

BUSH TRACKS

Bush Heritage Australia's quarterly magazine for active conservation

Every chance

A fish tank of red-finned blue eye.
Photo by Vanessa Hunter.

Inside an aquarium on Queensland's Sunshine Coast is a tank of tiny freshwater fish – each less than three centimetres long – that holds special significance for conservation in Australia.

This population of endangered red-finned blue-eye represents a new recovery initiative that may help to ensure the long-term survival of the species.

They're the first stage of a captive-breeding program Bush Heritage is pioneering in partnership with Sea Life Mooloolaba (also known as Underwater World).

While other blue-eye species are found in coastal draining rivers of Australia and New Guinea, these red-finned blue-eye have been relocated 1,200km from a small group of springs fed by the Great Artesian Basin on Edgbaston Reserve in central western Queensland.

As the only member of its family present on inland Australia, this fish has evolved in isolation for a very long time – as have most inhabitants of these springs – demonstrated to be the most ecologically diverse Great Artesian Basin spring complex in Australia.

Here, in water as shallow as just two centimetres, the only remaining wild populations of red-finned blue-eye survive. And it's the most variable freshwater environment you can imagine.

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“As this newsletter goes to print I’ll be just a few days from being on ground at Charles Darwin Reserve.”

Right: Gerard O’Neill, CEO. Photo by Peter Morris.

Below: A welcome sight for travellers to Charles Darwin Reserve. Photo by Cineport Media.



From the CEO

We all know the Kimberly region in Western Australia is spectacular and internationally recognised for its outstanding conservation and cultural value.

Its protected areas are critical to rare animals like the black grasswren and golden bandicoot, as well as monsoon vine thicket threatened by wild fires.

This year NAIDOC week gave us cause for celebration when our partners in the Kimberley – the Wunambal Gaambera people – picked up the 2014 NAIDOC Caring for Country award. The award recognises their fantastic work in pioneering a culturally driven conservation initiative.

It was back in 2006 when the Wunambal Gaambera Aboriginal Corporation first contacted us with aspirations for protecting its traditional land – some 2.5 million hectares.

A two-year on-country planning process followed to produce a Healthy Country Plan and their Unguu Healthy Country Project has been pioneering in the way it combines traditional knowledge with western science and planning.

Developing a strategy together around controlled burns is a tangible example of our work. Each year our Healthy Country Manager Tom Vigilante and others from our team are involved in a fire walk with Unguu rangers, to mitigate the risk of wildfire. Our scientific and culturally based monitoring program shows results are positive and the long-term plan is working.

Aboriginal partnerships have become integral to our work – from our longer-term partners in the north to emerging relationships with groups like the Bunuba community in the central Kimberley region and traditional owners responsible for the Birilibiru Indigenous Protected Area in Western Australia.

As this newsletter goes to print I’ll be just a few days from being on ground at Charles Darwin Reserve and mingling with visitors and locals from Western Australia’s Avon Wheatbelt at our reserve Open Day and Blues for the Bush event.

I’m very much looking forward to the reserve tour and discussions about the emerging Gunduwa partnership that’s leading a regional approach to land management in the area – more on that inside.

After reasonable mid-year rains the spring wildflower season promises to be spectacular. Tours will highlight our malleefowl conservation work along with restoration of disturbed areas to their rightful weed-free status. There will be some fantastic photo galleries and videos on our website from the event, and hopefully many more people around Australia can enjoy it and share the Bush Heritage experience.

Cheers,
Gerard O’Neill, Chief Executive

Bush Heritage Australia

Who we are

Bush Heritage Australia is a leading conservation organisation, protecting millions of hectares of ecologically important land for the benefit of nature and all Australians.

