

BUSH HERITAGE NEWS

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The art of birdwatching

If you hear some strange sounds escaping Glen Norris's lips, don't worry – he's just practising his birdcalls, thanks to careful instruction by birdwatching expert and Bush Heritage volunteer Andrew Black. Karen Graham reports.

Glen Norris admits he almost laughed the first time he watched highly regarded ornithologist Dr Andrew Black mimic a bird call. But these days, when Glen, Reserve Manager at Bon Bon Station, is out on his own working in the vast expanses of the South Australian reserve, he isn't averse to giving it a go himself. His knowledge of birds has grown dramatically over the last year thanks to some one-on-one training with Andrew, a retired neurologist and keen ornithologist.

Andrew first got the birdwatching bug on a camping trip to Central Australia about 40 years ago, which he soon followed with a course on identifying Australian birds.

"I was totally hooked and joined various birding organisations, including the South Australian Ornithological Association (now Birds SA)," says Andrew. In 2000, he received a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for contributions to Medicine, in particular epilepsy, and to Conservation, the Environment and Ornithology.

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"I never think of myself as a volunteer because what I do for Bush Heritage is part of my enjoyment of birdwatching. I enjoy visiting these wonderful places."

Above: The chestnut-breasted whiteface. Photograph by Graeme Chapman



BUSH HERITAGE
AUSTRALIA

Catch me if you can

Patience may be a virtue. But if you're looking out for the bridled nailtail wallaby, it's also a job requirement. Just ask Bush Heritage Ecologist Murray Haseler. Lynn Clark reports.



The bridled nailtail wallaby is as elusive as it gets. Murray Haseler was ecstatic when he caught a glimpse of one in June at Goonderoo Reserve in Central Queensland. "I managed to get a clear view of the tiny kangaroo before it disappeared into the bushes. It was passing within 500m of the reserve homestead," Murray recalled. Although there is not yet evidence of a population at Goonderoo, this sighting was a very good sign.

But these kinds of experiences are few and far between as the Olive-Prothero family found during their six months as volunteer caretakers in 2009. Supporters may remember from our Winter newsletter, parents Cathy and Steve, along with children Jiri and Toby, hoping to record a nailtail on Goonderoo, but unfortunately, they weren't quite as lucky as Murray.

Way back in 1937 the bridled nailtail wallaby had been declared extinct. So when it was rediscovered some 40 years later, conservationists began breeding the species in captivity. While any bridled nailtail is better than none, Murray won't be happy until he is sure this marsupial is reproducing in the wild in sufficient numbers and its offspring are surviving in the face of predators. Murray has been busily trapping and conducting wildlife conservation studies for much of his career, previously with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and other state agencies, before being appointed by Bush Heritage in 2003.

Only a few wild populations of this wallaby still exist. A number of bridled nailtails were reintroduced to Avocet, adjacent to Goonderoo, between 2001 and 2005, in the hope the animals would eventually broaden their habitat range to feed and breed on Goonderoo as well.

To what extent this has happened, Murray is not sure, but in hopeful anticipation, he and our reserve managers are doing their best to make the habitat on Goonderoo as suitable and productive as possible. That means, in part, protecting the nailtail's preferred habitat: brigalow, a silvery wattle tree that forms a dense shrubby woodland. About 90 per cent of Australia's brigalow has been lost over the last 200 years, leaving the nailtail only a few scattered patches in which to live.

So the battle for the nailtail begins with saving our brigalow forests, like those found at Goonderoo. Like much of the brigalow forests in the region, Goonderoo's brigalow has been flattened with a bulldozer and chains in order to introduce an African pasture grass called buffel grass, as feed for cattle.

Buffel is highly competitive and productive, but it's not until a fire comes through that it reveals its secret weapon: while brigalow will quickly succumb to repeated burns, buffel loves fire.

Dr Jim Radford, Bush Heritage Science and Monitoring Manager, says "Buffel is highly flammable – it burns hot then regenerates to grow back thicker and stronger than ever. The problem is that buffel not only chokes out native grasses and shrubs, it fuels fire outbreaks. Wherever buffel is thriving without grazing pressure, you risk frequent, intense burns. These continual fires will eventually eradicate the brigalow."

