



## Boolcoomatta – South Australia on the Bush Heritage map

**David Baker-Gabb oversees the management of Judith Eardley and Nardoo Hills reserves in Victoria and undertakes property assessments for Bush Heritage**

As a potential conservation reserve, Boolcoomatta Station in outback South Australia stood out from the start. My initial research on the property showed that it was one of only two grazing leases to receive a Pastoral Board Land Condition Index of 2.8 out of a possible 3. It seemed that, despite a long history of sheep grazing, the property's outback land systems had survived relatively unscathed. I also knew of numerous records, going back over many years, of nationally threatened plains-wanderers at Boolcoomatta.

I had been asked by Bush Heritage to assess the 63 000 hectare Boolcoomatta Station as a possible reserve. This meant looking at the property's significance within the region, assessing the conservation status and quality of its vegetation communities and land systems, identifying management issues and threats to the property and assessing its importance for threatened species. Should it prove worthy of acquisition, then Boolcoomatta would be acquired with funds provided by the Nature Foundation SA and the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust's National Reserve System program.

I shared the inaugural journey to Boolcoomatta with Jim McHugh from the Nature Foundation SA and Tim Bond from the South Australian Department for Environment and

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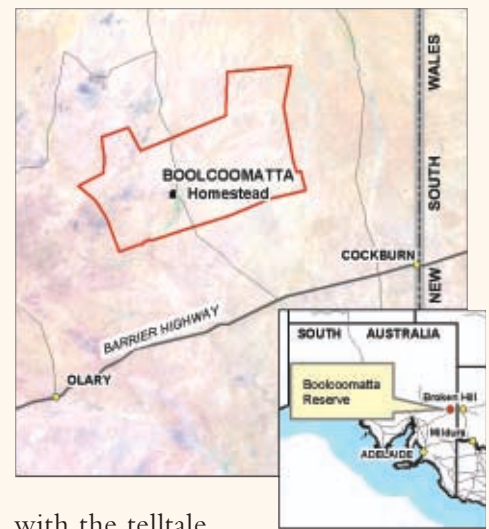
Boolcoomatta Reserve, SA  
Nardoo Hills Reserve, Vic  
Map of Bush Heritage reserves  
Research at Ethabuka  
Surveys at Eurardy

Heritage (DEH). The department had been generous in providing us with survey records and information about the property, and Tim had experience in reserve assessment.

Clockwise from top: Dome Rock. Flowering purple-wood *Acacia carnei*. PHOTOS: WAYNE LAWLER/ECOPIX  
Endangered plains-wanderer. PHOTO: TOM WHELLER  
Inset: Yellow-footed rock wallaby. PHOTO: WAYNE LAWLER/ECOPIX







At the time of our visit, southern Australia was in the grip of a major drought. The ungrazed, drought-tolerant roadside vegetation contrasted starkly with the parched, bare paddocks that stretched depressingly to the horizon.

As we entered Boolcoomatta's front gate my spirits lifted, because, here at least, there were some scattered saltbushes surviving. I recalled that the South Australian Pastoral Board had recorded 32 species of saltbush on these plains, ranging from tiny ground-hugging fissure weeds to swathes of bluebush and blackbush. We drove past Boolcoomatta's airstrip, the heritage woolshed and shearers' quarters built from local stone in the 1870s, and up to a gracious homestead. Alongside were a fully restored

cottage, an impressive manager's residence and sheds galore. There was hardly any rubbish. Paradoxically, my hopes began to fade. It is not usual to find properties as well resourced as this one appeared to be that still retain their natural values for conservation. Often a lack of resources, and thus the inability to fully develop the land for pastoral use, means that the vegetation and wildlife are inadvertently preserved.

We headed out across the plains like detectives, looking for signs of overgrazing and land degradation. We were also alert to future management issues, looking at the condition of boundary fences and assessing weeds, fire susceptibility, rabbit warrens, goat numbers, road access and communication systems. Numerous stops later, we agreed that Boolcoomatta was scoring well.

Despite the dry, the bluebush plains were dotted with copses of bullock bush and black oak, and cane grass swamps were evident. Massive red gums lined dry creek beds, the headwaters of which lay in the distant purple Olary Ranges in Boolcoomatta's south-west corner. In the north-west, impressive rock stacks were splashed

with the telltale whitewash of cliff-nesting birds of prey. A nearby outcrop displayed a dazzling collection of turquoise and green shards that told of the presence of copper, a feature of much of the region and another management issue to note.

On sandy rises in the sandbush plains we found the threatened purple-wood *Acacia carnei*, with its vivid purple timber. This species is now threatened because stock and rabbits eat the seedlings, preventing regeneration, and rabbits also undermine the ageing trees.

