dense coastal vegetation.





## Carnarvon Station Reserve three years on

**Bush Heritage Carnarvon Station Reserve Manager Mick Blackman and Conservation Programs Manager Stuart Cowell reflect on the past three years' work at Carnarvon**

Bush Heritage has owned Carnarvon Station for nearly three years. The property's diverse and threatened habitats, the native grasslands, vine thickets, brigalow and yellow jacket woodlands, and its rocky escarpments and stunning angophora and sheoak forests, made it a fine prize and one that Bush Heritage was thrilled to get. The importance of protecting this 58 000-ha property was, and remains, graphically illustrated by any survey of the surrounding districts, which are cleared and degraded.

Carnarvon has seen a dramatic change in management style in the past three years and, like a chameleon, is changing its colours and patterns in response to its changing environment. The changes can be seen, not only in a landscape that is coming to life, but also in the repair of buildings, roads, fences and water points, and in the level of activity and enthusiasm of its managers, volunteers and staff.

Once-dusty paddocks have burst forth as hypnotic seas of golden bluegrass, now outstanding examples of this nationally threatened ecosystem. These grasslands are inviting back the smaller marsupials and other ground-dwelling animals that have been absent for many years.

Five of the artesian springs, once mired and 'abandoned' after the wallowing of wild pigs, are recovering their beauty and usefulness as protective fences keep



out feral animals. The native animals can still get in to drink at the now sparkling water (thanks to a little ingenuity from the volunteers).

Other less obvious changes attest to the countless hours of hard work, generosity, and pride of our workers. Tons of rubbish has gone. The bores and pumps now fire





up first time. Bore water flows when needed for fire control and fills the recently repaired troughs in the three trapping yards. These yards, now operational again, catch rogue cattle that break in for the abundant grass.

The 440 km of vehicle tracks, fence lines and firebreaks are regularly maintained;



water flows clear (and with satisfying reliability) to the house complex through fifteen kilometres of recently laid polypipe.

We have doubled the water-storage capacity and installed grey-water recycling to reduce our water use. The 'barracks' have been moved to a better location and hooked up to the power supply, and now provide a clean and inviting accommodation complex for the growing number of volunteers. Our volunteers work with proper safety equipment, training and support.

These changes have made the property work far more efficiently and allowed us get on with the job of nature conservation.

### ONGOING CONSERVATION WORK

Fire work is seasonal. Controlled burns have been set to protect the house complex and patch burn around fire-sensitive communities like vine scrubs. Different burning techniques and burn intervals are being trialled to achieve the desired conservation results. Three wild fires on the property have kept us busy, as have others off the reserve that sent us to the assistance of our neighbours. The big fire last year, alight for over a month, burnt in patches over a total area of about

20 000 ha but without major ecological damage. In fact it was beneficial in revitalising habitat.

The weeds, buffel and Johnson grass, mimosa bush, Mexican poppy and fierce thorn apple have been dug or sprayed, and eradication will continue while any remain. Two 'wash-down' facilities now reduce the risk of seeds being dispersed from vehicles coming on to the reserve.

The six pig traps are doing their work. Hundreds of pigs have been caught. We are awaiting the results of gut analysis on 83 specimens (one of them a 92-kg boar) to examine their diet. One of the most spectacular catches has been a 5.2-kg cat. Twelve kilometres of fencing has been strengthened to help deter the wild horses, and new, smarter strategies for controlling feral animals are being devised.

**Facing page clockwise from left: Yellow jacket Eucalyptus similis.** PHOTO: WAYNE LAWLER/ECOPIX **Controlled burn around the house complex.** Mick Blackman at the burn. PHOTO: STUART COWELL **Grassland denuded by grazing.** PHOTO: WAYNE LAWLER/ECOPIX

**This page clockwise from top: Wallaroo.** PHOTO: WAYNE LAWLER/ECOPIX **Laying the water pipe. Connecting the water storage tank.** Mick Blackman and Peter Pavlov (right) fixing the leaks. PHOTOS: CLARE BLACKMAN **Waving seas of bluegrass have replaced the bare paddocks.** PHOTO: WAYNE LAWLER/ECOPIX





Volunteers arrive in growing numbers, working long hours often in persistent heat or cold to help care for the reserve. Collectively, they put in thousands of hours on plant and animal surveys, building fences, repairing and painting the buildings, maintaining vehicles and weeding. (It has almost become a rite of passage for Carnarvon Station Reserve volunteers to be involved in weed control.) They will continue to work on excluding feral animals from many of the remaining springs.

Since the camping area opened in late 2002 twelve groups of campers, as well as many other visitors, have marvelled at the spectacular scenery and watched the daily activities of the wildlife at Carnarvon. They have been guided by new signs, maps and an information booklet.

**Above: Grading the tracks at Carnarvon.** PHOTO: MICK BLACKMAN  
**Below: The White Stallion, Carnarvon Station Reserve, Qld.** PHOTO: WAYNE LAWLER/ECOPIX



## MONITORING PROGRESS

Photo reference points, which have been established at key sites around the reserve, show us whether our management strategies are working. Regular plant and animal surveys also help us to understand how our actions are affecting the wildlife. Our management planning is flexible and allows us to change our strategies in response to the feedback we get from the reserve.

