

BUSH TRACKS

Bush Heritage Australia's quarterly magazine for active conservation



Protecting vulnerable natives from ferals

Adult and juvenile brolga foraging at waters edge.
Photo by Steven David Miller, Auscape International Pty Ltd.

On Naree Station in northwest New South Wales, the day has dawned clear and bright. In the cane grass swamp behind the homestead, brolgas are picking their way through the shallow water on their long stilt-like legs.

They'll spend much of the day there peacefully foraging for food – digging into the mud with their powerful bills.

For Bush Heritage Reserve Managers David and Sue Akers, who live year-round on Naree Station, the sight of these stately native birds on this morning is a good omen.

Soon David and Sue will travel across Naree's vast alluvial floodplains to a semi-permanent waterhole where they expect a less welcome sight – feral goats. Like stray cattle and sheep, which the Akers have worked hard to remove since the purchase of Naree two years ago, goats can cause significant damage to Naree's fragile soils and vegetation.

Rather than scouring Naree's 14,400 hectares for stray ferals, the Akers have been systematically shutting down artificial water points across the reserve – effectively using the goats' reliance on water to lure them to a specific point. This makes it easier to both locate and remove them in sizeable numbers.

There they will meet neighbours with their sheep dogs, motorbikes and sometimes even a gyrocopter, to muster the goats into temporary yards from which they will be trucked off and sold.

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Right: Ms Chantelle Clarke, Western Rivers Region, during the opening ceremony hand over from South African rangers to Australian rangers. Photo by Wayne Quilliam.

Below: Gerard at John Colahan Griffin Nature Reserve, Vic. Photo by Matthew Newton.



From the CEO

It was with great pride that I recently led a delegation of staff from Bush Heritage Australia in attending the IUCN World Parks Congress in Sydney.

This once-in-a-decade event brought together our peers from around the globe and I was very proud to present our work in this context – on our home soil but a global stage.

The congress brought together conservation leaders with a refreshing range of perspectives and, for those interested but unable to attend, many of the best presentations and resources have been made available online and are well worth exploring (see WorldParksCongress.org).

Highlights for me were the strong representation from diverse indigenous groups and their incredible traditional knowledge, as well as a much stronger presence from private conservation groups.

While attending the congress we also enjoyed the announcement that the Midlands Conservation Fund (MCF), developed by Bush Heritage Australia and the Tasmanian Land Conservancy (TLC) had won the Banksia Natural Capital Award for its conservation work in the Midlands of Tasmania.

Focusing on the Midlands' International Biodiversity Hotspot in Tasmania the partnership with pastoralists, farmers, environment groups, State and Commonwealth governments is powered by philanthropic investors in the Fund.

Prominent in this field are the Myer Foundation, The Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation and the JT Reid Trust who supported the vision behind this market-based conservation program.

Occurring almost entirely on private owned land, the threatened grasslands and grassy woodlands of Tasmania's Midlands contain many threatened species and communities such as the Tasmanian devil, spotted tailed quoll and wedge-tailed eagle.

The MCF enters into stewardship agreements with private pastoralists supporting them to manage the land to improve conservation outcomes. With over 2,000 hectares of grassland protected and stewarded across 12 properties the fund truly is a remarkable achievement that has delivered results where more traditional approaches weren't possible.

Special acknowledgement must be given to the leadership of Pip Walsh and Jane Hutchinson, CEO of the Tasmanian Land Conservancy, and to our ecologist Matt Appleby and Andrew Cameron of the TLC, who have done an outstanding job developing relationships with landholders.

I must also recognise the participating landholders of the Midlands without whose commitment we could stand to lose the last remnants of these precious native grassland communities.

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.**



Left: Feral goats in a temporary yard.
Photo by Nick Rains, Auscape International Pty Ltd.
Below: a feral cat devours a native bird.
Photo by Jiri Lochman / Lochman Transparencies.



Continued from cover

The relative ease with which these goats will be removed is testament to Bush Heritage’s approach to feral animal control: our aim is to use the funds our generous supporters provide as effectively as possible by working smarter.

Feral animals like pigs, cats, foxes, rabbits and goats are a permanent feature of the Australian landscape, causing untold damage to native species.

In the relatively short period since European settlement we’ve lost 29 of Australia’s unique mammal species – with 89 more species and subspecies now at risk. In many cases feral animals are contributing to the decline.

