



## Scottsdale – the land and its river

**Bush Heritage Beyond the Boundaries Coordinator Stuart Cowell describes the newest Bush Heritage reserve**

From the top of an impressive ridge line running through the property, it is easy to appreciate the varied landscape of Bush Heritage's latest purchase, Scottsdale. This remarkable place is described by our Chief Executive Doug Humann as 'a cracker'.

Scottsdale covers 1328 hectares of the Murrumbidgee River valley twelve kilometres north of Bredbo in New South Wales, a 45-minute drive south of Canberra. It rises up from a large fertile grassy valley with rich alluvial soils, through dry sclerophyll

woodlands and onto a grassy woodland plateau, which drops steeply into the Murrumbidgee River itself.

Scottsdale is the first property to be bought for a new landscape management project that will re-establish a network of habitats between the Australian Alps and the remnant bushland of the coastal ranges to the east, a region called the Eastern Escarpment Conservation Corridor. This project, called 'Kosciuszko to the Coast', is a collaborative effort between local, regional, state and national non-government and government organisations.

The land that lies between the alpine and coastal conservation corridors has been heavily cleared and the remaining habitats fragmented and degraded. Much of the land is in private ownership. As a result, re-creating this east-west network will mean working with landholders on properties with a range of tenures and management regimes. The project will develop a regional conservation network to support the people and organisations involved.

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As the link becomes established it will once again allow animals to move through the landscape. It will increase the protection of poorly reserved ecosystems and the resilience of the landscape, and better enable species to respond to climate change. We also hope that it will increase national and international awareness of the scientific, social and economic benefits of managing entire landscapes for conservation.

The Murrumbidgee River at Scottsdale.

PHOTO: NICOLE PYNE Insets from left:

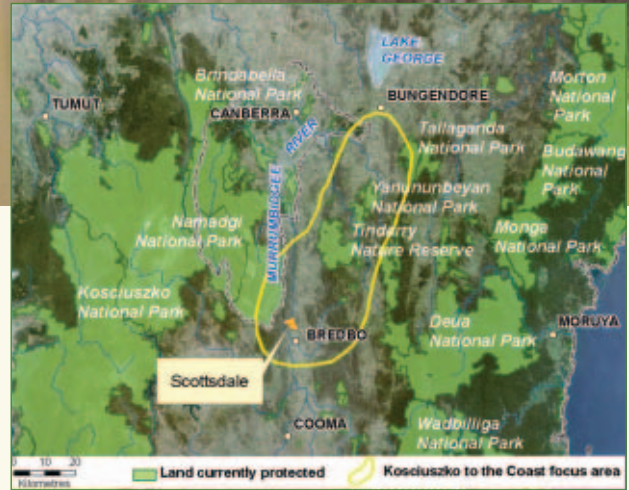
Peregrine falcon. Platypus.

PHOTOS: DAVE WATTS

Golden sun moth.

PHOTO: T EDWARDS





But what of Scottsdale itself?

The property is a key acquisition for many reasons.

Though they are undeniably beautiful and important for conservation, a large proportion of our protected areas are on land that is not productive, or, to put it another way, are on land for which no agricultural nor industrial use could be found. In many cases this also means that the land is not highly productive for native species. Scottsdale, on the other hand, is a highly productive system. Its ecosystems are poorly reserved and have the potential to be 'engine rooms' for regional conservation. They will support flourishing populations of native animals and plants.

Scottsdale is also one of the largest and last-remaining underdeveloped rural properties in the region. This further enhances its role in reconnecting the eastern fringes of the Namadgi National Park in the Australian Alps and the coastal ranges of the Eastern Escarpment.

### VEGETATION

Scottsdale has a diverse range of vegetation communities and land systems. They provide habitats for most of the region's endangered and vulnerable animal species.

The threatened natural temperate grasslands and grassy woodlands

on the lower slopes are poorly represented in the conservation estate. These ecosystems were once widespread. Now only about fifteen per cent survive in moderate to good condition, most having been heavily cleared or modified for agriculture and infrastructure development. They continue to be threatened, particularly by rural subdivision.

