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## Gondwana Link revisited

**Bush Heritage Conservation Programs Manager Stuart Cowell describes a crucial habitat area in the Fitzgerald to Stirling stage of Gondwana Link – hopefully, our next reserve**

Standing on top of a small, hidden breakaway, amidst the almost ludicrous plant diversity that is south-west Western Australia, I was able to look across 2000 hectares of bush and farmland and into the 4300-hectare Corackerup Nature Reserve beyond. We hope that this 2000-hectare area, a total of three properties, will make up our next reserve.

Beyond the Corackerup Nature Reserve lies the 870-hectare Chereninup Creek Reserve purchased by Bush Heritage in 2002. Chereninup Creek is our most botanically diverse property and was the first land acquired specifically as part of the Gondwana Link project. Altogether, these five properties bring together almost 30 kilometres of 'linked' bushland, and form the foundation for reconnecting and revegetating fragmented habitats in the state's south-west.

Gondwana Link is an ambitious and exciting partnership that brings together Bush Heritage and five other environmental organisations: the Fitzgerald Biosphere Group, Friends of the Fitzgerald, Greening Australia, the Malleefowl Preservation Group and the Wilderness Society. Together, our visionary aim is to repair some of the ecological damage inflicted upon one of the world's biodiversity hotspots. We aim to create a series of interlinked reserves that would join up the arc of habitats from the south-west's wet forests to the mallee and heath of the Stirling Range and Fitzgerald River national parks, and the dry woodlands beyond.

**Top: Looking west across the properties, a crucial 'link' for the Fitzgerald to Stirling stage of Gondwana Link.** PHOTO: STUART COWELL  
**Below: Western pygmy possum.** PHOTO: JIRI LOCHMAN/LOCHMAN TRANSPARENCIES





## ANCIENT LANDSCAPE

The landscape of this south-west region is shaped from granites of the ‘Yilgarn Block’, the oldest intact land surface on Earth. Closer to the south coast of Western Australia, there are quartzite rocks that contain fossils of the earliest known life on Earth. The properties that Bush Heritage hopes to acquire straddle what would have been an upper limit of the Eocene seas that covered large areas of the south coast when the Australian continent was finally breaking way from Antarctica.

Even after 40 million years my vantage point still holds a memory of those warm, shallow seas. Embedded in its soft rock are millions of minute silica spicules, which once formed the skeletons of

ancient sponges. Looking across the valley I can see the old shoreline, today glistening in the sun as water seeps down the steep granite slopes.

There are a number of landforms, including upland duplex soils, breakaway complexes, rocky slopes and hilltops, sandplains and creek systems. Parts of the area have been described by the National Trust of Western Australia as ‘extremely rocky and steep with areas yet to be explored by Europeans’. It is the ‘healthiest-looking’ and ‘least disturbed’ area of private bush likely to exist in the whole Fitzgerald to Stirling area, and is virtually trackless – as close to pre-European condition as anywhere in south-west Western Australia.

This rich and diverse landscape results from a combination of great geological

age, a long history of climate change and an intense and fine-scale mosaic of different soils, landforms and habitats. Consequently, we now have very diverse and complex habitat ‘patchworks’ supporting characteristic and varied plant and animal communities.

## VEGETATION

The area encompassed by the five properties has been identified as one of the most significant patches of bush in the region. The three properties now under consideration contain a significant number of vegetation communities including mallee, heath, *Eucalyptus* woodland, *Casuarina* woodland, *Melaleuca* along creeklines, jam acacia woodland, *Dryandra* heath, and chittick sandheath.



There are also a number of known notable plant species, including one categorised as ‘declared rare flora’ (the sandplain sun orchid *Thelymitra psammophila*) and one categorised as ‘Priority 2 flora’ (the Corackerup moort *Eucalyptus vesiculosa*). The area also represents a significant extension of the range of one ‘Priority 3 flora’ species, *Eucalyptus arborella*.

## WILDLIFE

The black-gloved wallaby (western brush wallaby) has been sighted a number of times on the properties, and the Tammar wallaby is almost certainly present on the proposed reserve, as there is a known population on an adjacent property. There are also populations of the vulnerable western whiplbird and malleefowl. The area is capable of supporting a range of animal species that are significant to the region, such as the chuditch (western quoll), red-tailed phascogale, honey possum, western pygmy possum and western brushtail possum.

As part of a much larger area, with good links to the Pallinup River and Beaufort Inlet, Greaves Road Reserve, Corackerup Reserve and Peniup Reserve, all of which are significant for their rare flora and fauna, this area of bushland is also likely to contain other rare flora and fauna.