Why we’re successful

It’s **our way of working** that makes Bush Heritage Australia so successful – and makes us optimistic that we can expand our great conservation work to meet the challenges ahead:

- We pursue **non-confrontational, pragmatic solutions** to conservation challenges.
- We work closely with our neighbours in each community and **share the outcomes and knowledge gained for the benefit of all.**
- Everything we do is informed by **good science** – aided by our staff ecologists and science partners.
- We have more than 20,000 (and growing) **committed supporters** who enable us to work on a scale that matters and to implement solutions that endure.
- We **partner** with indigenous communities, other land owners, non-profits, businesses and governments, because we know that by working together we can achieve so much more.
- We **buy** land, and invest in our partnerships and our growing number of supporters. **Our mission is for the benefit of all Australians, forever.**



“Without help the red-finned blue-eye’s future is bleak.”

Left: Fish sampling at Edgbaston.
Photo by Annette Ruzicka.

Below: A sample of invasive gambusia.
Photo by Adam Kereszy.



Continued from cover

Water temperatures can fluctuate 20 degrees in a day, and rise as high as 40 degrees in summer. Groundwater bubbling up through natural vents from the Great Artesian Basin is a constant 24 degrees and the tiny red-finned blue-eye occasionally huddle around the vents – presumably for temperature control.

Long-term supporters will be familiar with the background to this story, as through freshwater ecologist Dr Adam Kereszy, we’ve trialled various methods of protecting the blue-eye on Edgbaston, where they’re threatened by the invasive mosquito fish (*Gambusia holbrooki*). Introduced into Australia in the 1920s for malaria control, gambusia have become noxious pests with remarkable survival skills.

“To be honest, even without several million ‘gambos’ invading their habitat the blue-eye would still qualify as endangered simply because their range is so limited,” explains Adam. “But add in the most widespread invasive fish species in the world and the fact that each spring is its own ecological ‘island’, and the threat is far greater.”

Before starting our recovery project in 2009, we conducted an audit of the springs on Edgbaston and found 25 teeming with gambusia and only four with red-finned blue-eye. Critically, gambusia were absent from these four springs.

“When gambusia reach a spring with red-finned blue-eye, they eventually out-compete them,” says Dr Jim Radford, Bush Heritage’s Science and Research Manager and Chair of the Red-finned Blue-eye Recovery Team.

“We don’t know exactly how this occurs but we suspect it’s because gambusia give birth to live young whereas the blue-eye, like most fish, lay eggs. So young gambusia are bigger, better equipped to fend for themselves, and may actually eat the eggs of the blue-eye and other fish. Without help the red-finned blue-eye’s future is bleak.”

Since purchasing Edgbaston in 2008, thanks to our supporters, Adam has tried physically removing gambusia from springs and constructed barriers to stop them migrating across the floodplain during overland flows. Approved trials using a chemical have successfully eradicated gambusia from selected springs without harming other inhabitants – including numerous species of snails, crustaceans and flatworms found nowhere else in the world.

It’s been slow work and while red-finned blue-eye have been successfully moved to four springs on Edgbaston, establishing a captive population as ‘insurance’ for the fish in the wild is a logical next step.

“We chose Sea Life Mooloolaba as a partner because of their enthusiasm for the project, their previous experience with captive breeding programs, and because they have specialists, such as Senior Aquarist Nick Henning, on staff,” says Jim.

Twenty fish made the journey to Mooloolaba and nearly six months on, the project is tracking well. According to Nick Henning, the fish have been observed ‘dancing’ and exhibiting signs of breeding.

At the time of writing we’re checking the tanks expectantly for eggs, which we hope will hatch into young. With luck and patience, one day we may see the grand-children of the wild-caught fish from Edgbaston.

In a spin – the fish’s mating dance

“Many fish engage in a type of dance before mating,” explains Nick Henning. “At least, it’s something between a dance and a fight.”

“When the red-finned blue-eye male becomes excited his colours brighten and intensify, and he’ll tail the female to encourage her to spin. If she’s receptive, she’ll join in spinning and eventually drop two or three eggs for him to fertilise.”

“A small spring can’t support a big population, so there’s no biological point dropping hundreds of eggs,” explains Dr Adam Kereszy. “They also need to be able to respond to rain and the opportunities it brings to migrate so they’re adapted to keep the population ticking over with two or three eggs a day.”

“Which makes captive populations tricky,” he concludes. “No mass spawnings and plenty of fiddly work for potentially a small number of healthy offspring. But we’re giving them every chance.”

