

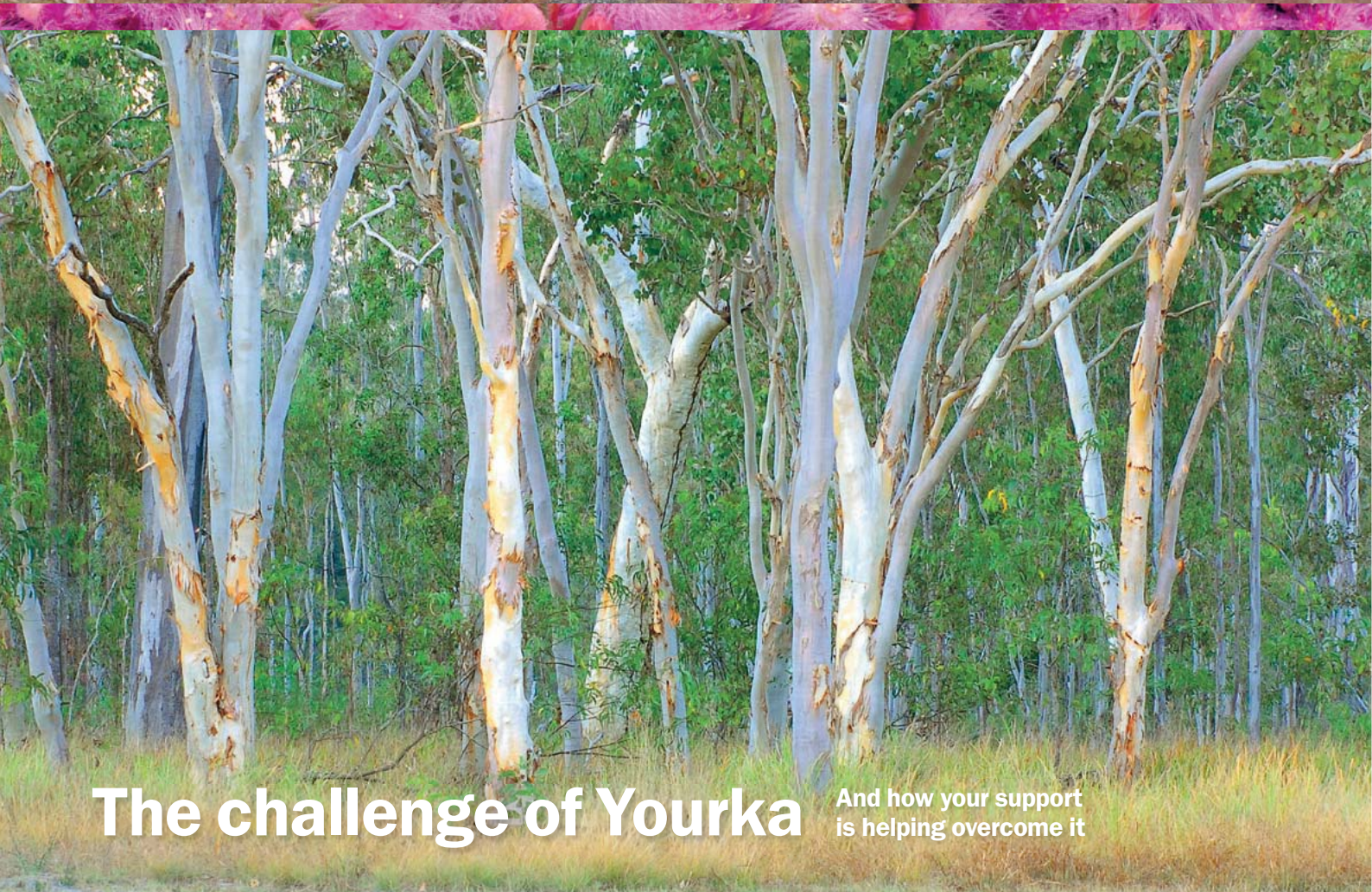
# BUSH HERITAGE NEWS

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## The challenge of Yourka And how your support is helping overcome it

**Five years ago, Yourka Reserve was a spectacular yet rambling place, waiting to be discovered. In 2012, reserve managers Paul and Leanne Hales look back on how far the reserve has come, as they face its biggest challenge yet.**

In October 2008, Paul and Leanne Hales paid a visit to a rugged property in Central Queensland, with flowing creeks and billabongs, where the landscape was rugged and lush. The place was Yourka Reserve, which Bush Heritage supporters had helped to buy in 2007. It was a stark contrast to the home that Paul and Leanne had shared for the previous

three years as Bush Heritage reserve managers on the rolling, sandplain heaths of your Eurardy Reserve, Western Australia.