Most of the vegetation and landforms on Boolcoomatta proved to be typical of this part of the Outback, and either not protected or only poorly protected in reserves. The spectacular rocky range country, low mulga and prickly wattle woodlands, river red gum woodlands, blackbush and cottonbush shrublands, freshwater wetlands and the Onartra Creek all provided vital habitats for wildlife, including threatened thick-billed grass wrens. The grasslands were of special significance; they were some of the few occurring in the region that were suitable for the plains-wanderer, a small grassland bird







threatened nationally as a result of cultivation and overgrazing. The plains-wanderer needs drought refuges, and there are currently no reserves for it in South Australia.

Jumbled rocks at the foot of steep cliffs also held promise of nationally threatened yellow-footed rock wallabies. With effective goat and fox control from DEH's Operation Bounceback, this endearing rock wallaby has made an impressive recovery on the new Bimbowrie Conservation Park that adjoins Boolcoommatta. It is not too optimistic to hope that with further goat and fox control this species may well return to Boolcoommatta's rocky hills. Threatened slender bell-fruit *Codonocarpus pyramidalis*, which also occurs on Bimbowrie, may yet be found on Boolcoommatta.

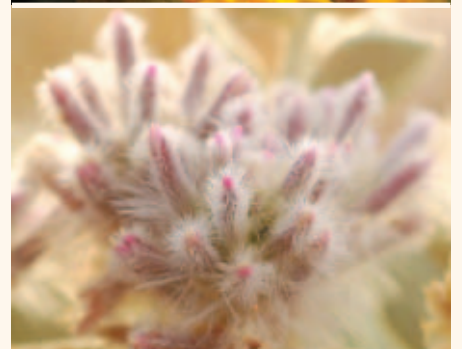
Boolcoommatta has a history of mining and we examined the relics of a copper mine and some old shafts. Gold and uranium are still mined nearby but these activities have no known direct effect on Boolcoommatta at present. We headed for the rounded rocks of the ram paddock which station owner Langdon Badger had told us was one of his favourite places.

As I sat on a large bare rock beside an Aboriginal gnamma hole, with its cap rocks nearby, and gazed out over the vast plains below, I could sense that this was a special place. It would be an ideal reserve.

The sky had been threatening throughout the day and finally it began to spit with rain. The rain began in earnest as we started on our journey south. It felt like a good omen at the time, and so it turned out to be. Boolcoommatta Reserve was launched on 26 April 2006. Another very important part of our natural heritage has been protected. Now Bush Heritage needs your help to manage this wonderful property in perpetuity. I have sent in my donation. Please help by giving whatever support you can.

**Facing page, clockwise from top: An ancient river red gum on Boolcoommatta.** PHOTO: WAYNE LAWLER/ECOPIX **Cinnamon quail-thrush.** PHOTO: GRAEME CHAPMAN **View to the distant Olary Ranges.** PHOTO: WAYNE LAWLER/ECOPIX **Gazing over the plains, from left, Bush Heritage CEO Doug Humann, Alexandra de Blas, David Baker-Gabb and Don Royal.** PHOTO: DUNCAN MACKENZIE

**This page, clockwise from top: Sunrise in the rocky hills. Native bee. *Ptilotis* sp. Gould's monitor. Oonatra Creek. Boolcoommatta's historic shearing shed and quarters.** PHOTOS: WAYNE LAWLER/ECOPIX







## A new reserve in the Nardoo Hills, Victoria

**David Baker-Gabb is Reserve Overseer for both the reserves in the Nardoo Hills**

‘Swift parrots!’ The cry sent our team of volunteer ‘cactus stabbers’ spilling from the cars, binoculars in hand, to the base of some of Judith Eardley Reserve’s massive grey box trees. We counted at least ten of these nationally endangered migrants from Tasmania as they squabbled and fed in the mass of gum blossom. After the first wet spring in a decade, the grey box were flowering profusely throughout north-central Victoria. There was some debate among us about why these swift parrots were feeding in Bush Heritage’s reserve and not elsewhere.

Our group was on the reserve to continue the control of invasive wheel cactus. We were working not

only on Judith Eardley Reserve and on adjacent grazing properties, but also on the new grassy woodland reserve just purchased by Bush Heritage in the Nardoo Hills. The Threatened Species Network has helped support this work as part of the Swift Parrot Habitat Enhancement Project.

Bush Heritage has put down an anchor in this part of north-central Victoria. It contains some of the most threatened vegetation communities in eastern Australia, has great potential for good conservation outcomes and poses challenges that can be effectively managed.

The region’s potential for conservation is built around a landscape that still retains more than 30 per cent of its native vegetation in a dozen blocks of public land. Together, these blocks



comprise the 7000 hectare Wychitella Nature Conservation Reserve. There is potential for further conservation gains by protecting the substantial blocks of privately owned woodland that link the ‘islands’ of public land. Some of these links are well managed, others are declining in quality, and all are potentially at risk from a change in ownership.

Bush Heritage is helping to protect these key areas of native vegetation. The new 245 hectare Nardoo Hills Reserve has been purchased with support from the R E Ross Trust, the Miller Foundation, and the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, Inc. It adjoins the southern boundary







of Judith Eardley Reserve and lies along the eastern border of the Wychitella Nature Conservation Reserve. It also provides good access to the Bush Heritage reserves and so saves on management costs.