Our partners

- Sea Life Mooloolaba
- Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection
- Commonwealth Department of Environment and Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Help save the red-finned blue-eye

We need ongoing support to ensure we can do everything possible to support these critically endangered little fish. Donate today at:
www.bushheritage.org.au/donate

Right: The young leaders' group.

Below: Clearing a gnamma hole.

Photos by Luke Bayley.



Gunduwa Young Leaders' Program

In the arid rangelands of Western Australia rainfall can be low and unpredictable but there's water to be found if you know where to look.

Traditional Owners often depended on 'gnamma holes' – natural cavities commonly found in hard rock that act as storage tanks, filling from ground water and rainwater runoff.

Protecting gnamma holes and clearing them of dirt and sand is important. If they can collect clean water, they provide a natural source of sustenance.

Under the guidance of local Aboriginal leader Ashley Bell from Ninghan Station, young people from rural towns in Midwest Western Australia have been learning this and more about the cultural heritage and conservation values of the area on our Charles Darwin Reserve.

A weekend camp learning about conservation, Aboriginal heritage and leadership skills has kicked off a six-month Gunduwa Young Leaders' Program.

Aiming to expose young people to education and mentoring opportunities, the program is run by the Perenjori and Morawa Shires with support from Bush Heritage, the Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre, and The Morawa District High School.

Other activities over the weekend included navigation races, wellbeing sessions, Aboriginal Story Time around the campfire and a guided nature and bush foods walk.

The Gunduwa Young Leaders' Program is one of several projects being funded by the Gunduwa Regional Conservation Association – an ambitious partnership that brings together local Government, pastoral and agricultural businesses, Aboriginal landholders, State government and the minerals sector to develop collaboration and environmental solutions. It's currently funded by Mount Gibson Mining and Asia Iron.

Bush Heritage Healthy Landscape Manager, Western Rangelands, Luke Bayley, has taken a leadership role as chair of the association, which he expects to have an impact in the Southern Rangelands and Northern Wheatbelt region on a landscape scale.

"There's no doubt that collaboration is the best way to monitor and control regional threats such as invasive weeds, feral animals, bushfires and drought," says Luke. "We can't operate in isolation. And getting young people involved is really important to foster their connection with the land."

"Charles Darwin Reserve is a pretty unique classroom, sitting at a meeting point of two bioregions – the Avon Wheatbelt in the southwest and the arid Yalgoo bioregion to the north," he explains. "This makes it a real melting pot of species."

"Charles Darwin Reserve is a pretty unique classroom, sitting at a meeting point of two bioregions."

The association has already funded several other projects, including:

- Research with Edith Cowan University on the impact of fire on bird communities;
- Research into the impacts of farming on soil microbiology; and
- Promotion of the North Central Mallee Fowl Preservation Group, to increase membership and capacity.

The Association ran a community Forum on Collaboration across the Landscape at this year's Charles Darwin Reserve Open Day and is working towards a landscape investment plan.

Gunduwa is the local Badimaya name for echidna. The Association's partners include:

- Department of Parks and Wildlife
- Australian Wildlife Conservancy
- Extension Hill Pty Ltd
- Liebe Group
- Mount Gibson Mining Limited
- Northern Agricultural Catchments Council
- North Central Mallee Fowl Preservation Group
- Rangelands NRM
- Shire of Dalwallinu
- Shire of Mount Marshall
- Shire of Perenjori
- Shire of Yalgoo



Left: Using a quadrat to assess groundcover. Photo by Sue Akers.

Below: Dr John Hunter and his wife Vanessa with Sue Akers. Photo by David Akers.



New species at Naree

A chance meeting has resulted in some exciting outcomes for Naree Station.

Dr John Hunter and his wife Vanessa called in to say hello when they were passing through western New South Wales on a large government vegetation mapping project earlier this year. During the visit they promptly volunteered to return and help with all things botanical.

In June they spent a weekend with reserve managers David and Sue Akers identifying plant species at 30 established monitoring sites on the property and taking 300 photographs of ground cover conditions.