“At first Yourka felt a little claustrophobic,” says Leanne, who has since walked the hillsides and creeklines of Yourka Reserve countless times, in her role as co-reserve manager with husband Paul. “We were struck by the diversity of vegetation, the lush landscape and the closeness of our surroundings. At Eurardy, we’d become used to being taller than the surrounding vegetation. We were used to seeing a long way when we looked out to the horizon.”

“We were struck by the diversity of vegetation, the lush landscape and the closeness of our surroundings.”

*Above: White gums at Bush Heritage's Yourka Reserve, QLD  
Photograph by Wayne Lawler / Ecopix*



**BUSH HERITAGE**  
AUSTRALIA

*Our heart & soul*





### The early days

When Yourka was purchased it was a beautiful and bountiful place. But as experienced land managers, Paul and Leanne could see the work ahead of them. Unlike at Eurardy, where conservation techniques were shaped around the scarcity of water, Yourka's forested hillsides and rocky outcrops presented a different challenge.

"Bush Heritage bought the place just as two really big wet seasons took hold – there was water everywhere," says Paul. "The roads and tracks were overgrown and you could hide a four-wheel-drive in some of the washouts they were so deep. It took an hour-and-a-half to travel 16km to the main shed."

In 2012, thanks in large part to the ongoing help of supporters like you, a journey across Yourka is a different story. The main shed takes just fifteen minutes to drive to, with high-quality roads serviced regularly.

"We started to build quality roads," says Paul. "That's so important – because without access you can't have land management," he says. "And without land management, you can't have conservation – it's essential for weed control, fire management and species monitoring."

### A landscape of storms

One thing that hasn't changed is the weather. Cyclones and storms regularly bring torrents of water that break the banks of the magnificent Herbert River creek system. In the summer of 2011, after successive flooding rains, Yourka Reserve was in the eye of Cyclone Yasi.

When Paul flew over Yourka two weeks later, "it was carnage. Trees were down and infrastructure was damaged, although thankfully not a lot. The roads stood up well, but trees had fallen across them. The neighbours accessed their property by boat for a month afterwards, and we had to travel by quad bike, with a chainsaw, clearing the fallen trees as we went."

Generous donations from Bush Heritage supporters together with funds from the Queensland Flood Relief program enabled the Hales to get Yourka back on track.

"Each year we're better placed to deal with the weather that is thrown at us," says Paul. "It means that we can start to face up to other challenges."

### Siam weed, the next big challenge

Of all the challenges the Hales face at Yourka, one is most pressing. Once the summer wet season arrives, bringing rains that replenish the landscape and set the vegetation on its yearly growth spurt, the green of the kangaroo grasses and ironbark trees will be swallowed up by the choking, twisting green of siam weed.

As one of our ecologists said recently, "Siam weed may well be the greatest threat faced by any Bush Heritage reserve." And this means that Paul and Leanne have some hard work ahead of them. Even with the improved roads, Leanne and Paul must walk every kilometre of creek line, getting down on their hands and knees, and crawling through infested areas.

"It's incredibly hard yakka, but in a way," says Leanne, "it's the most exciting thing we could achieve at Yourka – to control this weed. There is a lot to be done, but the importance of the work makes us all the more determined."



"Siam weed may well be the greatest threat faced by any Bush Heritage reserve."