Brigalow's dislike for fire is well known to cattle farmers, who often use fire as a tool to make brigalow country more suitable for running cattle. At Goonderoo, our team have turned that situation on its head: rather than using fire to make way for cattle, our team is using cattle to fight fire.



Could you be a birdwatcher?

Andrew Black's top tips for bird identification:



- 1 Bring binoculars to the eyes, not vice versa, so that the bird is in view immediately.
- 2 Observe size, shape, colour, markings and flight pattern.
- 3 It takes time to learn bird calls but it is worth the effort.
- 4 Some birds have characteristic behaviours including feeding methods and mode of movement.
- 5 Make detailed notes before looking in a field guide.

Want to try your hand at birdwatching? Why not join us for a Guided Tour of Yourka Reserve, which more than 100 bird species call home, including the red goshawk, the tawny frogmouth and the white-bellied sea eagle. See page 10 or www.bushheritage.org.au/getting_involved_visit for more. Don't forget your binoculars!

Cattle might sound like unwelcome visitors on a conservation reserve, but at Goonderoo, they have become the unlikely answer to an ecological challenge: as it happens, cattle are very good lawnmowers, and they love buffel.

Murray and the team decided to introduce cattle to chew down the buffel, in turn allowing the brigalow and other fire-sensitive species to flourish and eventually shade out the buffel. This arrangement suits the nailtail just fine – since it's such a tiny animal (standing not much taller than a crow) it prefers low-cropped grasses and finds tall, dense grass difficult to negotiate.

While this is a nifty solution in the fight to protect the nailtail's brigalow habitat, it's not the only technique used to manage ecosystems on Goonderoo. Brigalow sits among other ecosystems on the property which have very different requirements. A system of fire breaks and controlled burning is needed, as well as close cooperation with the neighbours. While some ecosystems at Goonderoo require burning to regenerate them, others don't.

Just like at Goonderoo, this summer is a big time for all your Bush Heritage reserves: our reserve teams across the country will work to manage for fire on each of these reserves. And all the while at Avocet,

the bridled nailtail continues to fight for survival. Let's hope that one day soon, the nailtail will make its home at Goonderoo Reserve too and Murray will be ringing in, excited, to say that his patience – and your wonderful support – has been rewarded with sightings of more wallabies ... and perhaps, sticking out from their pouches, he'll see pairs of little ears.

Murray and his team's work to provide healthy habitat for the nail tail wallaby at Goonderoo Reserve is made possible by supporters like you. Thank you for your ongoing support.

Left: By returning the brigalow woods to their natural state, Murray is hopeful that more baby bridled nailtail wallabies will be born and survive in the wild. Photograph by Hugo Spooner

Above: Birdwatching expert Andrew Black at Bon Bon Station Reserve. Photograph by Glen Norris

The art of birdwatching

Continued from front page

Andrew's association with Bush Heritage began in 2006 after Bush Heritage supporters rallied together to purchase Boolcoomatta Reserve. Having spent time on this property previously, he was familiar with its birdlife and immediately offered his time. It was a similar situation in 2008 when Bon Bon Station became the 24th Bush Heritage Reserve.

Bon Bon is 217,000 hectares and is unique for its diversity of vegetation. Its desert landscape is dotted with shimmering salt lakes, freshwater wetlands, gracefully twisting western myall trees and expanses of pearl bluebush. Birdlife includes the thick-billed grasswren (nationally vulnerable), Bourke's parrot, Gilbert's whistler and the chestnut-breasted whiteface (only found in arid parts of South Australia).

Andrew helps Bush Heritage by identifying birds, taking part in annual surveys, and teaching Glen the basics of bird identification.

Other things Glen now looks out for are the size, shape and colour of the bird, any unusual behaviour, and the sounds they make.

"One of the highlights was seeing the chestnut-breasted whiteface," says Glen. "By the end of the week I was very confident that I could identify this bird."

Glen says Andrew's contribution to Bush Heritage is priceless. "He's well respected in all bird circles throughout South Australia and I feel privileged to spend time with him. His contribution to the bird work out here has been amazing."

Andrew reckons anyone can take up bird watching. "All you really need is a bit of ingenuity, a pair of binoculars and time. Birds are beautiful creatures. In some cases the beauty is subtle – such as patterns on feathers and wings. That's the appeal; it's an opportunity to observe some of the wild creatures that share this planet and it's truly wonderful."