Our previous visit here ended abruptly when we were driven away by torrential rain, an uncommon occurrence in the shadows of the Stirling Ranges. On this visit, although the wind was still blowing, the low winter sun joined me, proudly showing off the landscape and its varied inhabitants.

As it turned out, however, the rain was merely biding its time, eventually forcing me from my high point to shelter in a



deep-pooled granite gorge, a critical and overlooked habitat in this fragmented landscape. As the light was gradually wrung from the day, I crossed a final ridge of flowering banksias, dryandras and hakeas – a July treat – and looked back across this critical 2000-hectare link.

The area bounded by the three properties we hope to acquire is one of the four large and intact bush areas that form key ‘foundation stones’ for the Fitzgerald to Stirling stage of Gondwana Link. It is fundamental to achieving the ‘link’ in this area. Securing it will be a big achievement, not only for Bush Heritage, but also for Gondwana Link and all its partners. The main beneficiaries, though, will be the wildlife of the south-west.

Thanks to the Gondwana Link team, Keith Bradby and Amanda Keesing, for all their efforts in building this project and for helping to identify these properties. Thanks also to Keith for providing important assistance with this article.

**Facing page, clockwise from top:**  
**Siltstone formation.** PHOTO: STUART COWELL  
**Western whiplbird.** PHOTO: GRAEME CHAPMAN/COURTESY BIRDS AUSTRALIA  
**Bottom of mesa, looking towards the south.** PHOTO: STUART COWELL

**This page, clockwise from top left:**  
**Chuditch (female).** PHOTO: PETER MARSACK/LOCHMAN TRANSPARENCIES  
**Bushy yate *Eucalyptus lehmannii*.** PHOTO: STUART COWELL  
**Red-tailed phascogale.** PHOTO: JIRI LOCHMAN/LOCHMAN TRANSPARENCIES  
**Deeply incised creekline running through the heart of the properties.** Pincushion hakea *Hakea laurina*. PHOTOS: STUART COWELL  
**Black-gloved wallaby.** PHOTO: JIRI LOCHMAN/LOCHMAN TRANSPARENCIES





# Visiting Bush Heritage reserves

**Bush Heritage Conservation Partnerships Program Coordinator Nathan Males and Reserve Visitation Officer Karen Harrland bring us up to date on opportunities to visit the reserves**

## LIFFEY RIVER RESERVE

The new Liffey River Reserve walking track has guided visitors from all over Australia and overseas around this beautiful forest environment. Many have returned for a second visit. Since the track opened four months ago over 140 walkers have recorded their details in the Liffey Log Book located at the end of the track amongst the tall *Eucalyptus viminalis* forest. Feedback from visitors has included the following quotes:

*'Great that this little, rare white gum patch is safe. What a great walking track! Thanks all.'*  
Bob Brown, Liffey

*'A remarkable accomplishment in making forest accessible with low impact. Well done!'*  
James Norman, Melbourne

*'Enjoyed it so much, we did it again. Keep up the good work!'* Lent Trudy, Canada

One of the benefits of supporting Bush Heritage is that you can visit and camp on some of the amazing reserves that you have helped to protect. From the new Liffey River Reserve walking track in Tasmania to the camp site at Queensland's Carnarvon Station Reserve, we are committed to providing opportunities for you, our generous supporters, to explore the wonderful diversity of landscapes and ecosystems that are now protected in Bush Heritage reserves.

Listed below are the reserves that you can visit unaccompanied:

Reserve	State	Highlights	Camp site	Facilities
Liffey River	Tas	Rainforest, platypus, white goshawk	Parks & Wildlife provides free camping adjacent to the reserve	Boardwalk, interpretive signs
Friendly Beaches	Tas	Terrific undeveloped beach, waterbirds on coastal lagoon	Camp site in adjacent National Park	X
Carnarvon Station	Qld	Magnificent sweeping landscapes, grasslands, raptors	Booking required	Signed tracks, interpretive booklet, drop toilet
Currumbin Valley	Qld	Microphyll rainforest, wildlife encounters	X	Picnic area
Ethabuka	Qld	Desert ecosystems, waterbirds on Pulchera waterhole	Camping from mid-2005	To be developed
Fan Palm	Qld	Fan palm rainforest	X	X
Brogo River	NSW	Dry rainforests, forest, red gum woodlands	X	Walk marked with posts, accompanying notes available
Charles Darwin	WA	Old-growth eucalypt woodlands, stunning wildflowers in spring	Camping from April 2005	To be developed
Chereninup Creek	WA	Plant diversity	X	X
Kojonup	WA	Plant diversity, ephemeral wetlands	X	X



## CAMPING AT CARNARVON STATION RESERVE

Camping at Carnarvon Station Reserve, Qld, is a truly memorable experience. Over the past three years the diverse range of habitats has recovered and visitors can again enjoy large intact tracts of native grasslands, grassy woodlands and natural springs. The return of a range of birds of prey is a bonus for the birdwatchers.