*Yourka Reserve was acquired in 2007 with the assistance of Ian and Nan Landon-Smith, the Australian Government under the Maintaining Australia's Biodiversity Hotspots Programme, The Nature Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy's David Thomas Challenge.*

*Yourka Reserve Siam weed: Extermination in critical and containable sub-catchment is supported through funding from the Australian Government's Clean Energy Future Biodiversity Fund.*

*Top: Volunteer Wayne Lewis on the hunt for siam weed among lantana at Yourka Reserve, QLD Photograph by Kim Ely*

*Right: Cameron Creek Bend, Yourka Reserve, QLD Photograph by Wayne Lawler / Ecopix*

### Help Paul and Leanne

Please support Paul and Leanne in their struggle to rid Yourka Reserve of siam weed. Your donation will make a very real difference:  
[www.bushheritage.org.au/donate](http://www.bushheritage.org.au/donate)





Left: Ecologist Angela Sanders with a red-tailed phascogale  
 Right: Your support helps to maintain healthy wandoo woodland, appealing habitat for phascogales.  
 Photographs by Geoff Corrick



## Cosy at Kojonup

**You helped a group of tiny nocturnal marsupials find a new home on Kojonup Reserve in March 2010. Two years on, we report on the phascogales' progress.**

By Fiona Rutkay

Once widespread throughout Western Australia, the red-tailed phascogale is now an endangered species, restricted to a small area in the state's southwest.

Bush Heritage partnered with the WA Department of Environment and Conservation in 2010 to give these small, vulnerable, marsupials a new home. The Department chose your Kojonup Reserve as the new home for 30 of these tiny, pouchless creatures, largely because your ongoing support of feral animal control gives them a chance to breed and a better chance at survival.

Two years later Bush Heritage ecologist Angela Sanders and volunteer Geoff Corrick headed out for their annual population monitoring survey.

During the five days of their survey, Angela and Geoff recorded eight phascogales in the she-oak woodlands where the phascogales were released, seven of which had not been captured before. One phascogale was found in nearby wandoo woodland – appealing habitat for a phascogale, with hollows that are ideal for nesting and a plentiful supply of insects for food.

It was the first time Geoff had worked with animals, and he relished the chance. He applied the skills he'd used monitoring vegetation and soils on other Bush Heritage reserves, to the phascogale monitoring. "I'm keen to just help to preserve what we have – and I wanted to take the opportunity to get out into the bush and learn," says Geoff.

Geoff and Angela laid out traps, enticing the phascogales with five-star treatment – winding the traps in gladwrap in case of rain, leaving bait of peanut butter and oats, and a ball of alpaca wool for warmth.

They monitored the traps and checked the artificial nesting boxes for droppings and sleeping phascogales. Geoff took the chance to study the endangered creatures up close. "They've got beautiful little feet. You can see right through the skin – the feet look like they're all tendons."

"The phascogales seem to have taken well to their new environment," says ecologist Angela Sanders. "This is a long-term project though, so it will be a while before we can know for sure that they will survive. Control of feral animals is a key part of helping to protect the phascogales. Just one or two foxes can threaten the entire population."

Angela will return for at least three annual surveys to determine whether the translocation has been a success. Thanks to you, the phascogales are safer in their homes at Kojonup.

"Given that we've done such a lot of damage to our native species," says Geoff, "it's about trying to preserve what's left."

### How your support is helping phascogales

- Monitoring and maintaining the health of wandoo woodland, appealing phascogale habitat
- Baiting prevents rabbits from eating sheoak seedlings, which attract insects and other food sources for phascogales
- Controlling feral predators, such as foxes and cats

### Thank you

Thanks to your generous response to our recent feral animal campaign, vital feral control work is underway to protect animals like the phascogale at Kojonup and the critically endangered red-finned blue-eye at Edgbaston Reserve, Queensland. Thank you!

### In memory

Many friends donated in memory of Peter Human, a generous supporter of the Australian bush and father of Doug Humann. Margaret Allen donated in memory of Sylvia Keech, "a keen conservationist of 98 years". Rosemary Boeren donated in memory of her husband Steve.

### In celebration

Friends and family donated in celebration of Joy Fletcher's 60th birthday. Susan Robertson made a donation in celebration of J Hodges' 80th birthday.