Bon Bon Station Reserve was purchased with the assistance of the Australian Government. The reserve is managed for nature conservation as part of the National Reserve System. Thanks also to the Besen Family Foundation for supporting conservation management of Bon Bon Station Reserve this year.

Around your reserves in 90 days

The Bush Heritage team lives and works in all sorts of places across our wide brown land, just like our many Bush Heritage supporters. They're up early each day, working to make a difference to the future of our landscapes and our unique plants and animals. Lucy Ashley gives a taste of what they've been up to.

New species for Charles Darwin Reserve



Charles Darwin Reserve continues to surprise and amaze our ecologists and supporters with the discovery of yet more ecological riches. In September, the reserve hosted an Earthwatch Survey Group of Earthwatch and Bush Heritage staff, volunteers from BHP Billiton Iron Ore and scientists from Edith Cowan University. In one week the group laid 144 pitfall traps across the reserve, capturing and releasing a total of 182 animals. The group was over the moon to learn that ten of the species trapped (nine reptiles and a mammal) are first sightings on the reserve. Earthwatch Director of Field Management Jen Alger said there was particular excitement when *Notomys mitchelli* (Mitchell's hopping mouse) was identified and added to the reserve's official species list. "We were thrilled to conduct such a large-scale biodiversity survey at this spectacular reserve. Next year, we hope to send in three more teams and keep adding to the list."

Winning the war on weeds

Every winter for the last three years, resolute Bush Heritage volunteers have converged on Nardoo Hills reserves with one thing on their mind: weed control. The team's efforts have seen huge reductions in the incidence and spread of both wheel cactus and Patterson's curse.

"This season we've made a huge dent in the Patterson's curse," said Bush Heritage Field Officer Jeroen van Veen. "Native species like kangaroo grass and spear grass are flourishing. These grasses provide seed that the diamond firetail feeds on, and is important for the hooded robin as well, so this is a real positive for these threatened species."



Before: September 2009 After: October 2010

Island life looks pretty good

In our last newsletter we gave a sneak peek of what life might be like on Tasmania's King George Island, bequeathed to Bush Heritage by the late Henry Baldwin. Since then, we have opened the doors and put this stunning island on the market, with much interest from potential buyers. Al Dermer said "We've had a lot of people express interest in the island. It's not surprising that people are attracted to such a beautiful place – it speaks volumes about the importance of keeping precious places like this protected." Bush Heritage assisted with the drafting of a conservation covenant for the island to ensure its conservation values are protected forever, as was Henry's wish. Proceeds of the sale will help our work to protect the Australian bush and its unique species.

When it rains...

In 2010, one topic has always made the headlines at Bush Heritage's weekly phone link-up with reserve managers and ecologists from around the country – rain, or the lack of it. This has been the 'year of the big wet' for our normally arid central Queensland reserves. At Carnarvon Station Reserve, just over one meter of rain fell from January to October – well above the average of 657 millimetres. The town of Boulia, near Cravens Peak and Ethabuka, had 336 mm instead of the average 210 millimetres. But, in WA it's a different story. While Charles Darwin Reserve's average rainfall for January to October is 265 mm, the reserve received just 127 mm for the same period this year. "In spring last year there were wildflowers everywhere," says Reserve Manager Dale Fuller, "but now it's the driest I've seen it since we've been here."

Mission accepted



Thank you! Generous supporters like you have ensured that freshwater ecologist, Dr Adam Kerezszy, can continue his vital work to save the red-finned blue-eye on your Edgbaston Reserve. In October we asked supporters to help save this critically endangered native fish, and you've responded generously. Continuing rain has delayed his plans but we've just got news that Adam is only days away from departing for Edgbaston. There, he'll start controlling the feral gambusia and relocating some red-finned blue-eyes to establish new populations. The Federal government has now given approval for our program under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*, and we now await only state approval.