This new property has been conservatively managed by the Paterson family for over a century. Scars on some of the reserve's numerous ancient trees are evidence of earlier occupation and management by Aboriginal people.

Nardoo Hills Reserve fulfills a valuable role as a buffer for the Wychitella Nature Conservation Reserve, and has many exceptional values in its own right. Ancient hollow-bearing trees and fallen logs are generally in short supply on public land, which has often been used for timber or firewood production in the past. Both of these valuable natural resources are plentiful on Bush Heritage's Nardoo Hills reserves. The two reserves have four diverse vegetation communities that support at least a dozen species of birds and two species of reptiles that are listed as threatened in Victoria. Diamond

firetails, hooded robins and tree goannas are all much more common in the Bush Heritage reserves than in the adjacent nature conservation reserve.

Some unwelcome pests such as wheel cactus are also more prolific on private land. The Bush Heritage reserves had a serious infestation of wheel cactus, but after 70 days of volunteer effort there is hardly an adult plant left alive on either property. We will have seedlings to deal with in the coming years, but the reserves' most serious weed issue has been brought rapidly under control.

And there is other good news. Like the gums, native grasses seeded prolifically throughout the region last summer. This meant that threatened woodland birds such as the seed-eating diamond firetail bred successfully, especially on Judith Eardley Reserve where there was no competition from

grazing sheep. As the summer progressed, the ranks of diamond firetails on the reserve swelled with immigrants, as grass seed dwindled in the surrounding districts as it was grazed by stock. It is indeed gratifying to know that the reserve is so soon fulfilling its role as a refuge for declining woodland species.

It is good to see the land and its wildlife responding so well after a short period of management by Bush Heritage, and exciting to protect yet another key area of threatened habitat.

Facing page, clockwise from top: View over Nardoo Hills Reserve. Sundew *Drosera* sp. PHOTOS: JAMES COWIE  
Aboriginal scar tree. PHOTO: DAVID BAKER-GABB

This page, clockwise from top: The desiccated remains of wheel cactus 'stabbed' by volunteers months earlier. Another cactus-stabbing team about to embark. PHOTOS: KATE FITZHERBERT  
*Stackhousia* sp. PHOTO: JAMES COWIE





# Australian Bush Heritage Fund reserves



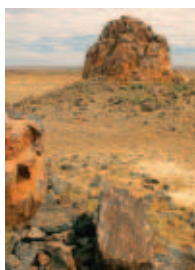
Black-striped wallaby at Bush Heritage Carnarvon Station Reserve, Qld. PHOTO WAYNE LAWLER/ECOPIX



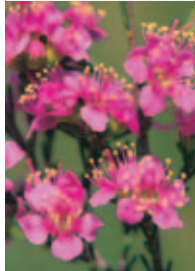
The Australian Bush Heritage Fund acquires by purchase, gift and bequest – land and water of outstanding ecological significance to preserve as the nation's heritage. These areas are managed to protect and enhance their natural values. Funds are raised by tax-deductible donations from the public and funding organisations.

The figures for threatened species and communities given below are based on our current understanding of the reserves and the vegetation communities and animals that they protect. As our knowledge of each reserve grows, these figures will be adjusted. The terms used here are general and indicate that the species or community is listed as threatened by state and/or national authorities.

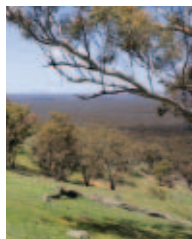
Phone: 1300 NATURE (1300 628 873)  
 Website: [www.bushheritage.org](http://www.bushheritage.org)  
 Email: [info@bushheritage.asn.au](mailto:info@bushheritage.asn.au)



**24** Boolcoomatta Reserve, SA – acquired 2006  
 This unique 63 000 ha reserve was purchased with funds provided by the Nature Foundation SA and the Australian Government's National Reserve System program. Bush Heritage will own and manage the reserve for the long term. Its ten vegetation communities were either poorly protected or not protected because the vast saltbush plains and grasslands are prized for grazing. Threatened plains-wanderers and thick-billed grass wrens will be safeguarded here and yellow-footed rock wallabies should return once goats and foxes are controlled. **Contributes to the protection of:** five significant communities and at least three species at risk.



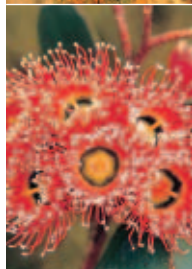
**23** Yarrabee Reserve, WA – purchased jointly with Greening Australia (WA) 2006  
 This 923 ha reserve is a key acquisition for the Gondwana Link pathway in WA. It lies on the eastern boundary of the Stirling Range National Park and boasts a varied topography from tall marri/jarrah woodlands to low mallee and banksia-rich heathlands. About 600 ha will be revegetated by Greening Australia (WA). **Management work 2005/06:** revegetation planning. **Contributes to the protection of:** significant vegetation remnants and an unknown number of species at risk.