The future for Carnarvon is bright. Planning, innovation and teamwork will see many more positive changes for conservation of the threatened ecosystems and wildlife. We have now passed the stage of 'quick fixes' and have moved on to plan and implement longer-term projects that will bring results within decades rather than years. Conservation management of land is forever, and with your help we will keep learning and working, knowing that the splendour of Carnarvon will now be there for all time.

## Volunteer rangers needed

Have you ever thought of working on one of Bush Heritage's finest reserves and enjoying the scenery? Volunteer rangers are now needed for Charles Darwin Reserve, WA (from May 2004), Tarcutta Hills Reserve, NSW (from June 2004), and Carnarvon Station Reserve, Qld (in 2005). Work to be done at Charles Darwin Reserve includes site cleaning, building repairs, goat trapping and weed control.

Please contact Joelle Medcalf or Nathan Males on 03 6223 2670 or email [volunteers@bushheritage.asn.au](mailto:volunteers@bushheritage.asn.au)

## Landmark agreement

Bush Heritage and the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) signed a landmark memorandum of understanding (MOU) on 2 December 2003 at Murrayfield, an ILC property on Bruny Island in southern Tasmania.

The memorandum establishes a framework for Bush Heritage and the ILC to work together to conserve and enhance the natural environment and indigenous sites of significance on properties owned by either organisation. Our work together will begin with discussions on the protection of the Aboriginal cultural heritage at the Charles Darwin Reserve, WA, and on improving conservation management on some ILC properties.

As one of the largest purchasers of properties for conservation in Australia, Bush Heritage has developed considerable expertise in the assessment and management of land with conservation values. The ILC is one of Australia's largest purchasers of land and clearly has substantial expertise in working with indigenous communities on a wide range of land management and heritage issues. The MOU brings the skills of both organisations together and will benefit the management of ILC and Bush Heritage properties throughout Australia.

At the signing, ILC Chairperson Ms McPherson said that '...achieving benefits for indigenous Australians through land ownership is not always possible without the active participation of other stakeholders. We believe this partnership is a positive outcome which will be beneficial to indigenous people and we look forward to a long and positive working relationship with Bush Heritage.'

*Note: See our web site for the full media release.*

**Below: ILC Chairperson Ms McPherson and Bush Heritage President Phillip Toyne sign the memorandum of understanding.** PHOTO: STUART COWELL



## From the CEO

The year 2004 is off to a flying start. I am delighted to tell you that the purchase of our new Ethabuka Reserve in western Queensland, our largest reserve yet, has just been completed. It is thanks to you, our generous supporters, that another unique reserve has been created. Our next job is to begin the exciting process of bringing this 214 000-ha property under conservation management. We are well placed to deal with its remoteness and size. Your ongoing donations will help us to protect Ethabuka and all our reserves around Australia, and also enable us to purchase new properties as they become available.

Another exciting piece of news is our intended purchase of the grazing lease on Hunter Island featured in this newsletter. The transfer of the lease is yet to be finalised but is likely within days. The island has outstanding conservation values and is visually spectacular. It will be a wonderful destination for Tasmanian and Victorian visitors in particular. The volunteer ranger program should begin this year and will provide vital assistance to the reserve manager on the island.

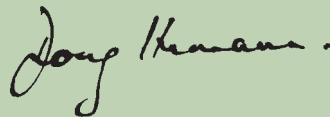
We have also recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC), one of the largest rural land purchasers in Australia.

We hope to begin a free exchange of information that will enhance the conservation management and protection of indigenous interests on both Bush Heritage and ILC properties.

The progress report on Carnarvon Station Reserve illustrates that we are actively protecting the land that you help us to buy. You can be confident that we will be good neighbours, control weeds and feral animals, promote sustainable visiting opportunities and manage fire, whether by reducing the risks of wild fire or using it as a tool to enhance habitats. The past summer has seen unplanned fires at two of the Liffey Valley reserves in Tasmania. Neither caused serious damage to either property or to the ecology.

The Liffey River Reserve interpretation trail is now open. I hope you, your family and friends can visit and experience what will be the first of many such trails on Bush Heritage reserves.

I thank you for your valuable support during 2003 and encourage you to continue your assistance in 2004. This will be another exciting year for us all as we further expand our conservation work.



## In memory

Griselda Hitchcock gave generously in memory of her parents **Barton and Stella Worthington**. Diane McQueen remembered her father **John McQueen**, and Chris Cummins gave for his parents **Anne and Frank Cummins**, 'both keen bushwalkers'. Nick Talbot donated in memory of his father **Norman Talbot**, 'who first got [him] interested in the environment'. A gift from Danielle Rankin was in memory of her husband **Neil Rankin** and also her son **Peter Rankin** who died in an accident in New Caledonia.

Brenda Blunden gave in memory of a dear friend **Sylvia Dawson**, 'a passionate and tireless worker for conservation and the environment'. Bev Robinson is giving monthly to honour **Bill Rigney** and **Heather Cameron**, 'two special people who touched the lives of many others'.