Flying Doctor field day



Imagine if you lived 200km from the nearest town and your family member became dangerously ill. Would you know what to do? Thanks to a recent Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) field day at Carnarvon, Reserve Manager Chris Wilson and Field Officer Cathy Zwick can answer "yes" to just that question. The field day, hosted by Bush Heritage, allowed Chris, Cathy, and 18 of their neighbours to refresh their knowledge of remote first aid and emergency evacuation procedures. RFDS Senior Pilot, Roger Rudduck, stressed the importance of maintaining airstrips and outlined simple ways to nightlight strips, from tins of sand soaked in diesel, to battery-powered landing flares.



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A change in the feather



Bush Heritage Ecologist Sandy Gilmore has been busy at Tarcutta Reserve, undertaking ecological condition monitoring of bird species. According to Sandy, increased rainfall this year has led to an improved vegetation response, which has driven a change in the status of various native bird-feeding groups or 'guilds'. "During our drier times we see a lot of flowering eucalypts which attract nectarivorous species such as the red wattle bird and noisy friar bird. With the wetter weather we're seeing fewer trees flowering but more crown growth and subsequently more leaf litter. Native birds have responded to this resource change and crown-feeders such as the rufous whistler, and ground-foragers such as the buff-rumped thornbill are more abundant." Sandy believes this resource boom, coupled with the general excellent condition of Tarcutta, has led to his first sightings of the superb parrot and painted honeyeater, both of which are listed as nationally vulnerable.

Photography by: New species for Charles Darwin – Catherine Hunt; Winning the war on weeds – Jeroen van Veen; Flying Doctor field day – Cathy Zwick; A change in the feather – Rob Drummond / Birds Australia



Tracks in the dunes

Nella Lithgow describes the life and work she shares with fellow Reserve Manager and husband Mark (and all the critters) at Cravens Peak and Ethabuka reserves. Interview by Fiona Rutkay.

Mark and I love the adventure and challenge of this job. We have a monumental piece of outback to take care of, and it's magnificent.

Walking over a sand dune in the morning is a delight. The dunes are full of tracks heading in all directions. You can see where animals met up the previous night, and that a dispute went on in another spot, followed by a chase. It's like a big storybook.

In the past year one of our biggest projects has been to control feral animals, which range from cats through to camels. We've had far fewer camels on the property since we dried up the dams they like to drink from.

We've also repaired fence lines to help control feral animals and keep cattle off the property. Fencing, along with de-stocking, has meant there's far more in the way of smaller shrubs and trees coming up because they haven't been trampled and eaten.



As the vegetation has increased, so has the number of native animals. Our smaller rodents and mammals are having a great time now and our birdlife has increased enormously. At the moment the place is full of budgies. That means there's plenty of food and lots of seeds that come from the extra vegetation.

I'm optimistic about the future of conservation. We're working in cattle country and we're the odd ones out. Saying that, people often ask us about plants they've found on their properties. When our ecologist Max Tischler was here, workers from neighbouring stations came over and were full of questions about the animal life in the area.

We're making a difference – and farmers and locals are starting to see that. When you can see the changes in people in these more conservative areas, that's a positive thing.

“You can see where animals met up the previous night, and that a dispute went on in another spot, followed by a chase.”

Cravens Peak and Ethabuka reserves were purchased with the assistance of the Australian Government. The reserves are managed for nature conservation as part of the National Reserve System. We would also like to acknowledge The Nature Conservancy for their generous support of this work.

Above: Photograph by Peter Morris / www.petermorrisphoto.com

Top right: James Armstrong (right), Jerramungup student. Photograph by Anne Sparrow

Middle right: The rarely seen black-backed snake. Photograph by Greg Harold

Bottom right: Juvenile Banjo frog. Photograph by Anne Sparrow



“The excursion was cool because we got to build habitats in the bush and release our wildlife that we had collected.”

– James Armstrong, Jerramungup student

Residence for reptiles

Yarrabee Reserve might have seemed a little unappealing for a reptile in search of a home, writes John Sampson, but some nifty thinking and a few willing hands have found ways to offer reptile habitat while Yarrabee's trees grow.

If you'd walked onto Yarrabee Wesfarmers Reserve in 2006 when Bush Heritage and Greening Australia first bought the property, you'd have seen a lot of cleared land and a fair bit of rubbish. “A conservation reserve?” you may have asked. But sometimes, all it takes to see some potential is a vision – like that of Bush Heritage, for instance.