The box-gum woodlands, comprised mostly of yellow box *Eucalyptus melliodora* and Blakely's red gum *Eucalyptus blakelyi*, are endangered. These woodlands are particularly important for a range of threatened and declining woodland birds such as the speckled warbler and diamond firetail.

Swamps, bogs, springs and vulnerable stream-side vegetation communities will also be protected on Scottsdale.

### THREATENED SPECIES

Many threatened species occur in the region around Scottsdale. Once survey work begins in earnest we expect to find significant numbers of these species surviving on the property. So far, we know that the endangered golden sun moth, and vulnerable diamond firetail, hooded robin and gang gang cockatoo occur there. Among those we hope to find are the vulnerable spot-tailed quoll, eastern pygmy possum and Rosenberg's goanna.

Threatened plants will also be discovered. So far, we know of the silky swainson-pea *Swainsona sericea* and silver-leaved gum *Eucalyptus pulverulenta*, both of which are listed as vulnerable.

### THE RIVER

A striking feature of Scottsdale is the Murrumbidgee River. It forms the western and northern boundaries of the property for a distance of four and a half kilometres. The river runs through deep pools and over sand bars and water-sculpted rocks and provides a protected environment for platypus and vulnerable Macquarie perch and trout cod. A recent report into the status and population





trends of fish communities in the Murrumbidgee catchment concluded that they were severely degraded. Protecting areas that are in good condition with good habitat, such as those in the reaches on Scottsdale, is vital to the survival of some of the species in the Murrumbidgee.

### MANAGEMENT ISSUES

By acquiring Scottsdale we have removed the main threats to the property: rural subdivision, agricultural intensification and further weed encroachment. In particular we have thwarted further attempts to 'improve' the productivity of this country through the introduction of additional exotic pasture species and crops.

The key management issue is weeds, particularly African lovegrass. Effective weed control and rehabilitation of the grasslands on parts of the property are likely to be costly, but there is strong support from a range of groups and agencies to set up a

regional demonstration site at Scottsdale for the control of the significant weeds of the region.

Now we need your help to take the next step in the realisation of the exciting Kosciuszko to the Coast project: to get the management of Scottsdale under way. Weeds are on the agenda and if you can provide any support we would be delighted. We need your donations and we need volunteers for weed control work and fencing. This could be a great way to see the reserve as it will not be open for visitors until 2008. If you would like to volunteer please phone Joelle Metcalf on 03 8610 9102 and, if you can, please send off your donation today.

**Facing page, clockwise from top: Flowering wattles on the banks of the Murrumbidgee. PHOTO: NICOLE PYNE Exploring the woodlands. PHOTO: PAUL FOREMAN Grassland earless dragon, a species we hope to find. PHOTO: PETER ROBERTSON/ WILDLIFE PROFILES**

**Clockwise from top: Rocky woodlands on the higher country. PHOTO: NICOLE PYNE Diamond firetail. PHOTO: DAVE WATTS Woodlands open out into grasslands on the lower slopes. PHOTO: NICOLE PYNE**

Kosciuszko to the Coast had its genesis in January 2004 following a gift to Bush Heritage in memory of Dr Peter Barrer. Dr Barrer was well known in the ACT conservation and Landcare communities for identifying key landscapes that required protection in the region around Queanbeyan River, Black Range, Captains Flat Reservoir and the Molonglo River.

From that gift the project has evolved to include Greening Australia (southern NSW and ACT), NSW Nature Conservation Trust, Molonglo Catchment Group, Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment Coordinating Committee, Friends of Grasslands and several other community groups, as well as the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation.

Significant support has also been received from the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation and a private donor to honour the life of Helen Lilian Manning Rickards.





## A wrap-up of the past year

It has been a wonderful twelve months at Bush Heritage, and you, our supporters, have achieved some extraordinary things. The bush, our wildlife and some of Australia's iconic landscapes have been the beneficiaries. And your support has helped to reduce the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions as we store atmospheric carbon dioxide in the recovering habitats and revegetated land on our reserves, and provide species with habitats to move into as conditions deteriorate.

Over the past year Bush Heritage has nearly doubled the area of land in its care. We have added Cravens Peak Reserve (233 000 hectares in far-western Queensland), Yarrabee Wesfarmers Reserve (923 hectares in south-western Western Australia), Boolcoomatta Reserve (63 000 hectares in the arid zone of South Australia) and Nardoo Hills Reserve (245 hectares in north-central Victoria).