In Victoria, on our Nardoo Hills Reserves, Global Positioning System (GPS) technology has been used in effectively controlling rabbits. When Bush Heritage supporters helped us purchase the first of the four properties that comprise Nardoo Hills, rabbits were threatening the future of its temperate woodlands.

These are the most threatened woodland ecosystem type in Australia, containing rare native orchids such as the northern golden moth orchid and the critically endangered robust greenhood.

Nardoo Hills Reserve Manager Jeroen van Veen has seen rabbit numbers plummet across three of the reserves to virtually nothing in 2014.

“Our first property was purchased in 2004 and rabbit control began about a year later,” says Jeroen. “We walked the properties with a GPS which allowed us to accurately pinpoint the location of each warren decommissioned.

“In 2007 we had 280 active warrens. Now we have about six – and they’re on the outskirts of the reserve where we get the occasional ‘immigrant’.”

We then checked them regularly for any renewed activity. Initially we did this a couple of times a week, then every few weeks, then every couple of months.

“In 2007 we had 280 active warrens. Now we have about six – and they’re on the outskirts of the reserve where we get the occasional ‘immigrant’, which is easy to control.”

Rabbits operate on a hierarchical burrow system, so as soon as a better burrow becomes vacant, they’ll move into it. The best burrows are targeted and decommissioned again and again, until no more rabbits remain.

Similar GPS-based systems are used on other Bush Heritage Reserves with substantial rabbit populations, including Scottsdale in New South Wales and Bon Bon Station in South Australia.

At Scottsdale the work is completed by dedicated volunteers who return four times a year to ensure the rabbits don’t get a chance to re-establish.

Technology is also being used to help us work smarter controlling feral cats on Boolcoomatta – our other South Australian reserve.

Here, thanks to the ingenuity of volunteers Keith Gooley and Peter Calder, Reserve Manager Glen Norris now has an electronic alarm system, which alerts him when any of his cat traps are activated.

Control of both predatory feral cats and foxes is crucial on Boolcoomatta, which provides sanctuary for species like the endangered plains wanderer – a small quail-like bird found on its open grasslands, and the nationally vulnerable dusky hopping mouse.

“We have traps on the reserve that are connected to a transmitter. I’m notified, using the UHF radio network when a cat gets into a trap,” says Glen. “It’s such a timesaver because previously I had to check all the traps manually.”

Depending on which feral animals are present, our control methods vary on each reserve but each is informed by science and continually improving.

While our methods are sound, feral animal control is an ongoing challenge with no end in sight. It’s a continuous process that requires substantial resources, dedication and smart thinking. Thankfully nature provides regular reminders – such as the sight of a majestic brolga in flight or a plains wanderer on Boolcoomatta – of the importance of this work in protecting our most vulnerable treasures.

Help us manage feral animals

Please help us protect unique landscapes, like Naree, from the impact of feral animals. Donate today to ensure our feral animal control program is fully funded for 2015.

Donate today at:
www.bushheritage.org.au/donate



The Umpila Rocky Lake survey

Illuminated arcs break the darkness of the rainforest night as a spotlight beam swings back and forth from tree to tree.

High above, almost directly overhead, a young common spotted cuscus is momentarily caught by the light midway along a branch. Voices chatter on the forest floor and then the beam moves on and he continues his slow and deliberate search for food.

This is the Rocky Lake area. Its traditional custodians – the Umpila – have looked after this land for more than a thousand generations. A thirteen hour bone-shaking drive north from Cairns, Umpila country runs from the McIlwraith range to the west to the Great Barrier Reef to the east, midway up the east coast of Cape York Peninsula in far north Queensland.

Remote and difficult to access, these forests are also places of breathtaking natural beauty and extraordinary biodiversity.

Working into the night is a team carrying out baseline monitoring of plants and animals. Over four weeks of early rises and evening spotlighting, the crew – including Umpila rangers (representing their five different river clans), two Bush Heritage staff, two staff from the Balkanu Development Corporation, three zoologists and a botanist – have recorded a wealth of species.

“It’s important that we as young people go through the stepping stones of our forefathers from the past and continue to keep these places protected.”