### Bequests

Bush Heritage gratefully acknowledges the generosity of The Estate of Jocelyn Van Haren.

# Around your reserves in 90 days

Your support makes a difference in so many ways. We take a look into the successes at your reserves around Australia – achievements all made possible thanks to you.

## One, two, a thousand

An overwhelming response by Bush Heritage supporters in June has helped reserve managers around the country with their work managing feral animals, a crucial step in providing safer habitats for our native animals. Glen Norris and his team at Bon Bon Station Reserve have finished counting and mapping rabbit warrens for the season, arriving at a total of 1781 warrens in the labyrinth land system on the South Australian reserve. That's a total of 15 active warrens per hectare in the labyrinth area. As few as two rabbits per hectare can prevent the regeneration of native trees and shrubs that native animals also feed on. The next task for Glen and his team is to destroy the warrens ahead of the Summer breeding season, while maintaining the safety of the southern-hairy nosed wombats. Some rabbits have curiously taken to sharing warrens with the wombats.



Photograph by Steve Parish



## Fighting foxes from the air

Boolcoomatta Reserve was a busy place in August, when Reserve Manager Peter Ashton and his family played host to a team from the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, who together with supporters like you, are helping us to fight the problem of feral foxes from the air. “Boolcoomatta adjoins Bimbowrie Conservation Park, where they are trying to achieve similar things for the land and its native animals,” says Peter. “So we worked together – it just makes sense. The use of their plane and baits, combined with our knowledge of Boolcoomatta’s geography provides a cost-effective and efficient way to tackle the fox problem.” The program is aimed primarily at reducing the killing of yellow-footed rock wallabies by foxes. This work is especially important since Peter spotted a yellow-footed rock wallaby in the rocky outcrops of Boolcoomatta’s Olary Ranges in 2010, the first time one had been seen on the reserve since 1924. Reducing fox numbers will also benefit other native animals on the reserve, like the dusky hopping mouse and the plains wanderer.



Photograph by Jiri Lochman / Lochman Transparencies





### Blue-eye among 100 most endangered species

The world's only population of the tiny red-finned blue-eye, which (with your help) is battling for survival on your Edgbaston Reserve in central Queensland, has been listed among the world's 100 most endangered species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The IUCN's recently released report *Priceless or Worthless?* identified the fish as one of four Australian species included in the top-100 report. According to Bush Heritage aquatic ecologist Dr Adam Kerezszy, the listing highlights the urgent need to support the blue-eye in its battle against feral gambusia fish. "This could be the first known extinction of a freshwater fish in Australia unless everybody helps out," says Adam. "The listing highlights the need to consider a range of options to effectively manage the blue-eye, including maintaining captive populations in or away from Edgbaston Reserve."

**If you're in Melbourne and you'd like to hear more about the plight of the red-finned blue-eye and other arid-zone species, join Dr Adam Kerezszy for a 20-minute lunchtime presentation at The Wheeler Centre on Thursday 22 November. [www.wheelercentre.com](http://www.wheelercentre.com)**



Photograph by Annette Ruzicka

### Fire and stories

On a damp and windy day in July, a group of landowners and conservationists could be seen clustered around a number of small patchy fires on your Scottsdale Reserve. They had gathered to learn about traditional indigenous fire management practices from Rod Mason, a man with strong connections to the land. Rod is a member of the Ngarigo people who regularly passed through the land many years ago. Rod's grandmother taught him which places to camp, and about the birds, plants and trees. "There are stories about this land that come from my family," Rod said. "They tell you who you are, where you are from." Rod has been working with Bush Heritage's Regional Reserve Manager Peter Saunders and the Kosciuszko to Coast partnership to protect Scottsdale Reserve as part of the Traditional Land Management Practices program. "Working with our supporters and partners makes us much more able to achieve our conservation goals," says Peter. "Rod has an incredible knowledge of this landscape."



Photograph by Peter Saunders



# Walking with fire

**With your help, our partnership with the Wunambal Gaambera traditional landowners in the far-north Kimberley is helping protect the unique plants and wildlife of one of the most remote and little-visited corners of the globe.**

*By Kelly Irving*

One bright day in the early dry season, a team of Wunambal Gaambera rangers together with Tom Vigilante, Healthy Country Manager, were helicoptered in to one of the most remote and rugged places on earth to undertake a Bush Heritage supported Healthy Country activity.