It was perfect timing, as the late summer and early winter rains had triggered the growth of a variety of species not seen previously by Bush Heritage staff and others on the property through the dry times since it was bought in late 2012.

One weekend's work by our highly skilled visitors resulted in more than 100 new plants being added to the Naree species list – bringing the new total to around 285 species so far. And, when the data was entered into Bush Heritage's master database in Melbourne by Norma Gates (another dedicated volunteer) 17 species were thought to be new to the national database too!

“One weekend's work by our highly skilled visitors resulted in more than 100 new plants being added to the Naree species list.”

John has also documented the indigenous knowledge and uses for the plants at Naree that he is aware of from current literature – another very valuable piece of information as we're beginning to work with the Budjiti Traditional Owners to understand more about the property.

John and Vanessa have offered to return and produce a high resolution vegetation map for Naree in the coming months, which will be extremely valuable for ongoing monitoring and management of the property, given the variety and complexity of habitats on this beautiful wetland and woodland reserve.

A heartfelt thank you from Bush Heritage Australia to John and Vanessa, and all our volunteers around the country – we couldn't do it without you!

Skilled volunteers



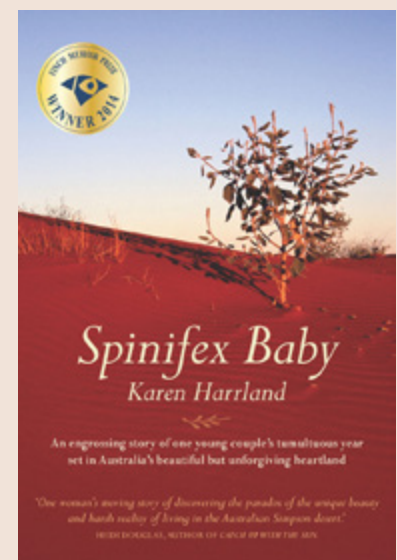
For a full list of volunteer opportunities see: BushHeritage.org.au/volunteer

Spinifex Baby giveaways

Karen Harrland has won the prestigious Finch Memoir Prize for her first book, which shares the story of her time with partner Al Dermer on our remote Ethabuka Reserve, edge of the Simpson Desert, Queensland.

The story surrounds the challenges of managing such a remote property alongside an unexpected pregnancy and the birth of their first child.

We have five copies to give away thanks to Finch Publishing. **Visit our Facebook page and join the conversation for your chance to win.**



Priority Landscapes

This map illustrates areas we've identified as conservation targets, as well as the sites of our work around the country. For more details see: BushHeritage.org.au/priority-landscapes



Briefs from the blog

www.bushheritage.org.au/blog

Your support makes a difference in so many ways.

A glance through some of the regular posts on our blog gives an overview of what's been happening on our reserves around Australia – all made possible thanks to you.

For regular updates follow us on social media.



Rare orchids planted

A small group of orchid conservationists has planted 32 new Stuart Mill spider orchids into the John Colahan Griffin reserve in Victoria, to complement 12 specimens already recorded there. The seeds and fungi used were sourced from a nearby property and new plants propagated at the Australian Native Plant Conservation (ANPC), Orchid Conservation Facility in Horsham. A big thank you to all involved!

Conservationists planting spider orchids. Photos by Julie Whitfield.



South Australian Rangelands Alliance (SARA)

A new alliance – SARA – has begun with Arid Recovery, who operate in the Roxby Downs region near our Boolcoomatta and Bon Bon Station Reserves in South Australia. Arid Recovery has successfully reintroduced four threatened mammals – the Greater stick nest rat, burrowing bettong, greater bilby and western barred bandicoot – on its 12,300 hectare fenced reserve. We look forward to collaborating on research, feral animal and weed control, and regional approaches to conservation.

Platypus rescue



Volunteer canoeists paddling the Upper Murrumbidgee (which flows alongside Scottsdale Reserve, NSW) to control willows found a stranded juvenile platypus in a sinkhole. Unable to climb out, the little platy was swimming around and, by the bedraggled looks of it, may have been there for a while! On being hauled up it rested exhausted in the rescuer's hands but was soon larking about, fur fluffed up like a mink coat on parade!