Since 2006, Bush Heritage has worked in partnership with the Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation on an over-arching Cape York Caring for Country Strategy. As part of this we have supported assessments and planning work with Traditional Owners in the Coen sub-region. The participating clans – the Kaandju, Umpila, Lama Lama and Ayapathu own vast estates, which include the KULLA (an acronym for the clan names) National Park, though most of the Umpila country is outside of this.

In 2012, partnering with Bush Heritage, Balkanu and The Nature Conservancy, the Umpila Pama Malngkanichi Healthy Country Plan was developed.

Planning sessions had identified the Rocky Lake area as an important site that hadn’t been accessed in some time. Baseline monitoring became a priority, to help understand the conservation targets and threats in the area, and to inform future plans and funding opportunities.

For the Umpila, caring for country is also about keeping their culture strong and healthy, as the two go hand-in-hand.

Johanne Omeenyo, an Umpila Healthy Country Steering Committee member, described her people’s aspirations as to basically get families back out there so people can manage their land.

“Umpila country is a very significant country – it’s rich and full of cultural values,” she added. “That’s why it’s important that we as young people go through the stepping stones of our forefathers from the past and continue to keep these places protected.”

Capacity building

Bush Heritage helps support partners like the Umpila by facilitating capacity building projects such as this one.

During the trip the Umpila rangers conducted ecological surveys at 14 different sites, with support from the accompanying scientists. This provided a chance for the rangers to get hands-on training in animal survey, capture and handling techniques – skills they’ll now carry with them into the future.

Bush Heritage Partnerships Manager – Northern Australia, Emma Ignjic, was part of the expedition and impressed by the results.

“The team worked worked hard every day, often from five in the morning until 10 at night,” explained Emma. “They got involved in using everything from pitfall traps with drift fencing, funnel traps and buckets; hair traps; cage traps; Elliott (box) traps; camera trap stations; song-meter (bat detector), and they did active spotlighting searches.”



Opposite page:

Top left: Johanne Omeeny.
Photo by Emma Ignjic.

Bottom left: The new all terrain buggy at work.
Photo by Dave Fell.

Large photo: Ecologist Dave Fell working
with Umpila rangers to record plant specimens.
Photo by Emma Ignjic.

This page:

Common spotted cuscus. Photo by Hans
and Judy Beste / Lochman Transparencies.

Giant tree gecko (*Pseudothecadactylus australis*).
Photo by Anders Zimny.

Palm cockatoo. Photo by Nic Gambold.

White-lipped tree frog (*Litoria infrafrenata*).
Photo by Nic Gambold.



Exploring the An-binik jungle

A second major survey with our Aboriginal partners was conducted recently on the West Arnhem Plateau, traditional land of the Wardekken people.

Our long-standing partnership (since 2006) produced Wardekken's first conservation management plan and helped protect many species listed as nationally or locally threatened, including the bustard, northern quoll, black wallaroo, Arnhem Land rock-rat and Oenpelli python.

The partnership has also helped to create jobs on country where previously there were none. Last year more than 100 Aboriginal people worked full-time and part-time as casual rangers and in related land management work.

As Bush Heritage Partnerships Manager, Justin McCaul, explains, partnerships make sense, particularly in a place like Northern Australia.

"Bush Heritage recognises the Traditional Owners' rights and responsibilities to country, so we think partnering is an appropriate approach to conservation management," he explained.



Watch a video online for more on this important partnership and the An-binik jungle survey.

www.bushheritage.org.au/an-binik

As a result of the fauna surveys, 108 birds, 30 mammals (not including micro bats), 15 amphibians and 40 reptile species were recorded. The Umpila rangers and Traditional Owners also engaged in cultural activities, collected cultural resources and recorded traditional knowledge.

Many of the native fauna are considered endemic to Cape York. Some – like the common spotted cuscus – have a shared distribution between the Rocky River area and Papua New Guinea.

Another of the outcomes from this trip was that it facilitated the purchase of an all-terrain buggy, which will help Umpila with future access to some of these densely forested areas that would previously have been too difficult to reach.

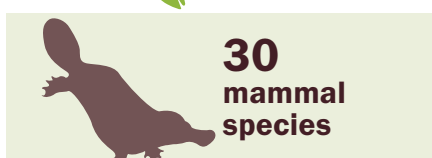
From Emma's perspective, the diverse range of habitats was one of the highlights. "I was just amazed by how the vegetation was constantly changing," said Emma. "There was rainforest with incredible buttresses and gallery forest, countless river and creek systems – it's really inaccessible country – stringy bark forest, tea tree plains and melaleuca swamp forest."