“There was quite a lot of rubbish on the property from old farming days,” says Simon Smale, Bush Heritage's Landscape Manager in Western Australia. “Old machinery and building materials were just strewn around the place.”

Lying on the eastern boundary of the Stirling Range National Park, Yarrabee is one of Bush Heritage's properties within the massive Gondwana Link project. But unlike its siblings Monjebup, Chereninup and Peniup reserves, Yarrabee was bought more for its potential and its key role in the connection of the GLink corridor, than for its current conservation values.

And despite two dry summers following initial restoration efforts, new bushland plantings are starting to come into their own, and will eventually provide habitat for species such as Carnaby's cockatoo, black-gloved wallabies and honey possums.

But until then animals such as snakes and lizards will be hard-pressed to find appropriate accommodation in the more cleared areas of Yarrabee, and that's where Bush Heritage Ecologist Angela Sanders' genius has come into play.

Angela had been eyeing off the junk building material lying around Yarrabee for quite some time, and was just waiting for an opportunity to put it to good use.

“One thing that takes a long time to develop in restoration areas is fallen timber,” she says. “And a lot of reptile fauna need fallen timber for shelter.”

“I was keen to make use of all the debris, the sheets of iron and piles of timber lying around the property, and turn it into homes for skinks, geckos, snakes and goannas.”

The final piece in the jigsaw was the intervention of Anne Sparrow from the Fitzgerald Biosphere Group, who invited students from Jerramungup District High School as part of WA's Bush Rangers Program.

“After studying what makes good shelter for snakes and lizards, and learning how to treat these animals with caution and respect, the students ventured into Yarrabee Reserve with the mission of turning old sheets of disused iron and piles of timber into new reptile habitat,” says Anne. “They were given free reign to use their creativity, as long as they kept in mind the elements that make for ship-shape reptile homes.”

And what the kids turned up excited even Angela, who was thrilled when they discovered swimming skinks, marbled geckos, a Rosenberg's goanna, and five black-backed snakes, which are rarely seen and are a record find for the property.

This work was carried out as part of the Western Australia's Bush Rangers program, which teaches kids from Year 8 up about conservation research and management, takes them on camps and shows them how to survive in the bush.



Two decades of desert

There's something about Ethabuka's big skies, little critters and red desert dust that University of Sydney scientist Chris Dickman just can't get enough of, as Fiona Rutkay discovered.



Chris Dickman with a sandy inland mouse. Photograph by Aaron Greenville

For scientist Chris Dickman, Beethoven is the perfect desert soundtrack. There are sonatas for looking at the stars and symphonies that embody the dramatic desert rains. "If the others let me get away with it, I'll play Beethoven whenever I can," says Chris.

For 20 years, the softly spoken ex-Englishman has been driving over Ethabuka's dunes in a quest to unlock the secrets of its amazing biodiversity. The property, purchased in 2004 with the help of Bush Heritage supporters, is home to one of the most diverse systems of plants and animals seen in any desert environment in the world.

Chris Dickman is a Professor of Ecology at the University of Sydney and has recently been named NSW scientist of the year in the Plant and Animal Sciences section. When he's not on the land mapping vegetation and monitoring animals, he's busy writing papers and books on wildlife and conservation.

After graduating in science from Leeds University in the mid '70s, Chris travelled through the Iranian deserts, central Afghanistan and Israel's Negev desert. "I was fascinated with how the world works and how life manages to persist in some of the harsher parts of the world," says Chris.

He was drawn to Australia because it was "a 45 million-year experiment in evolution, isolated from the world for a vast amount

of time. In terms of the biology, there's nowhere else like it."

In 1990, Chris travelled to the Simpson Desert National Park to look for animal and plant life, but found it overrun by rabbits. Ethabuka, however, was rabbit-free. Chris was immediately seduced. "You could take a morning stroll on the dunes and it was just a superhighway of small mammal and lizard tracks."

Ethabuka has since become like a second home, where Chris spends two to three months a year. "It has a very clean feeling about it. There's a strong contrast between the red of the sand and the blue of the sky. It's a starkly beautiful place as well as being harsh."

So harsh, in fact, that one summer's day, the high temperature of the sand melted the glue on one of his shoes, causing the sole to fall off. Chris admits, "At the end of a summer desert trip you're feeling pretty hot and frazzled. If you spend very long out there, you do find yourself thinking, 'I wish I could just dive into the surf'."