Monster Murray cod

Wow! This beautiful 93cm Murray cod was discovered at our Scottsdale Reserve (NSW) through survey work on the Murrumbidgee River (yes, it was returned unharmed). Two Murray cod and two trout cod (both threatened native fish) were found this year, which is the first time we've recorded these native fish since monitoring began.

NSW Fisheries officer, Justin Stanger. Photo by Dylan van der Muelen.



Utility Terrain Vehicles



Use of quad bikes on reserve has been reviewed in line with Safe Work Australia's Quadwatch initiative. As a result side-by-side utility terrain vehicles have been rolled out as replacements, improving safety conditions.

The trapdoor

At Eurardy Reserve (WA) ecologist Vanessa Westcott and the Citizen Science volunteers spotted this trapdoor spider burrow. Look closely and you'll see the twigs and leaf litter radiating out from the centre are fastened with web to the rim of the hole, which extends into the burrow. They work as 'trip lines' so insects walking by can be detected! The owner was unsuspected but both Eurardy and Charles Darwin reserves are in the natural range of the nationally vulnerable shield-backed trapdoor spider.

A trapdoor spider burrow. Photo by Vanessa Westcott.





A focal point in the Fitz-Stirling

After ‘coveting’ Monjebup Creek as a potential Bush Heritage reserve for years, our team in Western Australia has finally got their hands on it.

Now the long wait is over they’re wasting no time getting plans for the property underway.

Thanks to our generous supporters, Bush Heritage has settled on the purchase. In what is largely a cleared or heavily altered landscape, Monjebup Creek Reserve will now stand protected as part of a mosaic of natural sanctuaries between the Fitzgerald River and Stirling Range National Parks (the Fitz-Stirling).

Covering over 1,000 breathtaking hectares of virtually intact bushland, Monjebup Creek protects some of the area’s most at-risk plant communities including mallee heath and yate woodlands, and animals like the black-gloved and tamar wallaby and the threatened malleefowl.

So far, the only piece of infrastructure on the reserve – an old shed – has been demolished, two obsolete entrances closed off and a new entrance opened, giving us more practical access.

Meetings with architects have also taken place to discuss the construction of a field station – marking what Bush Heritage’s Gondwana Link Landscape Manager Simon Smale sees as a major ramping up of our activity in the region.

“Until now, we’ve had no permanent base in the Fitz-Stirling,” he explains. “Besides a shipping container I brought up many years ago, we’ve had nowhere to really store machinery or use as a workshop.

A site has been chosen in a spectacular location with views over expansive savannah-type grassland, and Simon sees having a permanent station there as a chance to leverage far more from the many offers of support we receive.

“We’ve had no overnight accommodation, which means either ‘making do’ in temporary digs or camping out. Otherwise it’s a four-hour round trip from Albany – not just for us, but for our research partners, volunteers and contractors.”

“With the purchase of Monjebup Creek we’ve hit critical mass with our work in the Fitz-Stirling. This field station will allow us to pull a whole lot of programs and people together – giving us a real focal point.”

At the time of publication, Simon and Bush Heritage Ecologist Angela Sanders will be on their way to the property for a two-day walk – a task they’re absolutely relishing. Aerial photographs have revealed some very interesting patches of vegetation and they’re looking forward to getting in there to take the first close-up look. “We know it’s going to be amazing,” says Angela. “This trip will give us the first chance to start filling in some details.”

“With the purchase of Monjebup Creek we’ve hit critical mass with our work in the Fitz-Stirling.”

In fact, the reserve has already begun to reveal some of its unexpected ecological treasures.

“On an hour’s walk recently with one of our Gondwana Link partners, we found a york gum woodland covering a number of hectares,” says Angela. “They’re extremely unusual in this area – it was amazing to see them. They’ll create a lot of interest amongst botanists.”

On their upcoming walk, Simon and Angela will also begin the process of selecting and mapping areas with potential to be long-term plant and animal monitoring sites.