Overall, the survey confirmed the high conservation value of this remote and special place, which supports a rich and diverse range of unique or rare animals including the canopy goanna, red-cheeked parrot, palm cockatoo and Bennett's tree kangaroo.

Very few introduced plants or feral pests were recorded, and traditional burning practices will continue to sustain the quality and condition of its range of habitats.

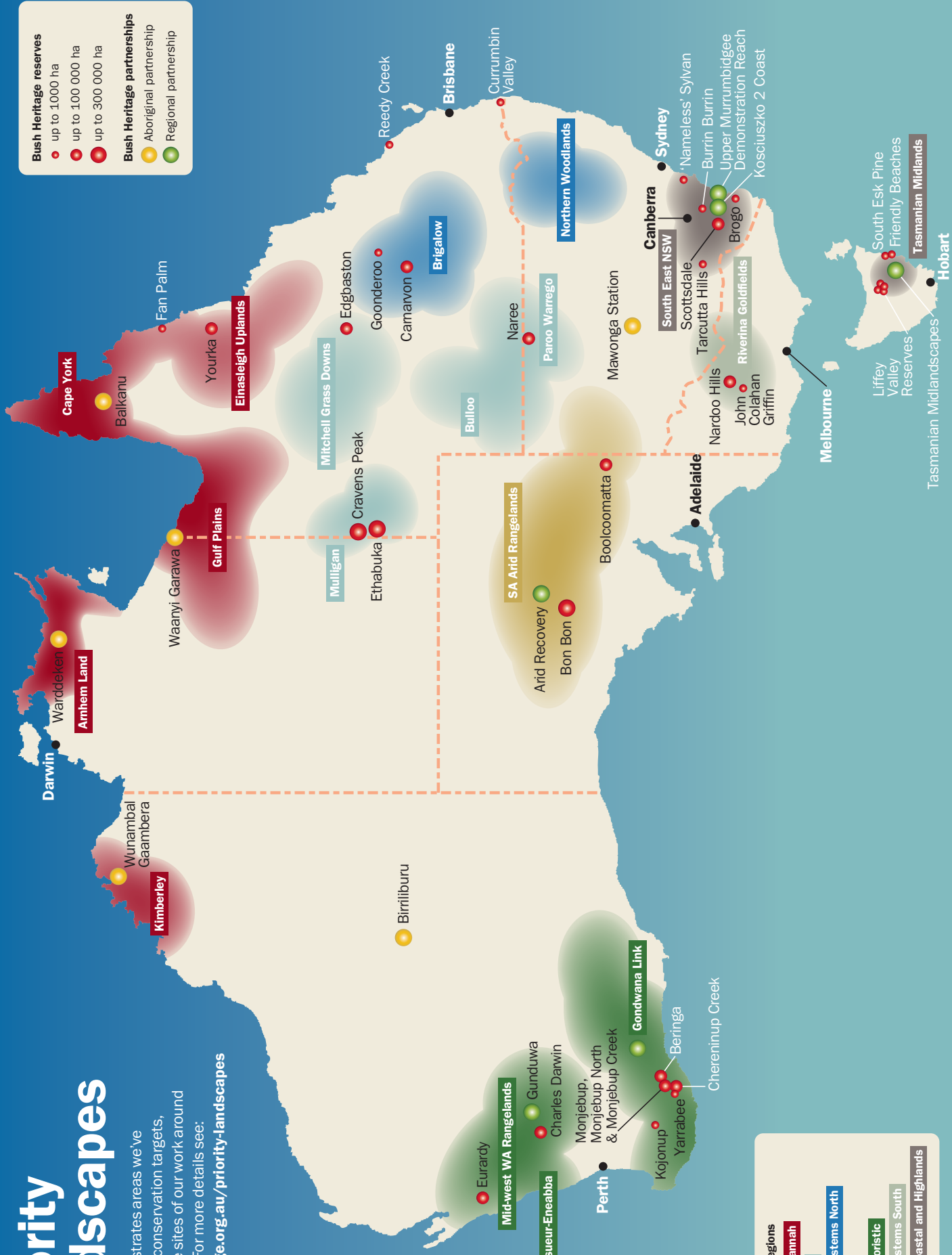
With this baseline monitoring complete the Umpila can start working with partners to tackle specific projects addressing identified threats, such as establishing access routes to implement conservation measures. It's work that will also support their ranger program, and help develop jobs and livelihoods on country.