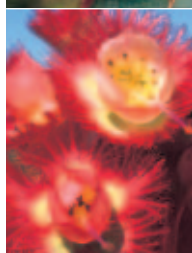
**22** Nardoo Hills Reserve, Vic – purchased 2006  
 At 245 ha, this property will contribute to the protection of some of the most threatened ecosystems in southern Australia. It adjoins the Judith Eardley Reserve and the Wychitella Nature Conservation Reserve and will help to safeguard the elevated grassy woodland habitats of many declining woodland bird species. The property is particularly important for the vulnerable hooded robin. **Management work 2005/06:** management planning, weed control, infrastructure planning, fencing. **Contributes to the protection of:** four significant communities and six species at risk.



**21** Cravens Peak Reserve, Qld – purchased 2005  
 This vast property of 233 000 ha lies north of Ethabuka Reserve and the Simpson Desert National Park. It encompasses the transition from the Simpson Desert dune fields through the rocky Toko and Toomba Ranges to the broad grasslands of the Mulligan River headwaters. Its nine ecosystems are home to an abundant and diverse fauna including threatened species such as the mulgara and ampurta. **Management work 2005/06:** management planning, infrastructure work. **Contributes to the protection of:** at least sixteen and potentially 24 species at risk.

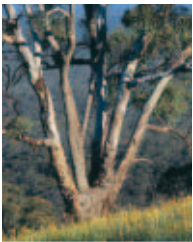


**20** Monjebup Reserve, WA – purchased 2005 (boundary realignment under way)  
 These two properties (formerly referred to as the Gondwana Link properties and now amalgamated into one reserve) protect 956 ha of highly diverse remnant bushland in south-west WA. They safeguard a diversity of landforms, natural waterways and many species. They are key properties for the Gondwana Link project that is restoring an extensive corridor of native vegetation throughout the region. **Management work 2005/06:** management planning, monitoring. **Contributes to the protection of:** at least five species at risk.



**19** Eurardy Reserve, WA – purchased 2005  
 This 30 066 ha reserve helps to build a protected habitat corridor between the Kalbarri National Park and the Toolonga Nature Reserve on the central coast of WA. Together these reserves protect one of the most diverse endemic plant communities on the planet. Over 900 plant species have been recorded at Eurardy, including 38 declared rare plants. **Management work 2005/06:** feral animal and weed control, infrastructure work, seed collection for propagation. **Contributes to the protection of:** 44 species at risk.





**18** Judith Eardley Reserve, Vic – purchased 2005  
This reserve protects 344 ha and five vegetation communities of conservation significance, including grey-box grassy woodland, herb-rich woodland and mallee. It is a high-quality habitat with good populations of declining woodland birds including the hooded robin, brown tree creeper and diamond firetail. **Management work 2005/06:** mammal and bird surveys and monitoring; weed control, fencing, track maintenance, feral animal control. **Contributes to the protection of:** five significant communities and six species at risk.



**17** Reedy Creek Reserve, Qld – donated 2004  
This 452 ha reserve abuts the Deepwater National Park in one of the most intensely used and depleted natural environments in eastern Australia. Nine vegetation communities including pandanus-lined wetlands and threatened vine forests are safeguarded. Bush Heritage also manages loggerhead and green turtle breeding areas on the adjacent beaches. **Management work 2005/06:** flora and fauna surveys, fuel-reduction burns, feral animal and weed control. **Contributes to the protection of:** at least one significant community and three species at risk.



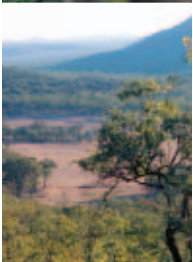
**16** Ethabuka Reserve, Qld – purchased 2004  
This vast reserve of 213 300 ha abuts the Simpson Desert National Park and protects river flood plains, dune systems, clay pans and ephemeral and semipermanent wetland systems of national significance. Most of these ecosystems are not protected in the adjoining reserve. Ethabuka has a remarkable diversity of mammals, birds and reptiles. **Management work 2005/06:** flora and fauna surveys, feral animal and weed control, fire planning and management. **Contributes to the protection of:** at least five significant communities and nine species at risk.



**14** Charles Darwin Reserve, WA – purchased 2003  
This reserve protects 68 600 ha of york gum, salmon gum, gimlet, and sandplain vegetation in the wheat belt of WA. It is part of a growing area of protected land where fire and feral animal control are being managed on a regional basis. The reserve protects twelve regional ecosystems, and rare and threatened plants continue to be discovered. **Management work 2005/06:** weed and feral animal control, fire planning and management, soil erosion assessment, infrastructure works. **Contributes to the protection of:** at least eight significant communities and 22 species at risk.