“For instance, Monjebup Creek has a wealth of information to share about how fire helps to keep the bush here healthy,” explains Angela. “Fire swept through a large section of the property about 20 years ago and now it has incredibly diverse and vigorous native regrowth.”

“On our other Fitz-Stirling reserves, some parts haven’t seen fire for 50 years or more, and some plant species like banksias are starting to collapse and not re-generate, which we can’t allow to happen.”



Huddled up in new homes

“We’ll use what we learn on Monjebup Creek to set up a patchwork burning program to invigorate older areas of vegetation on our other reserves – knowledge that’s not just valuable to us but also to our conservation partners.”

Adding this exquisite property to our growing ‘jigsaw puzzle’ of reserves in south-west Western Australia is another step towards restoring a 70km green corridor in the Fitz-Stirling.

More broadly, our work in the Fitz-Stirling region is part of our wider commitment as a key partner in the even more ambitious Gondwana Link Project.

This visionary conservation program aims to reconnect a 1,000km swathe of bushland from the karri forests of the far south-west of Western Australia to the woodlands and mallee bordering the Nullarbor Plain – a region that’s internationally recognised as a biodiversity hotspot.

Opposite page far left: Shingleback lizard on Monjebup reserve.

Opposite page left: Monjebup bioblitz.

Above: Recording survey results on Gondwana Link properties.

Photos by Jessica Wyld.

Like coiled springs, red-tailed phascogales leap from tree to tree, darting around nervously and always alert.

This small carnivorous marsupial is limited in range to the West Australian wheatbelt and on our Kojonup Reserve a translocated population has settled in to one of the largest intact remnants of wandoo woodland – ideal habitat – in the area.

In partnership with the Western Australian Department of Parks and Wildlife 30 individuals were moved to the reserve over the course of two years beginning in 2010. Around 30 nest boxes were also erected to keep them safe.

“This is our fourth year of monitoring the translocated population and they’re doing well,” explains Bush Heritage ecologist Angela Sanders. “We recorded at least 12 animals in Elliott traps and artificial nest boxes, which indicates a stable population has established.”

All the animals picked up in monitoring would be second or third generation born at Kojonup. The males compete frantically for females and the stress of mating results in their death after each breeding season at around 11 months. Females can live up to three years, having up to six young each year.

“They make a large ball nest inside the box out of wool, sticks, leaves and feathers, often raiding other nest boxes for material,” says Angela. “Some of the nests now fill the whole nest box.”

Recently the South West Catchments Council provided \$30,000, through the Inland Linkages Project, to enhancing phascogale habitat. Now 30 new nest boxes have been added and some 500 sheoak trees planted and fenced off to exclude grazing kangaroos and rabbits. This funding injection also added some sophistication to ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

“It will be fascinating to use small video cameras later this year to see the comings and goings of the females and young.”



Five-year report

A five-year Report Card for Kojonup, based on an ecological review, has just been completed. For details see BushHeritage.org.au/Reports

Top: A huddle of phascogales.

Above: Angela Sanders supervises as volunteers set up a new nesting box.

Photos by Maureen Francesconi.



Left: Saraan Finney (left) with Nicky Rolls at Bon Bon.

Below: Nic and Finney taking a break with Reserve Managers Mike Chuk and Julia Harris.

Photos by Nicky Rolls.



Nic and Finney's annual adventure

Nicky Rolls, together with her friend Saraan Finney, first took a volunteer role at a Bush Heritage Reserve way back in 2007. They enjoyed it so much they came back the next year, and the next. This year, their eighth annual 'working holiday' with Bush Heritage, was spent at Bon Bon Reserve in South Australia's arid rangelands.

Many years ago, during the excitement of the Sydney 2000 Olympics I took a scenic ferry trip from Circular Quay to Manly Beach. On one of the outside seats I found a Bush Heritage Australia newsletter, which I rescued from being blown overboard.

I enjoyed the read. It was my first introduction to an organisation that seemed to have values and goals similar to my own and that gave me a chance to 'buy that bush block' as a contributing supporter.