Survey results



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.

Our blog provides an overview of what's been happening on our reserves around Australia – all made possible thanks to our supporters.

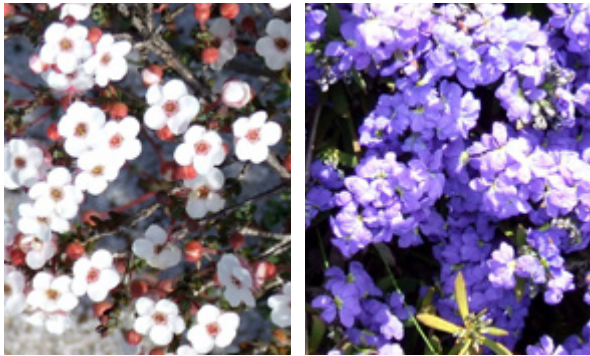
For regular updates follow us on social media.



Wildflowers of Western Australia

Spring is always a sea of wildflowers in west Australia and this year was no exception. You can view the amazing pictures of this spectacular annual event on our website.

Photos by Simon Smale.



Tree hugging at Boolcoomatta

At Boolcoomatta Reserve in South Australia's arid rangelands, our staff recently discovered new trees worthy of appreciation. White cypress-pine is recorded on several neighbouring properties but was found on the reserve for the first time. Several examples of fast growing slender bellfruit, listed as 'vulnerable', were found along with a horse mulga, recorded for the first time in what may be an extension of range from the north and west of the state.

Buffel busters at Bon Bon

The 'Roxby Downs Buffel Busters' are a volunteer community group who get together regularly to keep buffel grass infestations under control around their town. They visited Bon Bon with another group of volunteers from the Eyre Peninsula, called 'Friends of the Gawler Ranges National Park'. Over a weekend 20,000 litres of herbicide was used and countless hours spent chipping, bagging and mapping.

Move to Level 1

Our head office has been brought down a few levels – literally – from Level 5, 395 Collins St Melbourne, to Level 1. The move means we can make better use of our space, ensure the environmental credentials of our office, and welcome more of our supporters to visit us in person!

Gungoandra Creek rock weir

After nearly four years in planning and building the Gungoandra Creek rock weir and fish way has been completed on Scottsdale Reserve. It's part of an erosion control plan that volunteer soil consultant Peter Fogarty helped produce. Funded by South East Local Land Services its purpose is to stop an active head cut eroding into several kilometres of creek wetland. A large rock wall was installed into both banks and held by steel columns drilled into the bedrock. A series of steps where the water drops 10cm for every 80cm of flow was carefully built on the original stream course creating a fish way or ladder.

Photo by Peter Saunders.



Baby eagle photo bomb

The art of 'photo bombing' (getting yourself included in someone else's photo – often as a joke) may be a natural instinct for this baby wedge tail. Remote sensor cameras were set up on Monjebup North to establish some wallaby monitoring sites. When they were picked up this baby (and you can tell from the creamy feathering and vestigial gape that it's little more than that) had left a superb profile picture!





Bush Blitz unearths new discoveries

The national Bush Blitz program – a partnership between the Australian Government, Earthwatch Australia and BHP Billiton – aims to discover new species.

Program Manager, Jo Harding, has made the claim that 75% of Australia’s biodiversity remains undiscovered – a fact that checks out according to the ABC’s Fact Check website.

It’s the small stuff – insects, soil organisms, fungi and bacteria – in which there’s still much to be discovered and so it proved during a ten-day intensive survey of our Carnarvon Station Reserve, 200km south of Emerald in central Queensland during October.

Hundreds of flora and fauna samples were collected including many new, undescribed species. The survey team included 12 of Australia’s top scientists, eight volunteers from BHP Billiton’s Sustainable Communities Program as well as support staff.

“A property like Carnarvon does amazing work to conserve what they have, but if they don’t know what they have they can’t make those decisions,” said Jo.