For five long days and 50 kilometres, the team journeyed the Kimberleys' spectacular sandstone gorges and coastline – from the tops of the cliffs to the bottom of the flat plains, along the Hunter River, to the incredible Mitchell Plateau.

Their aim? To protect the area's vulnerable animals, plants and vegetation through 'right-way fire' burning. According to head ranger Neil Waina, 'right-way' burning is a traditional practice that's been carried out by his ancestors for thousands of years and has become an annual event in the rangers' work calendar. It's a unique and respectful way of burning the Wunambal Gaambera peoples' uunguu – their living home – to make the savannah country healthy and prevent destructive wildfire.

'Right-way fire' is just one part of the Healthy Country Plan – a ten-year conservation agreement between the Wunambal Gaambera traditional landowners and Bush Heritage. It integrates the strong body of traditional knowledge about the ecology of the Australian bush with western scientific methods, to ensure the lands you assist Wunambal Gaambera people to manage are conserved for generations to come.

## A walk on the wild side

The Healthy Country team walked with fully-laden packs on their backs, camping under the stars after each day's work was done. They hunted freshwater crocodile and bream, and collected bush foods like yams, to nourish them during their trip.

As they walked, they worked as a team, lighting fires as they followed the creek line (a natural barrier). They watched for wildlife and recorded sightings of animals, plants and birds, like the black-grass wren, on handheld data collecting GPS devices.

"We recorded our route, any cultural sites we found and also feral animals and cattle," says Tom Vigilante. "This helps us think about where we might have to build fences so we can protect native wildlife and valuable rock paintings."

## Healthy country

The walk was also an opportunity for the Healthy Country team to increase knowledge about country and apply conservation techniques that will safeguard this very special area long into the future. The group found the walk physically challenging, but enjoyed sharing their connection with the land.

Ernie Boona, one of the rangers, said "I felt happy to visit my grandmother's country for the first time, finding rock art and burning the right places to bring the country alive." Ernie took photos of the rock art home to show his grandmother, who told him the traditional stories depicted in the paintings.

"Everything we learned on the trip will help the rangers look after their ancestors' land even better," says Tom Vigilante. "Together with Bush Heritage supporters, we're working hard to protect this incredible place."



## First-time finds

The Wunambal Gaambera rangers recorded some important animals, birds and plants for the first time on the walk.

### 1. The rough-scaled python

"This is quite hard to spot, but the rangers found one while we were walking. It's a really unusual-looking snake with big eyes – it's quite rare."

### 2. The black grasswren

"We found a population of four birds and when we checked the records no-one had reported them in the Hunter River region before."

*Above: Black grasswren*

*Photograph by Graeme Chapman*

### 3. Borya subulata

"We also found a species of resurrection plant (which survive extreme dehydration) called borya. It's from the lily family and dries out completely in the dry season and comes back to life when it rains."

*Top: Uunguu rangers on their fourth annual fire walk in Wunambal Gaambera traditional lands*

*Photograph by Tom Vigilante*

*Opposite page: Photograph by Stuart Cohen*





# Thank you

**In August thousands of you took part in our supporter survey – so many that we're still going through all the replies.**

The survey helps us to understand the motivations of our supporters so that we can improve our service to supporters and encourage more people like you to help protect the Australian bush. Thanks for taking the time to add your voice to the Bush Heritage community. And thanks to so many of you who also donated towards our ongoing work through the survey.

If you updated your contact details or changed your communication preferences in the survey, we'll make sure these changes are noted – but this may take some time due to the volume of responses! Thanks for your patience.

## What you told us

In the surveys we've looked at so far, a vast majority of you say that you like knowing your support is making a difference to the health of the Aussie bush. We're also pleased to hear that most of you would recommend us to others wishing to donate to a good cause.