**13** Chereninup Creek Reserve, WA – purchased 2002  
This 877 ha reserve protects some of the most floristically spectacular and globally important land in south-west WA. It is critical to creating the Gondwana Link corridor of protected and restored habitats, and safeguards at least twelve major plant communities and threatened species such as the western whipbird and tamar wallaby. **Management work 2005/06:** feral animal control, fauna monitoring, track maintenance. **Contributes to the protection of:** eight significant communities and four species at risk.



**12** Carnarvon Station Reserve, Qld – purchased 2001  
This 59 000 ha reserve adjoins Carnarvon Gorge National Park. It protects seventeen regional ecosystems, including six that are endangered, in a region that has seen broadscale land clearing. Species diversity is increasing as the habitats recover. **Management work 2005/06:** fuel-reduction and prescribed burning, feral animal and weed control, fencing of springs, erosion control, flora and fauna surveys. **Contributes to the protection of:** six significant communities and thirteen species at risk.



**11** Currumbin Valley Reserve, Qld – donated 1999  
Although only 4 ha, this regenerating rainforest reserve is highly diverse. Together with the adjoining Nicholl Scrub National Park, the reserve contributes to the protection of a significant area of habitat. **Management work 2005/06:** maintenance and monitoring. **Contributes to the protection of:** seven species at risk.



**10** Burrin Burrin Reserve, NSW – donated 1999  
This reserve protects 411 ha of escarpment forest in the upper reaches of the Shoalhaven River catchment. It provides habitat for sugar and squirrel gliders and brushtail and ringtail possums. **Management work 2005/06:** flora and fauna surveys, track maintenance. **Contributes to the protection of:** three significant communities.



**9** Tarcutta Hills Reserve, NSW – purchased 1999  
Tarcutta Hills is a 432 ha reserve of national significance. It protects the largest area of high-quality grassy white box woodland left in Australia and enjoys an unusual richness of species. It provides habitat for nationally threatened turquoise and swift parrots. **Management work 2005/06:** flora and fauna surveys, weed control, fire planning and management. **Contributes to the protection of:** one significant community and thirteen species at risk.



**8** South Esk Pine Reserve, Tas – purchased 1998  
Located on the banks of the Apsley River on Tasmania's east coast, this 6.8 ha reserve protects the last large stand of the South Esk pine. A Tasmanian endemic, the pine is considered to be vulnerable, with only 10 000 trees remaining. **Management work 2005/06:** weed control, vegetation monitoring. **Contributes to the protection of:** one significant community and seven species at risk.



**7** Goonderoo Reserve, Qld – purchased 1998  
This 593 ha reserve lies in a region that has been heavily cleared. It protects nine plant communities including brigalow woodlands and native grasslands, both of which are classified as endangered. Over 140 bird species, many snakes and a wide variety of other wildlife are protected here. **Management work 2005/06:** maintenance of firebreaks, fuel-reduction burns, weed control, infrastructure works. **Contributes to the protection of:** eight significant communities and seven species at risk.



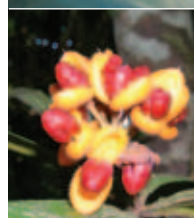
**6** Friendly Beaches Reserve, Tas – purchased 1997  
Fringed by Saltwater Lagoon and the sand dunes of Friendly Beaches, this reserve protects 140 ha of coastal heathland with dry sclerophyll forest, black gum and marsh-plant communities. It retains some of the last examples of natural dune systems in Tasmania. **Management work 2005/06:** vegetation monitoring. **Contributes to the protection of:** four significant communities and three species at risk.



**5** Kojonup Reserve, WA – purchased 1996  
This 389 ha reserve is an important remnant of wandoo woodland in south-west WA. It protects at least 81 species of native birds and three threatened plant species. It has an intact understorey of herbs, heaths, sedges, orchids and other wildflowers. **Management work 2005/06:** monitoring, flora and fauna surveys, feral animal control. **Contributes to the protection of:** one significant community and seven species at risk.



**4** Brogo Reserve, NSW – purchased 1995  
At 120 ha, Brogo is one of the largest viable remnants of bushland in the Bega Valley in south-east NSW. It is a haven for native mammals including sugar gliders and long-nosed bandicoots, and many bird species including powerful owls. **Management work 2005/06:** weed control, monitoring, track maintenance. **Contributes to the protection of:** four significant communities and seven species at risk.



**3** Fan Palm Reserve, Qld – purchased 1993  
Lowland tropical rainforest is one of the most threatened habitats in Australia. This 8.17 ha of fan palm forest adjacent to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area was threatened by subdivision. It provides habitat for cassowaries and threatened plant species. **Management work 2005/06:** feral animal and weed control, fauna surveys, revegetation, track maintenance. **Contributes to the protection of:** one significant community and 20 species at risk.