Dr Patsy Hallen remembered **Raymond Dudley**, Jenny Whyte, **Sue Whyte**, and Tony Allen, **Elsbeth M Allen**. Tom Sutton donated to remember **Patricia Anne Williams**, and Leonard and Ruth Johnson to remember **Jan and David Gartland** and **Jean Paton**. Rose Hanbury's gift was in memory of **Keith Kerferd**.

**Jean Stokes** was remembered by Daniel Connell, Gail Winkworth, Faye Alexander and Steve Morton, and also by Brenda Stace-Chat and Janet Hill. Mike J Fox remembered **Denise Leanne McKenzie**, 'a valued friend who, with her family, loved and actively protected the bush'. Patricia Wilkinson gave in memory of **John Stevenson**, 'a magnificent gardener'.

## In celebration

Benjamin Clark celebrated the birth of **Flyn Cole Graham**, first son for Kirsty and Mitch, 'another budding environmentalist on the way'.

Judith Ambler donated to celebrate the 70th birthday of **Paree Hartley**. 'Many happy returns!'

Many friends have celebrated the birthday of **Robert Pallin** with gifts to Bush Heritage.

Windswept vegetation on Hunter Island, Bass Strait.



# Getting involved

## INFORMATION GATHERINGS

Come and hear about our activities around Australia!

### Sydney: March

Wednesday 10, 12.30 - 2.00 pm.

Thursday 11, 5.30 - 7.00 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 - 7.00 pm.

### Canberra: April

Thursday 15, Public Meeting Room, Canberra Museum and Gallery, London Circuit, Civic, Canberra, 5.30 - 7:00 pm.

### Melbourne: April

Wednesday 28, ANU House, Level 11,

52 Collins St, Melbourne, 5:30 - 7:00 pm.

Thursday 29, Banks Room, Rydges Riverwalk Hotel, 649 Bridge Road, Richmond, 12.30 - 2.00 pm.

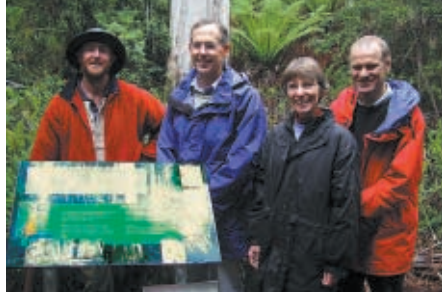
## FIELD DAYS 2004

Come on guided visits to some of our reserves and learn about these special areas. 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)



Bob Brown opening the Liffey River Reserve interpretive walk with Dr Judy Henderson (front), who generously donated the Coalmine Creek Reserve, track designer Paul Clarke (left) and Bush Heritage CEO Doug Humann

# Liffey Valley - new pathways

## Bush Heritage Reserve Visitation Officer Karen Harrland reports

On 21 November 2003 Dr Bob Brown launched the new Coalmine Creek Reserve, Tas, and opened the Liffey River Reserve interpretive walk. More than fifty people attended the launch and many walked the new track, guided by the interpretive signs designed by Joelle Medcalf. Paul Clarke, an experienced Tasmanian track worker, has used large boulders to make the creek crossing easy, and incorporated picturesque carved seats so that visitors can rest and enjoy the abundance of bird life.

This interpretive walk marks the beginning of an exciting new step for Bush Heritage in making its reserves more accessible to an increasing number of visitors. With time, interpretive walks will also be established at other reserves so that visitors can better appreciate both the conservation significance of each area and its management requirements.

For visitor information packages about Liffey River and other reserves please call Karen Harrland on 03 6223 2670.

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North face of Mt Everest. PHOTO: BRAD ATWAL

# See Nepal and Tibet!

World Expeditions is offering two great adventures exclusively to Bush Heritage supporters and at a sizeable discount. Bush Heritage will receive a generous donation for every participant.

## Trekking in Nepal

Departs 13 November 2004, returns 1 December. Nineteen days including a nine-day trek with stunning mountains, traditional villages and rhododendron forests, plus Kathmandu and a three-day wildlife safari with elephant-back excursions. Cost is \$3870\*, a saving of \$865. This includes \$700 to Bush Heritage.

## Tibet - the high road to Lhasa (non-trekking)

Departs 18 September 2004, returns 4 October. Including two days in Kathmandu, three days in Lhasa, then an eight-day road journey through the Tibetan Plateau and the peaks of the Himalaya. Visit the Potala Palace and the Rongphu Monastery at the north face of Mt Everest, sights you will never forget. Cost is \$5295\*, a saving of \$500. This includes \$600 for Bush Heritage.

For full details, enquiries and bookings contact World Expeditions, Melbourne. Telephone: 03 8631 3300 or [travel@worldexpeditions.com.au](mailto:travel@worldexpeditions.com.au).

\* Includes airfares and most meals. Air taxes, visa and insurance costs not included. Price assumes departure from Sydney or Melbourne.



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

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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 \_\_\_\_\_

8

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