It wasn't until 2007 that I read about volunteer working bees and signed up for one at Carnarvon Station, talking my friend, Saraan Finney, into coming along. We had such a great experience that we've volunteered two weeks of our time each year since at various Bush Heritage reserves. A lot of people I know think it's unusual I want to 'work' on my holidays but to tell you the truth it's my most anticipated holiday each year.

"I get away from the city, see fabulous scenery, gaze at the stars, get dirty, listen to dingoes howl and barking owls bark."

I love getting physically involved on the reserves and seeing what Bush Heritage is doing with supporters' money.

I see, first-hand, the feral animal and weed management strategies, erosion control, boundary and infrastructure maintenance, controlled burning, fauna surveys and more.

All of the reserve managers I've met have been welcoming, friendly people who've been happy to answer my endless questions and help me learn more about land care.

On a personal note, I get away from the city, see fabulous scenery and wildlife, gaze at the stars, get dirty, listen to dingoes howl and barking owls bark and enjoy a piping hot donkey shower at the end of the day. Half the adventure is getting to some of these properties, which can involve two or three days of driving from my home in Brisbane.

This year we made the trek out to Bon Bon Station in South Australia, where reserve managers Mike and Julia provided us with a variety of jobs around the property. I have a particular interest in weed control, so have been in my element spraying buffel grass (introduced for stock and originating from Africa) which out-competes native grasses and shrubs.

Other duties have included 'fixing up' the airstrip, track maintenance and fence removal. For the animal lovers amongst us, the last job is particularly important as wildlife can get entangled in fences and die a slow death.

The landscape at Bon Bon is far more vegetated than I expected. A multitude of grasses, shrubs and small trees cover the sand, rocks and clay. The sunrises and sunsets are spectacular and the facilities are more than we could have asked for.

I've now finally seen Australia's iconic red kangaroos as well as burrows for the southern hairy nosed wombat, whose occupants remained out of sight. Bon Bon is also home to many birds however I'm not a 'twitcher' and can only list emus, plovers, galahs and crimson chats (plus the persistent chiming wedgebill).

Volunteering with Bush Heritage is a great way to pitch in and become directly involved in 'doing your bit' for the environment. It's also a fantastic way to see the properties, get away from the city and enjoy a million stars.

To find out more about volunteering opportunities or to register your interest, visit BushHeritage.org.au/volunteer

Weed control



Hear Nicky on ABC's Radio National on combatting siam and lantana weed in far north Queensland:

BushHeritage.org.au/siam



Dome Rock on Boolcoomatta Reserve. Photo by Wayne Lawler/EcoPix.

Remembered in nature

Supporters Alan and Saxon Condon had very special connections with the land, and since their passing – both at age 93 – their eldest daughter, Honour, has remembered them through nature and the places they loved.

Alan, a renowned geologist, passed away in 2008 and when his wife Saxon followed last year, one of her wishes was that a gift from their estate be left to Bush Heritage.

She was motivated to leave money because she felt we were rapidly destroying the planet's habitats and wildlife, and believed it was essential that we tried to hold on to as much as we could.

Saxon had organised for a plaque to be erected in Alan's name at one of our reserves, but Honour decided that her mother's name should be on the plaque too, and after seeing a photo of Dome Rock at Boolcoomatta in the South Australian rangelands, felt that her parents would be happy for the plaque to be placed there.

Honour scattered her father's ashes in what turned out to be a 'geologist's heaven' – a limestone cave near Paddy's River Mine where over one hundred minerals were once mined (some rare). Honour also wanted her mum to be returned to nature and describes the magical day she scattered Saxon's ashes.

"As I emptied mum's ashes into the Cotter River, a flock of squawking black cockatoos suddenly appeared and followed her ash-cloud – as if they were fare-welling her – as it was taken by a strong current down to where the Cotter meets Paddy's River and turns to go on down to join the Murrumbidgee. Then they came back and disappeared just as suddenly as they'd come.

Saxon loved bush ballads and, like the title of a famous song, she was *Bound for South Australia*.

Remembering her parents through nature has given Honour a simple satisfaction: "It's a feeling that they've gone home, you know. Back to the land they loved."

Thank you

Thanks to the many supporters who have generously donated to our work.