Now, with the addition of Scottsdale in New South Wales, Bush Heritage owns 25 reserves. They protect:

- a total of 674 155 hectares of Australia's key habitats, including at least 192 vegetation communities, of which 69 are listed as threatened
- at least 2658 plant species, of which 112 are considered to be at risk
- at least 530 species of birds, mammals and reptiles, including at least 126 that are classified as either critically endangered, endangered, vulnerable or near threatened.

The reason for the remarkable progress this past year has been your support. Together you have contributed over \$8.6 million in donations, bequests and special gifts for large projects, an increase of 111 per cent on the previous financial year. Once grants and income from other sources are added, our total income was \$13 328 000. The Australian Government (through the National Reserve System program and Envirofund), The Nature Conservancy, Nature Foundation SA, The Thomas Foundation, Wesfarmers, and also Flight Centre, Lotterywest and an anonymous foundation deserve special mention. The Bush Heritage annual report for 2005–2006 lists other significant contributors.

We also have more supporters this year and our Friends of the Bush, who give through automatic debits, have increased their support substantially, up 18 per cent this financial year.

The number of supporters who have confirmed gifts in their wills has also increased by 26 per cent.

Volunteers have again provided vital and irreplaceable support both on the reserves and in the Conservation Support Centre in Melbourne. One hundred and sixty-two people volunteered, through the Conservation Partnerships Program, and contributed more than \$300 000 of value towards reserve management and administration costs. A total of 53 people participated as volunteer rangers, with most staying between two and four weeks on the reserves to assist the reserve managers with major projects and daily tasks.

Between July 2005 and June 2006, 105 people joined working bees for periods ranging from one day to three weeks.

Our financial position is sound and growing strongly. We finished the financial year with another operating surplus and a greater percentage of our spending going towards conservation programs and land purchases. The amount of money in long-term ethical investments has also grown, with the income helping to support the management of the reserves into the future.

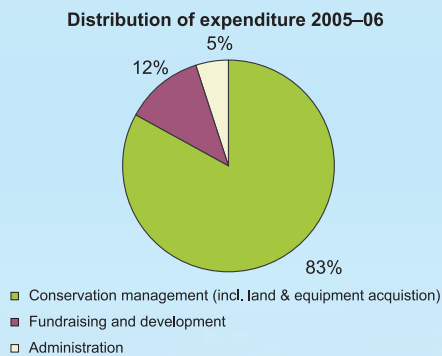
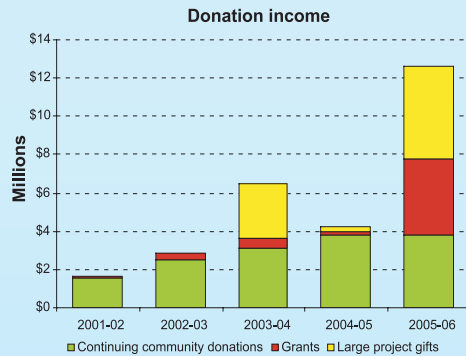
Media coverage has soared this year with the appointment of our Communications Strategist. We achieved stories in 59 media outlets from July 2005 to June 2006. Stories about Bush Heritage had significant national coverage as well as coverage at the state and local levels.

Partnerships with research organisations continued to develop. We are now working with Edith Cowan University, the University of Sydney, the Mammal Survey Group of Victoria, the University of Southern Queensland, Griffith University, the University of South Australia, Charles Sturt University and RMIT University. These institutions are helping us to monitor environmental changes on the reserves and/or providing technical advice on the management of the reserves.

It has been a great year and shows what can be achieved in partnership with others. Whether your contribution

has been through your donations, your time as a volunteer or your professional skills, you have contributed to protecting the environment in tangible and practical ways.

Thank you all for this wonderful contribution.



Total expenditure for the year 2005/06 was \$10 332 000.