The reserve is open to campers from Easter until the end of October and bookings are now being taken up to October 2005. A 4WD vehicle is essential for getting around the reserve and campers need to be entirely self-sufficient in terms of fuel, food and camping supplies.

Bookings are made for one party at a time for a period of up to one week, ensuring both minimal impact on the environment and a tranquil experience for campers. The camp site is as basic as it is beautiful. Visitors will find a fireplace, pit toilet and water tank on site.

Venturing out from the camp site, there is a lot to see and explore on the reserve, including vegetation regeneration sites, stunning panoramic views, ancient Aboriginal sites and the possibility of chance encounters with the wildlife.

## OTHER RESERVES

The Charles Darwin Reserve, WA, should be open to campers in April 2005, and Ethabuka Reserve, Qld, in mid-2005. At all reserves we ask that you 'leave only footprints and take only photos'.

To book for a camping trip, plan an unguided visit or have any queries answered please contact Karen Harrland on 1800 677 101 or email [kharrland@bushheritage.asn.au](mailto:kharrland@bushheritage.asn.au)



Facing page, clockwise from top: Map showing Bush Heritage reserves that you can visit unaccompanied.

At Carnarvon Station Reserve, volunteer rangers Peter and Margaret Calder unwind after erecting a feral-animal-control fence around Orange Tree Spring. PHOTO: WAYNE LAWLER/ECOPIX

New boardwalk, Liffey River Reserve. PHOTO: NATHAN MALES  
Nathan Males (left) and track worker Paul Clarke venture over the Liffey River crossing. PHOTO: STUART COWELL

This page, clockwise from top: Forest red gum *Eucalyptus tereticornis* on sandstone, one of the diverse habitat types on Carnarvon Station Reserve.

Volunteer rangers Lyla and John Hansen conduct a bird survey at Carnarvon Station Reserve.

Riparian vegetation of river oak *Casuarina cunninghamiana*, apple box *Angophora floribunda* and mat rush *Lomandra* sp. beside Channin Creek, Carnarvon Station Reserve.

As volunteer rangers at Carnarvon Station Reserve, the Kerwick family (from left: Erica, Carmel, Renata and Tom) install a road sign as part of the network of self-drive interpretive tours being set up around the reserve.

Volunteer ranger Carmel Kerwick conducts a fauna survey in creekside vegetation, Carnarvon Station Reserve.

Fruit of female zamia palm *Macrozamia moorei*, Carnarvon Station Reserve. PHOTOS: WAYNE LAWLER/ECOPIX



# Funding the future

**Bush Heritage Bequest Officer**  
**Anne Peedom** spoke with a special supporter

With thoughtful foresight, quite a few of our supporters have included bequests to Bush Heritage in their wills. Their hopes and concerns for the future



of Australia's threatened areas of environmental significance are reflected in these wonderful gifts.

As **Marion Fields**, of Sandringham, Victoria, explained:

'I know my bequest will be helpful to the work of Bush Heritage in saving some of Australia's wild places, and the mammals and birds that live there. I've camped and walked in much of Australia and latterly I have seen what the years have destroyed. I would like to help the work of Bush Heritage in saving some treasured parts of our country.'

You too may like to consider a gift to Bush Heritage in your will. It is a way to continue to help Australia's unique flora and fauna beyond your lifetime.

For a copy of our bequest brochure, which includes a recommended wording, ring Anne on (02) 9264 1566 or email [apedom@bushheritage.asn.au](mailto:apedom@bushheritage.asn.au)



## New staff

**Joelle Metcalf** has recently joined Bush Heritage as the Conservation Partnerships Officer after volunteering as the Volunteer Ranger Coordinator.

Joelle has previous experience in hospitality after partially completing a fine arts degree. Her artistic abilities came to the fore when she helped to design the interpretive signs at the Bush Heritage Liffey River Reserve.

## Hunter Island update

As reported in the previous newsletter (Winter 2004), the Tasmanian Government has not yet allowed the transfer of the Hunter Island lease to Bush Heritage.