Yet Chris returns again and again. "Seeing how it could change was quite a revelation. I had an expectation it was a more static place, like a forest. The desert can change almost before your eyes."

Returning to the same place over a long period allows scientists to recognise patterns in plant and animal behaviour.

It is only now, for example, after observing successive big rains, that Chris is starting to unlock the mysteries of spinifex's seeding patterns and the effects it may have on the rodent population.

Chris's research on Ethabuka has influenced reserve managers' conservation techniques, from feral animal control to the way they conduct controlled burning. Monitoring also enables managers to locate and track the numbers and responses of vulnerable species. On his next trip to the reserve, Chris will relocate goannas to assess the effects they have had on other desert species.

Another bonus of Chris's 20 years at Ethabuka has been the opportunity to train countless students in the desert environment, and more recently, to share his knowledge with Bush Heritage ecologists, reserve managers and volunteers.

Chris is happy to think that in the future, Bush Heritage will continue his monitoring work when "the wheelchair won't get over the sand dunes".

Bush Heritage Ecologist, Max Tischler, is just one who has benefited from Chris's wisdom over the years. "He has an infectious thirst for knowledge," says Max, "and an incredible dedication to conservation. We're privileged to have one of the most highly regarded ecologists, not just here but internationally, helping guide our management and protecting these important places."

Chris enjoys the camaraderie that develops between ecologists and volunteers on desert trips. "After hearing stories, telling hopeless jokes and chewing over the day's experiences by the campfire," says Chris, "you get to know people quite well. By the end of the trip you feel like you can let your hair down a bit."

He's known to let his hair down with an 'emu dance' that's as singular as some of the animals he studies. "It's probably a hybrid from looking at emus and watching old Monty Python films," Chris theorises, when pressed for more information.

Right now, though, it's a new trip he's thinking about. News has just come in from Reserve Manager, Mark Lithgow, that the roads are finally open after the big rains left them stranded for weeks. Chris is wasting no time – he's heading home to pack his bags for Ethabuka, to record and study the colourful carpets of wildflowers, the millions of budgies and the explosion of fauna.

"We've got nearly 21 years of information from Ethabuka, which is a fabulous baseline. We can use that to look at the effects of future climate change and different land management practices. The more that data is extended into the future, the more valuable it will become. That's the legacy."

Ethabuka Reserve was purchased with the assistance of the Australian Government. The reserve is managed for nature conservation as part of the National Reserve System. We would also like to acknowledge The Nature Conservancy for their generous support of this work.

Bush Heritage supporters Chris Dickman, Libby Robin and Mandy Martin are co-editors of *Desert Channels: The Impulse to Conserve*, a stunning book which explores the 'impulse to conserve' in the distinctive Desert Channels country of south-western Queensland, especially Ethabuka and Cravens Peak reserves. Bush Heritage scientists, ex-board members and science partners are among the book's list of highly respected contributors. Published by CSIRO Publishing and available now. To buy a copy, visit www.bushheritage.org.au/desertchannels.html

Chris's top four desert critters

Asking Chris Dickman to nominate his favourite desert animal is like asking a parent to choose their favourite child. After some deliberation, he decided he couldn't come up with just one. Instead he's decided to tell us about his top four.



Hairy-footed dunnart

"In terms of cute and cuddly, the hairy-footed dunnart probably has the edge. Sometimes they call it the hobbit marsupial because it's got really huge hind feet, but it's not a jumping marsupial. It has a beautiful white belly, great big ears and great big eyes. It's a really beautiful little animal."



Mulgara

"It's a compact little animal with a conical-shaped head. Its tail looks a bit like a carrot, bright red at the base and black at the tip, where it stores fat for later consumption. The mulgara's got attitude. You can sometimes see the tracks from a mulgara running at top speed, hunting down a gecko or another small mammal. They're voracious predators."



Thorny devil

"I've chosen the thorny devil because it's probably the most bizarre lizard in the world. It's usually the favourite of the volunteers – guaranteed to get all the cameras out and have everyone ooh and aah. It's a great little beast."