**1** **2** **15** Liffey Valley reserves, Tas – acquired 1990 and 2003  
Combined, the Liffey River, Dries Bluff and Coalmine Creek reserves protect 261 ha of fern gully, rainforest and wet and dry sclerophyll forest. The reserves lie beneath the Great Western Tiers on the edge of the World Heritage Area and are a haven for wildlife, including pygmy possums and Tasmanian devils. They support the threatened Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle and white goshawk. **Management work 2005/06:** weed control, regular monitoring. **Contribute to the protection of:** one significant community and two species at risk.







## Insights into our desert world

**Chin Liang Beh, Bobby Tamayo and Chris Dickman are ecologists with the Institute of Wildlife Research, University of Sydney, and have been undertaking research at Ethabuka for many years**

To protect a vast tract of Australian bush, deep in the red heart of our arid country, was the dream of Professor Chris Dickman and his research team after many years of studying the precarious lives of our desert animals at Ethabuka Station.

The recent protection by Bush Heritage and its supporters of Ethabuka, and more recently Cravens Peak in the Simpson Desert, owes much to the dedication of the ecologists led by Chris Dickman at the Institute of Wildlife Research, University of Sydney. The salvation of these two former cattle properties is a vitally important contribution to nature conservation and the recovery of the precious arid-zone environment.

Chris Dickman's early work in the goldfields east of Perth in Western Australia sparked his passion for studying the ecology of small animals in arid environments. Motivated by a strong desire to protect these

Australian species driven to precariously low population levels, Chris set up a permanent research study site at Ethabuka after his initial visit in 1989. He knew there was something very special about the sandhills and swales of Ethabuka, and rains the following year proved him correct. The floods brought amazing life to the land, and the desert began to share some of its many secrets.



The researchers found that tiny native rodents and marsupials, such as the spinifex hopping-mouse and lesser hairy-footed dunnart, would travel up to 15 kilometres over several nights in pursuit of food, water and shelter. Imagine travelling non-stop by foot from Sydney to Melbourne just to get a good meal!

As plants burst into life after the rain, so the populations of small animals





flourished on the abundance of seeds and insects. Seed-eating rodents such as the sandy inland mouse responded first, breeding rapidly. Their young were also breeding within just six months. Larger carnivorous marsupials such as the threatened mulgara responded next, feeding on the burgeoning rodent populations.

But the rains also brought many unwelcome visitors. Feral cats and foxes travelled into the desert to feast on the increased numbers of native animals. Professor Dickman and his team found that the critical time for setting in place control measures for these introduced predators was six to nine months after good rains.

Fire also proved to be a major environmental factor that shaped animal populations. Small patchy fires enhanced the diversity and structure of the landscape and mobile small mammals could move out of small burnt patches into neighbouring unburnt habitat. On the other hand, large wildfires that covered many thousands of hectares could devastate mammal populations by removing all the food and shelter for vast distances. Foxes and cats moved in following such fires and the surviving animals, now exposed, made for an easy meal.

Research findings such as these have helped numerous organisations across Australia to better implement their landscape- and species-management programs. Bush Heritage will use this information to target its feral animal control programs and guide its controlled burning.

As key Bush Heritage research partners, Professor Dickman and his team continue to study the desert ecosystem in what is now the longest-running arid-zone research program in the southern hemisphere. They will continue to contribute towards the collective understanding and management of these amazing conservation reserves.

Imagine experiencing the land and its animals for yourself. You can! Why not visit Ethabuka, see it first hand and contribute to the ongoing studies?

**Facing page, clockwise from top:** Flock of budgerigars. PHOTO: BOBBY TAMAYO **Wongai ninggai is one of the smallest desert carnivores.** PHOTO: B ESSEX & C FREE **A brewing storm in June 2005 began another desert cycle of plenty.** PHOTO: KATRINA BLAKE **Spinifex pigeon.** PHOTO: BOBBY TAMAYO **Central military dragon.** PHOTO: B ESSEX & C FREE **Chris Dickman measures a small monitor.** PHOTO: BOBBY TAMAYO

**This page, clockwise from top:** Flowers follow the rain. Growth and flowering of plants provides a diet of seeds and insects for small mammals. PHOTOS: B ESSEX & C FREE **Feral cats prey on small desert animals.** PHOTO: BOBBY TAMAYO **Spinifex country is home to many desert creatures.** PHOTO: WAYNE LAWLER/ECOPIX





# Eurardy – an ecological blitz

Staff ecologist **Sandy Gilmore** describes the work done at Eurardy in September 2005

In late September 2005 the Bush Heritage ecology team headed to the newly acquired Eurardy Reserve, north of Kalbarri National Park, WA. The aim was to conduct an ecological inventory or ‘blitz’ of the wildlife and plants, as well as the property’s infrastructure, as a basis for developing the reserve’s management plan.

The timing was excellent. Spring was the ideal time for recording the plants, as most were flowering, and the birds were breeding. Twenty-seven monitoring sites were established across the reserve and at each the vegetation structure was recorded. This data will provide the basis on which to build a long-term picture of the changes to the reserve under Bush Heritage management. The earlier work of volunteers from the Wildflower Society of WA, in creating a detailed field herbarium and plant lists from each monitoring point, made our job so much easier. We hope that this collaboration will continue.