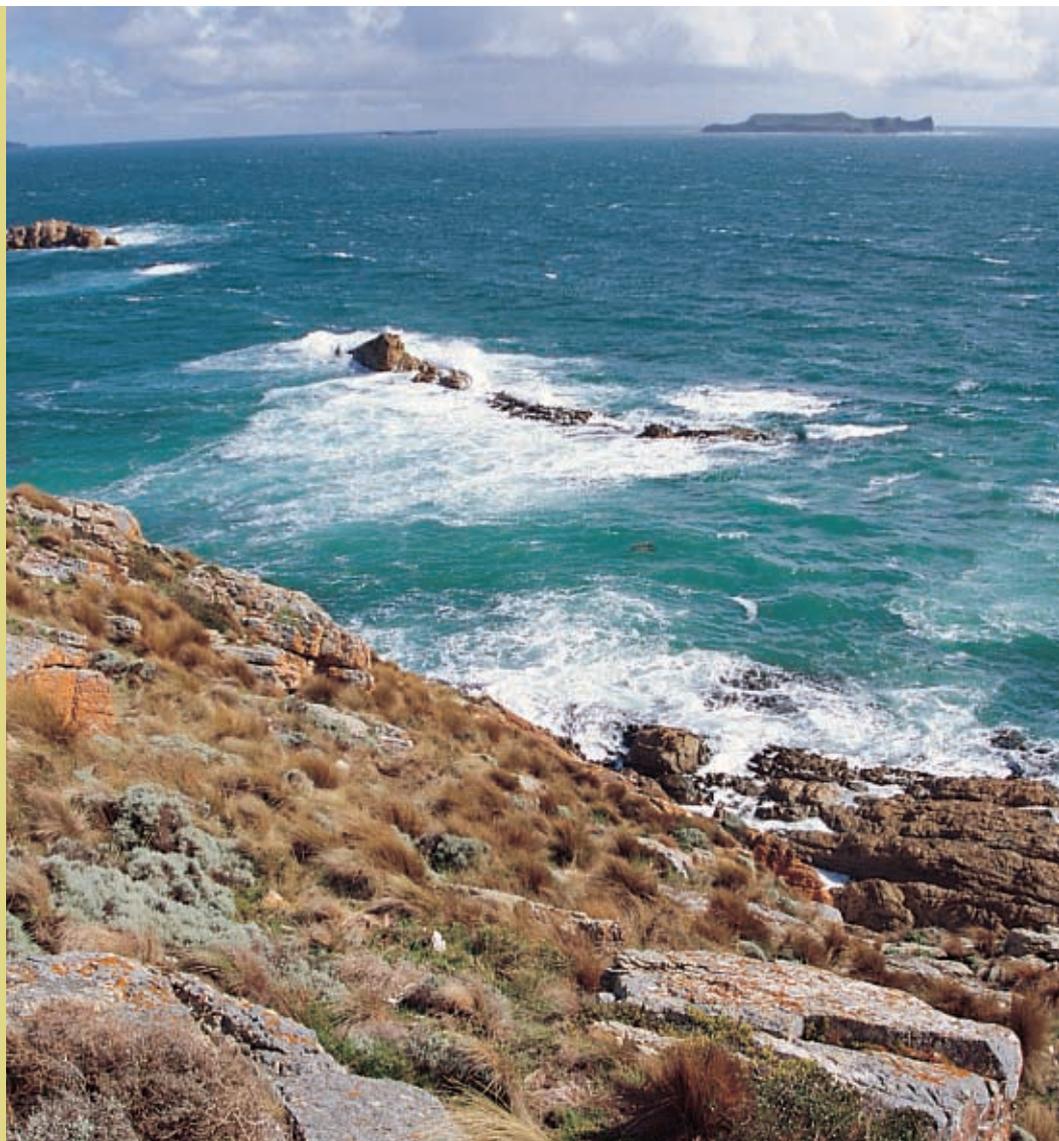
We would like to thank all those Bush Heritage supporters who wrote to the Tasmanian Government on this matter.

The Tasmanian Minister for National Parks is now awaiting the results of a very limited public submission process intended to identify the key concerns and management aspirations of the Circular Head community. The Minister has yet to agree to meet with us.

We will continue to push for a future under conservation management for this important threatened landscape and its associated plants and animals.

We expect a resolution to the issue by the end of this calendar year and ask for your continued support of our efforts to protect this unique place.

Rocky coastline, Hunter Island.



## From the CEO

It is a thrill to see the growing numbers of enthusiastic people supporting Bush Heritage's activities throughout Australia.