The annual report for the financial year 2005-2006 is now available on request from the Conservation Support Centre in Melbourne, or you can view it on the website at [www.bushheritage.org.au](http://www.bushheritage.org.au)



Facing page from top: Cravens Peak Reserve, Qld. PHOTO: WAYNE LAWLER/EKOPIX Scientific Expedition Group members at Boolcoomatta Reserve, SA. PHOTO: JULIAN FENNESSY Flowering foxtails *Ptilotis* sp. at Cravens Peak Reserve, Qld. Dawn at Cravens Peak Reserve, Qld. PHOTOS: WAYNE LAWLER/EKOPIX

This page from top: Eastern grey kangaroo and joey, Nardoo Hills Reserve, Vic. PHOTO: JAMES COWIE Rocky ranges at Boolcoomatta Reserve, SA. PHOTO WAYNE LAWLER/EKOPIX Ancient grey box *Eucalyptus microcarpa*, Nardoo Hills Reserve, Vic. PHOTO: JAMES COWIE Grassy woodland, Yarrabee Wesfarmers Reserve, WA. PHOTO: AMANDA KEESING



# Blitzing the weeds at Charles Darwin Reserve

**Andrea and Kurt Tschirner, reserve managers at Charles Darwin Reserve, report on the latest weed blitz**

In August, 22 willing volunteers joined us for our annual weed blitz. The extremely dry year and a terrific effort by volunteers last year, which significantly reduced the number of seeds of weed species in the soil, meant that there were many fewer weeds to pull, chip, spray and chop than in previous years.

We targeted 23 sites on the reserve. For the most part we were treated to stunning spring days, and the visits to the weed sites were most enjoyable, especially with Sandra's wonderful damper, cooked on the camp fire.

Having many willing hands and fewer weeds to deal with also enabled us to undertake some strategic work on erosion control. The weed problems in many areas are exacerbated by the channelling of rainwater along tracks and into areas compacted by the pressure of past grazing. The flowing water carries the seeds of weed species out into the surrounding bush and also creates serious erosion problems that have impacts on the condition of the soil and growth of native vegetation.

To help stem the weed and erosion problems we have begun putting in silt traps made of brush to slow down the water flow that follows heavy rain. Using branches and logs, we pack loose material into gullies and creeks where running water cuts into the



surface of the soil after rain. The sticks, twigs and leaves slow down the water to the point where it no longer has the momentum to carry away precious topsoil and, in many cases, the seeds of weed species.

After only six months we have found a lot of our traps beginning to silt up, and weeds thriving amongst the brush. This is a great help in our management of the weeds because it slows their spread into the adjacent bush and helps us to target our weed-control efforts.

Our special thanks to all our volunteers. You contributed over 550 hours of work! We greatly appreciate the time and effort every one of you put in to travel to the reserve and participate in such an important stage in the management of its biodiversity. We hope to see you all again next year.

Working bees are a vital part of the management of all the reserves and we would encourage you to join one if you can. You will find a list of upcoming working bees on the back page of this newsletter.



**Rock bridge formed by years of weathering.**  
PHOTO: JIRI LOCHMAN/LOCHMAN TRANSPARENCIES **Volunteers start the construction of brush silt traps. A completed silt trap.**  
**Volunteers and staff share a drink at dusk.**  
PHOTOS: ANDREA TSCHIRNER



## From the President

On any measure, this has been an extraordinary twelve months for Bush Heritage. Whether we look at the area of land conserved, the number of species protected, staff and volunteers employed for conservation work or research partners engaged, amount of income received or level of exposure in the media, we have made remarkable progress. Thank you for making this possible. It would not have happened without your support. The centre spread of this newsletter gives you a summary of this progress.

Climate change and global warming are finally coming to public attention. Bush Heritage and our supporters are playing an important role in addressing climate change. By protecting healthy ecosystems we prevent them from being cleared or developed and releasing their stored carbon. As ecosystems recover on our reserves, atmospheric carbon dioxide is being captured in the regrowing bush. As we continue to protect more of Australia's diverse ecosystems we are providing species with habitats into which they can move as conditions around them deteriorate. The more land we can protect, the easier it will be for species to adapt to the changes.