Bird counts began at all the sites. Over time the counts will enable us to watch for trends in how the numbers and occurrences of birds change, both within and between our Western Australian reserves. The heathlands



and shrublands were full of honeyeaters, including, significantly, pied and black honeyeaters that have not been recorded at the other Bush Heritage reserves. We were also delighted to see the beautiful tawny-crowned honeyeater; Eurardy is at the limit of its range. The extensive patches of threatened york gum woodland proved to have the greatest number of bird species of any site.

We conducted only a small amount of mammal and pitfall trapping but we recorded two ashy-grey mice, one spotted dragon and a variety of invertebrates. Several other species were recorded during our travels around the reserve and their location recorded by geographic positioning system (GPS). These included Stimson’s python, sand goannas, several species of birds of prey and larger mammals, both native and introduced.

The information gathered during our ecological blitz, coupled with an analysis of species’ distribution, soils, terrain, vegetation and ecosystem processes, will help us to understand why species occur where they do

and how we can help them to thrive. As our understanding of the reserve develops over the years, our management techniques will adapt to help build the resilience of the land for the long term.



Clockwise from top: A profusion of yellow daisies and blue pincushion *Brunonia australis*. Spotted dragon. PHOTOS: JULIAN FENNESSY Goldfield’s bullfrog. PHOTO: JIRI LOCHMAN/LOCHMAN TRANSPARENCIES Pied honeyeater. PHOTO: GRAEME CHAPMAN A drift net guides small animals into a trap so they can be identified. PHOTO: JULIAN FENNESSY Tawny-crowned honeyeater. PHOTO: GRAEME CHAPMAN





## From the CEO

*Patter, patter . . . Boolcoomatta,  
Adelaide and Oodnadatta,  
Peperonga, parched and dry  
Laughs beneath a dripping sky.*

(From 'A Song of Rain' by C. J. Dennis)

Rather than the patter of rain, it was a still evening with fabulous views and a glowing sunset that marked our celebration of the unprecedented partnership that has seen Boolcoomatta Station become Bush Heritage's newest and 24th reserve.

In April new neighbours and the media assembled with representatives of Bush Heritage, the Australian Government and the Nature Foundation SA in the remote north-east pastoral zone of South Australia. Funding from both the Australian Government's National Reserve System program and the Nature Foundation SA has allowed Bush Heritage to acquire Boolcoomatta without calling on our supporters. We acknowledge this fantastic contribution.

We need your support now, however, as we begin the vital first stages of

establishing this new reserve. We must ensure that the infrastructure is sound, animal and plant surveys begin, and control programs for pest plants and animals continue.

On all new reserves we need substantial funds to ensure that our professional staff and volunteers are safe and properly equipped. They work extremely hard to conserve the astonishing land systems, vegetation communities and species within our care. Your donations support them and help to build an endowment that will fund our land management for the long term. It is our achievements in land management, as well as acquisition, that will determine our success.

Thank you for your continuing support. I would like to make special mention of our Friends of the Bush, who give by automatic debit, who responded so generously to our request for additional help in the last newsletter. Thank you.

In conclusion, we are again indebted to our dedicated volunteer Don Royal. Don is currently at Boolcoomatta and has now acted as manager on

four reserves. Thank you, Don, and all our volunteers and supporters, whom I acknowledged at the recent launch. Volunteers will be needed at Boolcoomatta this year and I encourage everyone to consider joining the volunteer program. The reserve will be open to visitors in 2007. Boolcoomatta has wonderful old buildings and provides great opportunities for volunteering, visits and research, all of which we are planning with the Nature Foundation SA.

The sun shone on our launch but, as we packed to leave the next evening, clouds gathered and much-needed rain fell over this drought-stricken landscape. *'Patter, patter . . . Boolcoomatta.'*

A final word on Hunter Island! The Tasmanian Government has awarded the lease of Hunter Island to a pastoralist from north-west Tasmania. Grazing, the main threat to the island and its rare and endangered species, will continue. Bush Heritage has worked hard to save the island and is deeply disappointed at this decision.



## In memory

Adair and Dick Clark have donated in memory of their dear friend **Di Cunningham**. Esme and Robert White remembered **Kit McCormack**, a very dear friend. Vicki Williams and her mother Joan Crettenden honoured a valued colleague and friend, **Amanda Jayne Cowan**: 'Amanda will always be a treasured "best buddy"'. Annette Stewart and Harry and Janette Asche honoured **Jose Alfonso**, a dear friend who 'loved wandering around the Australian bush'.

Julie Duell has commemorated her late husband **John Duell**, a keen naturalist. Susan Williams remembered her uncle **Paul Edwards** and also her friend's father, **Robin Muir Head**.