We always want to improve and we asked you whether there was anything about Bush Heritage that disappointed you. A majority of you have no complaints, which is reassuring. We're now looking at the feedback and how it can help us improve our work. If you ticked the box requesting a response to your feedback, you'll be hearing from us soon. As always do not hesitate to call us if you have any questions **1300 628 873**.

**“Fire is medicine for our country and medicine for our people. It's a living thing you know ... use fire in the right way, it will help you.”**

Sylvester Mangolomara, Wunambal Gaambera, *The Healthy Country Plan*

## What is 'right-way fire' burning?

'Right-way fire' is the way in which the rangers use fire to improve the health of their land according to traditional practice. The practice shares similarities with Bush Heritage's approach to fire management – taking a range of factors into consideration, including time of year, which plants rely on fire to flower or fruit and which don't cope with hot fires – while also respecting traditional law and rituals handed down from ancestors.

The practice guides the rangers on such things as how to create the least amount of smoke to reduce climate change; and what balance of open country versus savannah woodland will maintain healthy habitat for kangaroos and wallabies, culturally significant species for Wunambal Gaambera people.

# 32%

have or are considering including a gift to Bush Heritage in your Will

# 21%

are bushwalkers

# 20%

have already visited a Bush Heritage reserve (and we want to increase this)

# 100%

We'd like to thank all of you for helping protect the Aussie bush!

Two of the faces that make up the Bush Heritage community – **Lydia Teychenne** and **Keith Venton** (below), both generous Bush Heritage supporters. Thanks to Lydia and Keith (and to you!) for the difference you're making.



Photograph by John Deer



Photograph by Freshpix Photography



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# FROM THE CEO

**There are few better places to experience all those things we associate with Spring, than at your Charles Darwin Reserve, WA, in September.**

I had the opportunity to visit this unique part of the Australian bush recently, and to see the results of two years of good rain, combined with the good management that Bush Heritage supporters like you have made possible. The reserve is on fine display, with its masses of white daisies, yellow everlastings and grevillea.

I was met at the homestead by broad smiles, the typical welcome of the bush people that Bush Heritage is fortunate enough to have in our team. These smiles belonged to a new family living at Charles Darwin: Luke and Fiona Bailey, together with their two children, have quickly settled in and become part of the local community.

That community was well represented at a Sunday afternoon barbecue hosted by the Baileys. People from all sorts of backgrounds talked around the campfire: some were pastoralists and representatives of industry groups, some were from fellow conservation

group Australian Wildlife Conservancy and others were volunteers helping us manage this fantastic place.

Bush Heritage has a unique ability to bring people together in this way. Communities like this one – and the one that you, as a Bush Heritage supporter, are part of – contribute to our conservation goals at reserves right across the country. A love of the bush is at the centre of this connection.

I also met one young couple, a few hundred kilometres from Charles Darwin Reserve, who have poured their energy and love of the bush into a place called Wooleen Station. At Wooleen, David and Frances have set themselves an ambitious goal: to restore the rangelands of the outback station. Their inspiring story is so well known that tourists arrive from all over the world to experience their work and stay at the magnificent homestead.

David and Frances are yet another example of Australians who have their own dream for the Australian bush – and it was wonderful to hear how they are going about achieving it. I'm sure that each of you has your vision too.

Thank you for sharing the Bush Heritage vision – and for helping to make a difference to the Australian bush.

**Gerard O'Neill, CEO**

*If you'd like to see how Bush Heritage has put your support to where it's needed most, download your copy of the 2011–2012 Annual Report at [www.bushheritage.org.au/annual\\_reports](http://www.bushheritage.org.au/annual_reports)*



*CEO Gerard O'Neill with reserve managers Luke Bailey and Ian Hamilton. Photograph by Nikki Hamilton*



Bush Heritage is a not-for-profit organisation, funded entirely by donations from generous supporters like you. If you'd like to make a contribution to our work, please fill in the form and send it to us at the address below. Thank you.

**Yes, I'll help Paul and Leanne rid Yourka Reserve of siam weed.**

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**Please send me information about including a gift to Bush Heritage in my Will**

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**You can also donate online at [www.bushheritage.org.au/donate](http://www.bushheritage.org.au/donate)**

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