Preparing for the consequences of climate change is a critical part of Bush Heritage's Anchors in the Landscape conservation strategy.\* As we work towards protecting more than one per cent of Australia by 2025 we will be targeting landscapes where ecosystems and species are highly threatened and poorly reserved. These areas are often of great importance as drought refuges or refuelling areas for migratory species.

Larger reserves, which can extend over a number of latitudes, as well as clusters of smaller reserves, are more effective than isolated small reserves as buffers against the impacts of climate change. The diversity and continuity of their habitats allow species to move long distances in safety as conditions change. The purchase of Ethabuka and Cravens Peak reserves, which protect nearly 450 000 hectares (more than a million acres), provides this secure environment over a vast area.

Bush Heritage is also involved with others in conducting cutting-edge science that relates directly to climate change. We will report on this next year.

In November the Bush Heritage Board approved a plan that will see more landscapes and vulnerable species protected. In the past twelve months the Board has undertaken a major review of its role and operations and identified four new directors who will help to make vital strategic decisions in the financial and business areas. We welcome Alexis Wright, a member of the Waanyi people of the southern highlands in the Gulf of Carpentaria, who has worked extensively with government and Aboriginal agencies; Keith Tuffley, Head of Investment Banking and Managing Director of Goldman Sachs JBWere, who has over 15 years' experience in investment banking; Hutch Ranck, Managing Director of DuPont Australia/New Zealand and member of the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council and the Business Roundtable on Sustainable Development; and David Rickards, who heads up the equities research group at Macquarie Bank and coordinates a team based throughout Australia, Asia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

The Board farewelled and thanked retiring directors Janice Carpenter, Libby Smith and Brian Whelan, who have each served with distinction over two three-year terms. At the Annual General Meeting I was re-elected President for another term, and Steve Morton was elected Vice-President. Other continuing directors are Mara Bún, Guy Fitzhardinge and Louise Gilfedder. Information about all our directors is available on the website.



Phillip Toyne  
President

\* An explanation of this strategy is available on the Bush Heritage website and was summarised in *Bush Heritage News*, Autumn 2006.

## In memory

Martin Bouman donated to honour his mother **Dirkje Bouman**. Hugh Holloway remembered his wife **Margery Jean**, and Trish Saunders her mother **Sheila Saunders**, 'a passionate Bush Heritage supporter'.

Vanessa Horton donated for **Rose Drury**, 'a much-loved little girl', and Margaret MacNevin for her sister **Rosalind Herron**.

Leigh Fielder remembered **Joan Parsons**, and James and Rosa Hajinakitas donated for **Ollie Coles**. Hilary Mack honoured his friend **Travis Esposito**, and Christopher Mattingly remembered **Heather Reid**. Colin and Beverly Maxwell honoured **Kerry Kennedy**, and Carolyn Parsons donated for **Bernard (Bunny) Fennessey**.

Robin Sevenoaks donated in memory of her partner **Raymond Coles** and Erica Siegel honoured **Delphine Douglas**, 'a very special lady, dedicated to protecting wildlife'. **Grace Iggulden** was remembered by family and friends and Carol Warren donated for **Ian Medcalf**.

Numerous people donated to honour the life of **Steve Irwin**.

## In celebration

Members of the Australian Democrats (SA) honoured the 90th birthday of **Hal Pritchard**, and Victor and Adele Bear the 70th birthday of **Ronald Burnstein**. Andrea McAdam and Bronwyn each celebrated the 60th birthday of **Elizabeth Carse**. John and Gillian Moore celebrated the 80th birthday of **Barbara Beeson**, a Bush Heritage supporter and friend, and the 70th birthday of **Alison Kendall**.

John Cowley celebrated the wedding of his cousin **Bronwyn** to **Mark Broderick**, Mark and Karen Humphris the wedding of **Fiona Robertson and Abinav Keswani** and Barbara and Greg Rowsell the wedding of **Catherine Walker and John Cauchi**. Craig Smith donated as a wedding gift for **Jeff and Stella Smith**. Carol Warren donated as a gift to **Ross and Sue Marley**.

Ann and Dick Heller celebrated the birth of their granddaughter **Ella Hughes** and Pam Rawling the births of her three grandchildren **Isla Rose Wickham** (2006), **William Darcy Wickham** (2003) and **Lily Elizabeth Wickham** (2000).