Hundreds of flora and fauna samples were collected including many new, undescribed species.

Overall, participants were impressed at the diversity of species on Carnarvon and many were very surprised by the difference in species recorded here and on neighbouring National Parks to the east and north.

“It’s rewarding to see different species being recorded, despite similar surveys being done there,” Mr Haseler said. “It’s an indication that we’re making a real contribution to the national reserve estate.”

Findings from the exercise will help Bush Heritage gain a much better understanding of the biodiversity on Carnarvon, and lead to refinements to reserve management in the future.

Highlights

Dr John Stanisic, Curator of Molluscs at the Queensland Museum for 26 years, found about 20 species of land snail, including eight new undescribed species. Their greatest threat is fire so mapping habitat and managing fire is vital.

Previously unknown on the reserve, *Philydrum lanuginosum* (Frogsmouth) and a species of *Viola* were collected for the Herbarium in Canberra.

Dr Christine Lambkin is Curator of Entomology at the Queensland Museum. Her husband Noel Starick, also an entomologist and Susan Wright, Queensland Museum’s Entomology Collection Manager, headed up the team focused on flies, dragonflies and ants.

Forty-five species of flies were sampled, which represents at least 15 of the 100 families known in Australia.

About 35 species of bees were collected by Dr Remko Leijs from the South Australian Museum. Carnarvon appears to be the western most limit for a number of these species including the green carpenter bee (*Xylocopa aerates*), which has a very healthy population on reserve.

More than 40 species of spiders from 20 different families were collected by Queensland Museum’s Dr Barbara Baehr. There were six specimens collected from the large *Mygalomorphae* spiders, four ant-mimicking spiders, four ant-eating spiders and a wolf-spider. A very rare wall-crab spider was also recorded.

Above top left: Dr Remko Leijs found several undescribed bee species on Carnarvon Reserve. Photo by Alison Wilson.

Above bottom left: This native viola species found was new to Carnarvon. Photo by Emma Toms (Australian National Herbarium).

Above: Barbara Baehr examines a spider found in one of her pitfall traps. Photo by Alison Wilson.

Bush Blitz 2

Bush Blitz 2 is the second phase of a National Program aimed at discovering new species.

Alison Wilson posted updates from the field at BushHeritage.org.au/blog



Left: Bush Heritage Ecologist Murray Haseler and Amanda Hancock discuss possible trial sites. Photo by Alison Wilson.

Below: Quoll detection dog 'Sparky'. Photo by Annette Ruzicka.



Molly Harriss Olson, speaker at 2015 Women in Conservation Breakfast.



The scent of a quoll

If you've ever owned a border collie you'll appreciate that they have some amazing qualities.

Specially bred for intelligence and obedience, these working dogs have incredible energy and love to be involved in everything.

After her daughter Liz passed away in 2012, an anonymous supporter was keen to honour her memory with a gift to Bush Heritage that her daughter would have just loved. As Liz had been an avid bushwalker, native animal lover and owner of border collies herself, there was one project that stood out.

Thanks to a gift from Liz's estate, two border collies have been special guests on our Carnarvon Reserve in central Queensland, joining 30 scientists and field researchers as the National Bush Blitz program conducted a 10-day surveying exercise.

Scampering through the bush with their handlers in trail, these specially trained sniffer dogs were on site to find traces of the nationally endangered northern quoll.

Working in habitats identified by our Queensland ecologist, Murray Haseler, as most suitable for the quoll, the dogs confirmed their scent at several sites.

While sniffer dogs are usually used to find drugs, ecologist Amanda Hancock and her husband Lloyd, from a neighbouring property, provide trained sniffer dogs as a wildlife detection service and worked with the dogs during the blitz.

“What we want ultimately, to confirm the animal, is to get a photo of it. So we can now use motion sensor cameras at identified spots.”

“We have no doubt that there's quoll odour here,” Mrs Hancock said, “so it's very exciting.”

“What we want ultimately, to confirm the animal, is to get a photo of it. So we can now use motion sensor cameras at identified spots,” said Murray. “If anything walks past, it'll snap a picture.”

Carnarvon Station represents one of the few intact remnants of Brigalow Belt landscape, which was once one of the most extensive and fertile regions in northern Australia. Broad-scale land clearing has fragmented habitats and ecosystems but intact remnants such as Carnarvon Reserve provide a chance for scientific researchers to understand that natural biodiversity.