In memoriam

Margery Stuchbury donated in memory of her husband Graham, who was a great lover of the environment. Many generous donations were made in memory of Audrey Horn, a long-time supporter of Bush Heritage. Joan Hesse, who loved the bush, passed away at the age of 95 and was remembered with a gift. Donations were also received in memory of Trevor Day, Teija Weinmann, Isobel Robin, Bruce Heggie and Annemarie Dunker, who migrated from Germany but grew to love Australia's natural heritage.

In celebration

The guests at Kathleen Olive's birthday luncheon donated in celebration of her 93rd birthday. Generous gifts were also received in celebration of Paula Bain's 60th birthday, Alan Dickerson's 70th and Dr Ann Gibson's 80th. Graham and Hazel Beneke's golden wedding anniversary was celebrated with a gift and Christopher McElwain generously raised donations in celebration of his birthday.

Bequests

We gratefully acknowledge the estates of Neil David Smalley, Merlie Ivy Merchant and Yvonne Joan Viner.

Below: Fringed violet flowers on Yourka Reserve, Qld. Photo by Wayne Lawler/EcoPix.



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This publication uses 100% post-consumer waste recycled fibre, made with a carbon neutral manufacturing process, using vegetable-based inks.



The coastal paperbark forest walk

On the Queensland coastline near Agnes Waters a new attraction is getting plenty of use at our Reedy Creek Reserve.

On land adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and just north of the Deepwater National Park this spectacular reserve protects dense wetlands and threatened vine forests – habitat for wildlife such as the threatened Dunmall’s snake, beach stone-curler and rare grey goshawk.

A short interpretive walk through the coastal paperbark forest has been constructed by Reserve Manager Matt McLean, opening up access to this difficult terrain for the first time.

This specially designed circular track (a mix of boardwalk and stepping platforms) will allow you to penetrate the thick, lush undergrowth and tiptoe through the wetlands without getting your feet wet.

To cover around 400 metres allow about 45-minutes and keep an eye out for butterflies and coloured fungi while keeping your ears open for frog calls as you pass through their habitat.

The trail is suitable for most ages but mobility is needed as you’ll face obstacles, stepping stones, fallen debris, water crossings, steps and rough surfaces that require good balance.

A picnic table at the start/finish of the walk makes a great spot for a cuppa and the walk is open to the public all year round (safety permitting).

To make a day of it The Red Rocks Walking Trail – a 6km or 2.5 hour walk (if you don’t stop for a swim) – begins next to our reserve and hugs the headlands and beaches south along the coastline on beach esplanade. While Bush Heritage doesn’t own this land we do help with some of the management.

Thanks to Michael Myer and Dellarose Rubi-Baevski for generously donating this property, and to the residents of Sunrise @1770 for supporting the management of Reedy Creek Reserve.

Stepping stones through flooded wetlands. Photo by Steve Heggie.

Above right: Many frogs are resident on Reedy Creek Reserve. Photo by Matt McLean.

Other access opportunities

You can visit some more of our smaller, less-remote reserves on self-guided trips:

- Chereninup Creek Reserve, WA
- Kojonup Reserve, WA
- Liffey River and Oura Oura Reserves, Tas
- Currumbin Reserve, Qld

Several of our reserves are open for camping between April and October, but have now closed for the warmer months. We also run a number of guided tours throughout the year in the cooler weather. As we prepare our trip schedule for 2015 we’ll post updates on our website and social media.

See BushHeritage.org.au/visits for guides and more details.

Reedy Creek chorus



To hear a frog chorus from Reedy Creek visit BushHeritage.org.au/frog-calls

Bush Heritage is a not-for-profit organisation, funded entirely by donations from generous supporters like you.

Yes, I want to help Bush Heritage ensure the survival of our critically endangered red-finned blue-eye fish.

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You can also donate online at: www.bushheritage.org.au/donate

We sometimes work closely with other like-minded organisations. Occasionally we may allow these organisations to send you information that we believe may be of interest to you. These organisations usually allow us to do the same, which helps us reach more people with vital information. Please tick this box if you would prefer not to receive such mailings.



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