Knob-tailed gecko

"Knob-tailed geckos are irresistibly beautiful. They have a triangular-shaped tail, with a little knob at the end of it, and if they think there might be something odd going on, they waggle the knob around. They've got huge great eyes, and they're just looking at you, wagging this little ball at the end of their tail. It's very endearing."

Photography by: Hairy-footed dunnart – Leanne Hales; Mulgara – Jiri Lochman / Lochman Transparencies; Knob-tailed gecko – Wayne Lawler / Ecopix

Ready for a Bush holiday?

Red dust, big skies and long shadows – isn't it time you got out into the Australian bush you help to protect? We welcome Bush Heritage supporters to visit the following reserves in 2011.



Scottsdale Reserve, NSW

Saturday 2 April, 2011 (9am – 4pm)

This gorgeous property, located on an untouched stretch of the Murrumbidgee River, offers refuge for some of the area's most threatened species. You'll experience Scottsdale's thriving community of endangered grassy box gum woodlands, home to many rare birds and reptiles including gang-gang cockatoos, diamond firetails, hooded robins, and Rosenberg's goanna.

Transport Make your own way to Scottsdale (2WD access), then you'll be on foot.

Facilities There is a composting toilet on site.

Food Morning tea provided. BYO picnic lunch.

Nearest town Bredbo (4km)

Cost \$30 for supporters / \$40 for non-supporters

Photographs by Katrina Blake

Carnarvon Station Reserve, QLD

Friday 13 – Monday 16 May, 2011

Carnarvon is a breathtaking and remarkably diverse property located in the heart of central Queensland. You'll see Carnarvon's dramatic outcrops, natural springs, streams and grassy woodlands. Your visit may include viewing sites of cultural significance to the Bidjara people, learning about seed harvesting.

Transport You'll need a high-clearance 4WD for travel to and around the reserve. Make your own way to the reserve, where you'll meet up with your guide.

Facilities Accommodation is in the old homestead and railway barracks.

Food Breakfasts and dinners provided. BYO lunches.

Nearest town Augathella (200km)

Cost \$750 for supporters / \$850 for non-supporters

Yourka Reserve, QLD

Friday 3 – Monday 6 June, 2011

Yourka Reserve is situated on the western edge of Queensland's Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. This magnificent conservation reserve protects over 39 ecosystems, a number of which are not protected anywhere else on earth. The red goshawk, Australia's most threatened bird of prey with only 700 breeding pairs left in the world, is one of at least 23 threatened species protected on the reserve.

Transport You'll need a high-clearance 4WD for travel to and around the reserve. Make your own way to the reserve, where you'll meet up with your guide.

Facilities Accommodation in swags under the open shed or in tents.

Food Breakfasts and dinners provided. BYO lunches.

Nearest town Ravenshoe (70km)

Cost \$630 for supporters / \$730 for non-supporters

Self-guided camping and daytrips

You can visit some of our reserves as a self-guided camping or daytrip from the beginning of April to the end of September each year. See the map (right) to plan your visit. For information go to www.bushheritage.org.au/getting_involved_visit. Bookings are essential – contact us on 1300 NATURE (1300 628 873) or (03) 8610 9100 or email visits@bushheritage.org.au.



- Self-guided daytrips ●
- Self-guided camping ●
- 2011 Guided tours ●

Supporter spot: Michael Williams

In towns and cities, farms and homes around Australia, Bush Heritage supporters just like you are helping to protect our unique landscapes. As Bush Heritage approaches its 20th anniversary, we meet a supporter who's been with us all the way.



Michael Williams is passionate about preserving the Australian bush and is President of the Mackay Conservation Group. He is also a leader in children's health and is the Director of Child and Adolescent Health at Mackay Base Hospital. Michael and his wife Margaret have visited Carnarvon and Cravens Peak reserves on guided tours, and in September we welcomed Michael as a Bush Heritage member, after nearly twenty years as a supporter.

Q: Which place in the Australian bush is most special to you?

A: I love the diversity of Australia's bush, but growing up in Victoria, spending as much time as I could on a farm with nearby bush, the tall eucalypt forests have a sentimental attachment. As a child I was devastated to see the destruction of the Heytesbury forest (near the town of Cobden in south-west Victoria).

Q: Can you remember the moment you first decided to support Bush Heritage in 1991?