Thank you for your commitment to our work. You are helping us to acquire new reserves, extend our management activities on existing reserves and build new initiatives beyond our boundaries.

Bush Heritage's newest acquisitions – the spectacular 214 000-hectare Ethabuka in Queensland's arid western desert and Reedy Creek Reserve on Queensland's temperate eastern coast, recently donated – demonstrate both our flexibility and our growing capacity to take on properties with more complex management issues. Both properties are wonderful additions to our portfolio. Knowing that we have your financial support and volunteer labour behind us makes us confident in our decision to protect these outstanding areas.

As in the case of all our reserves, these properties have been assessed for their strategic contribution to the protection of Australia's biodiversity. We have also carefully considered our ability to maintain a long-term commitment in these regions.

Quite rightly, our supporters and donors expect Bush Heritage to actively manage our reserves, both land and water, for the long term. This is foremost in our thinking every time we make a decision to buy a property or become involved within a region.

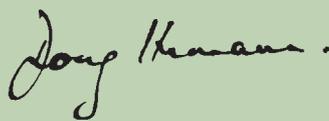
We have an efficient and practical model for managing the 345 000 hectares of land and water now under our care in the seventeen reserves. We never simply acquire a property or an interest in a particular area of land, then shut the gate and throw away the key. We find the best people available to manage each reserve,

people who know the region and its ecology and have the practical skills to undertake the wide variety of tasks demanded of them. Your donations support these professionals. They are guided by sound conservation science and assisted by enthusiastic and informed volunteers.

On the subject of managing properties, we owe a debt of gratitude to Paul and Carol Spencer at Ethabuka, who will continue to manage this reserve until August when the permanent managers arrive. They have overseen the rebirth of the infrastructure at Ethabuka and have introduced Bush Heritage to those in the region.

I am delighted that there are increasing opportunities for people to visit our reserves and witness the complex process of reserve management first-hand. It is through these visits that you can see what you have helped to protect and appreciate how effectively we are making use of your financial support (see page 8 for opportunities to attend field days and undertake volunteer work). Keep an eye on the website at [www.bushheritage.org](http://www.bushheritage.org) or please contact [kharrland@bushheritage.asn.au](mailto:kharrland@bushheritage.asn.au) to discuss further opportunities to visit the reserves.

Currently Bush Heritage is examining a range of exciting new opportunities. We are developing ambitious plans to enlarge the scale and expand the scope of our work, and we will report back to you as we make progress. Thank you again for your support.



**Postscript:** The Tasmanian Government has still not resolved the long-term future of Hunter Island. Please keep up to date with any developments on our website.

## In memory

Peter Turner donated in memory of his Welsh aunt **Mary Turner** who 'visited Australia often, and loved the bush and coast'. **John Benham** was remembered by Jim and Rosa Hajinakitas, and **Gay Bell** by Helen Webb.

John Ransley gave in memory of his partner **Muktanand Meannjin**, 'a celebrated yogic teacher both in Australia and India'. Molly Sutton remembered her father **Harry Sutton**. Judy Iltis donated in memory of **Professor Robert 'Bob' Neale**.

The family of entomologist **Dr Ev Britton** celebrated his memory, and his 14-year-old granddaughter Zoe is now taking an active role in supporting Bush Heritage.

Rosslyn Duncan sent in many donations in memory of her husband **Robert 'Bob' Duncan**, who died suddenly while bushwalking in the Bungle Bungles, WA. Adrienne Shilling and other friends also remembered this 'lovely, gentle bushwalking companion'.

Lynne Hutton and Geoffrey and Richard Wharton remembered their parents **Stephen and Tina Wharton** who 'were both committed to looking after the land'.

Lindsay Whitham gave in memory of his wife **Phyl Whitham**. Sue Heggie remembered her husband **Bruce Heggie**, father of Steve Heggie, who with his partner Mel was the first reserve manager at Carnarvon Station Reserve.

## In celebration

Kel and Lyn Eggins donated to celebrate the golden wedding anniversary of **Bob and Lois Campbell**. Julie Hamilton made a gift to celebrate the birth of her nephew **Max Havard**.

Kenneth Parkhouse, who recently retired from Metro Residence (a facility for people with intellectual disabilities in Sydney), donated the collection from his retirement.

## Thanks

Bush Heritage would like to thank the Earth Sanctuaries Foundation ([www.esf.org.au](http://www.esf.org.au)) for its generous support of the Volunteer Ranger Program at the Tarcutta Hills Reserve, New South Wales.

Carnarvon waterhole. PHOTO: JOSS BENTLEY