Paul Gibson honoured his late mother **Joan Gibson**, who loved the Australian bush. Ken and Sally Wylie donated in

memory of Sally's parents **Rene and Les Grieves**. Kaye Millar sent a gift for her father **Vernon Roberts**.

## In celebration

Margaret Young donated for the engagement of her daughter **Katie to Braky** and Ben Clark sent a gift for the 'entanglement party' of **Julian Rutt and Julia Winefield**. Judy Christie celebrated the wedding of **Leanne Cusiter and Christian Hanvey**, and family and friends, the wedding of **Bec Gibb and Ian Humphries**.

The birthdays of **Susan Leavesley** and **Paul Hermancz** were celebrated by Dennis and Barbara Leavesley. Peter Cranston donated for the 85th birthday of his mother **Margaret Cranston**. Jeanette Sinclair and Phillip Ridgeway commemorated the first birthday of **Tess Burroughs**.

## Thanks

Our special thanks to **the students in 2S at Tintern Girls Grammar School**, East Ringwood, Victoria, for their wonderful efforts and donation for black-chinned honeyeaters at Judith Eardley Reserve, Vic.

A Memorandum of Understanding has recently been signed between Bush Heritage and the Centre for Ecosystem Management (CEM) at Edith Cowan University, Western Australia. This exciting development will provide many research opportunities, student projects and avenues for collaboration. With Bush Heritage's activities growing in the West, this partnership provides a strong basis for applied research to feed back into the adaptive management of Bush Heritage reserves. For more information on the CEM, please visit <http://cem.ecu.edu.au>



# 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 our activities around Australia. Light refreshments will be provided.

### Sydney: May

Thursday 25, 5.30–7.30 pm  
Friday 26, 12.30–2.30 pm  
Venue for both events: History House, 133 Macquarie St, Sydney

### Brisbane: June

Thursday 29, 5.30–7.30 pm  
Dinosaur Room, Queensland Museum, cnr Grey and Melbourne Sts, South Bank (entry via Level 2 main entrance)

For information on attending information gatherings, or to RSVP, please contact Paul Evans on 03 8610 9128 or email [pevans@bushheritage.asn.au](mailto:pevans@bushheritage.asn.au)

## FIELD DAYS

Come on guided visits to some of our reserves and learn more about these special areas. Places are limited so please book soon. To ensure that your donations are used for conservation work on reserves rather than on arranging field trips, we are now charging a small amount to assist with maintaining the visitor program.

Costs vary depending on whether you are a supporter (first figure) or non-supporter (second figure). Times listed are approximate.

**July:** Reedy Creek Reserve, Qld, morning walking tour (9.30 am – 1.00 pm), Sunday 9. Cost: \$10/\$25

**August:** Carnarvon Station Reserve, Qld, Friday 11 to Monday 14. 4WD required. Basic accommodation and all meals supplied. Cost: \$200/\$300. Waitlist only available.

**October:** Fan Palm Reserve, Qld, Sunday 8. Morning walking tour. Cost: \$5/\$15

Nardoo Hills reserves (including Judith Eardley Reserve) Open Day Event. Dates and details to be confirmed in *Bush Heritage News*, Spring 2006.

For information on attending field trips, or to RSVP, please contact Katrina Blake on 03 8610 9124, fax 03 8610 9199 or email [kblake@bushheritage.asn.au](mailto:kblake@bushheritage.asn.au)

## WORKING BEES

Bush Heritage working bees extend over a number of days. You can come for the whole time or just for a couple of days. There is some hard work and lots of fun. Food is supplied from a kitty of \$10 per person per day and subsidised by Bush Heritage. You will be camping or in volunteer quarters depending on which reserve you are

working on. Tasks depend on current management priorities. Please have a look at the dates below and pitch in where you can:

**June:** Carnarvon Station Reserve, Qld, Tuesday 6 to Thursday 15 – reserve management

**July/August:** Goonderoo Reserve, Qld, Saturday 29 to Sunday 6 – shed-building, spotlighting for bridled nail-tail wallabies

**August:** Charles Darwin Reserve, WA, Saturday 5 to Sunday 22 – weeding

**September:** Nardoo Hills reserves, Vic, Saturday 16 to Sunday 17 – fence removal and cactus control

**September/October:** Cravens Peak Reserve, Qld, Tuesday 26 to Friday 6 – reserve management and maintenance of infrastructure

**October:** Tarcutta Hills Reserve, NSW, Saturday 7 to Sunday 15 – reserve management  
Nardoo Hills reserves, Vic, Saturday 7 to Monday 9 – fence removal and cactus control

**November:** Liffey River Reserve, Tas, Friday 3 to Monday 6 – removal of foxgloves and track maintenance.

If you are interested in either the Volunteer Ranger Program, working bees or other volunteer activities, please contact Joelle Metcalf on [volunteers@bushheritage.asn.au](mailto:volunteers@bushheritage.asn.au) or phone 03 8610 9102.

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buying back the bush

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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

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 latest reserve.

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (h) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (w) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

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