A: I remember being excited by the concept of the people buying back the bush to prevent what happened at Heytesbury from happening again, with an increasingly aggressive logging industry. I was impressed by Bob Brown's selfless stand and leadership to preserve the Liffey bush block, the beginning of Bush Heritage.

Q: What part do you think the bush plays in Australian identity?

A: Away from air conditioning and shopping malls we can build a familiarity with the smells, sounds and sights of our bush. It is the unique evolutionary expression of our climate and landscape, which we grow up in. It often is rugged and tenacious. As a community we may identify with these traits.

Q: What did you see on your 2003 visit to Carnarvon Station Reserve that convinced you Bush Heritage deserved your ongoing support?

A: It is a magnificent property adjacent to a national park, a great strategic purchase. The managers were outstanding – dedicated, talented and enthusiastic – and already demonstrating significant outcomes such as feral animal reduction. The volunteer program was running well, with the skilled supervision of the managers.

Q: What are your favourite Australian animals?

A: I love seeing the wallabies, the sea eagles, the dolphins, turtles, whales, the flying foxes and even the scrub turkeys from our home in Mackay. I worry about the 15 million (I understand) feral cats each eating five native animals a day in Australia.

Q: What image from your guided tour of Cravens Peak Reserve in June this year remains strongest in your mind?

A: The red sands, the white trunks of the river red gums, the flowers, the huge vistas, the stars, the campfire, the fantastic food, and of course Nella and Mark (Reserve Managers at Cravens Peak).

Photograph by Darryl Wright

In celebration

We received a generous donation from **Kathleen Kean** who requested donations to Bush Heritage in lieu of gifts, for her 21st birthday! Ms Janet Mayer donated to celebrate her grandson **Harry Jessup's** birthday. Fred and Joy Docking donated to celebrate their son and daughter-in-law **Andrew** and **Elizabeth's** birthdays. Linda Jackson celebrated the marriage of **Jo and David Cassam** with a donation. Ms Elkie White donated in celebration of her friends' wedding in England.

In memory

John Clarke made a gift in memory of **Marie Clarke**, whose legacy made possible this donation for conservation work on Scottsdale Reserve. Friends and family donated on behalf of **Ina Moss**. **Jenny Gaze** was also remembered by many who donated in her memory.

Wild gifts

Dreaming of a green Christmas?

If you care about Australia's wildlife, you'll love Bush Heritage's WILDgifts. For gifts that protect our natural heritage, visit www.wildgifts.org.au

FROM THE CEO



Photograph by becwalton.com.au

Every time I get on a plane (which is often, due to the far-flung locations of our properties, partnerships and supporters) I aim for a window seat. The geographer comes out in me.

I can't resist the attempt to work out precisely where I am, look at the influences on the landscape and watch the topography and colours change.

The flight from Brisbane to Mt Isa is always exciting. I love travelling across the Great Dividing Range, beginning at the ocean and ending in the outback. The flight path takes you directly over Queensland's Central Highlands and Bush Heritage's Carnarvon Station Reserve. I can see the "big shed", as it has become known to the Bush Heritage team, where we store harvested native grass seeds collected on site, and the native grasslands we are protecting and rehabilitating, and I can see how the season is going. Closing in on Mt Isa, I see the massive sweep of the Diamantina River and I watch as the arid land systems come into play.

Looking at the landscape in this way enables me to see and contemplate at a macro level how we can influence the protection of high conservation value areas: the importance of landscape connectivity (joining together important remnants be it at regional or continental scale) and how a single road can affect visual amenity and influence drainage. Even at 30,000 feet it is clear there is still much to be done to better manage our extraordinary landscape.

As a part of Bush Heritage, you and I are in the position to make such a difference. Together, we have celebrated many accomplishments. Many of these have been achieved in the last year and I am proud to invite you to view these accomplishments online through our Annual Conservation and Annual Financial reports at www.bushheritage.org.au/annual_reports.

When you do, I hope you feel the same sense of pride I do: pride in your ability to make a difference and pride in what we have accomplished together. And, next time you're on a plane, see if you can identify one of our properties; many of them are visible from a number of Australia's major commercial routes!



BUSH HERITAGE
AUSTRALIA

Our heart & soul

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