Last recorded on the property in 2008 quolls are threatened by habitat loss, a propensity to eat poisonous cane toads and predation by feral cats and foxes.

The smallest of the Australian quolls, the northern quoll males die off after each mating season, leaving females to raise their young. If a population on the reserve can be found, we can ensure they're supported by altering fire regimes and controlling feral predators in the area.

Celebrating Women in Conservation

The fourth annual Celebrating Women in Conservation Breakfast, held in partnership with Trust for Nature, is coming up in March.

Celebrate with us as guest speaker Molly Harriss Olson shares her transformative ideas for decision making in conservation.

Named as one of the 2014 Australian Financial Review and Westpac 100 Women of Influence, Molly has convened, chaired and been a member of numerous sustainability initiatives over more than three decades.

Molly worked in the White House as the Founding Executive Director of the President's Council on Sustainable Development, appointed by President Clinton. She is also the Founder and Convenor of the National Business Leaders Forum on Sustainable Development and co-founder of EcoFutures and Earthmark.

Molly serves on the Green Building Council of Australia and the AMP Sustainable Investments Alpha Advisory boards, and is CEO of Fairtrade Australia & New Zealand.

This breakfast is generously sponsored by NAB.

Thursday, 5 March 2015 at 7.00 am for a 7.15 am start.

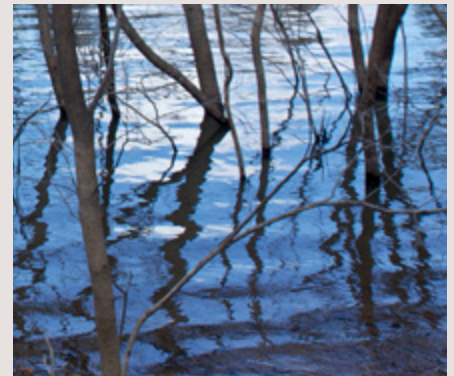
RACV City Club, 501 Bourke Street, Melbourne. \$75 per person; \$700 for a table of 10.

Book tickets at:
www.trybooking.com/109307



Left: Storm clouds create an interesting light on Boolcoommatta Reserve, SA.
Photo by Boris Hlavica.

Below: Reflections in the water at Naree Station, NSW.
Photo by Peter Morris.



Snapshots to savour

For many of us, getting out into nature is a chance to savour sights, smells and sensations, and we often get the impulse to capture some of the beauty we find to keep it or share it in a photo.

For professional photographer Boris Hlavica, outback Australia is a study in colours, forms, textures and light.

“My work is about conveying the emotional impact landscapes have on me. It is about the effects of beauty, space, time and history,” said Boris. “The only other place you get the vastness and subtle patterns is the open ocean, though the colours of Australian deserts and arid regions are something else.”

Boris will run a nature photography workshop on our Boolcoommatta Reserve in South Australia’s arid rangelands from 27 to 30 March 2015, providing a unique visitation experience. Costs will be \$500 per person and bookings are essential.

For more details see:
www.ImagesOfAustralia.com.au

“My work is about conveying the emotional impact landscapes have on me. It is about the effects of beauty, space, time and history.”

Boris Hlavica, Photographer

Photo tips

Below Boris shares some simple tips that can help transform your nature photography:

1. Look for interesting light conditions first and then for a subject within them.
2. Too much contrast (the difference between the brightest and darkest points) will ruin the photo.
3. If shooting subjects in low light, look for the moment they look into the light and their faces are lit up.
4. Wait for motionless moments when subjects stop moving.
5. If movement is an issue, use the ‘burst’ feature to take a rapid fire series. At least one will be much clearer than others.
6. Change point of view. Climb up on something or get down low for a unique angle on your subject.
7. Look for a puddle of water, get down close to it and you’ll have fantastic reflections.



Other access opportunities

You can visit some more of our reserves on self-guided day trips:

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

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

For more details and to download brochures see: BushHeritage.org.au/visits

Above: Zebra finches on Ethabuka Reserve, Qld.
Photo by Linda Rogan.



Share your nature photos with us for a chance to win a canvas print.

We’ll share your images on social media and the most popular will win a canvas print from among our free desktop wallpaper images.

Simply send in your photos to:
webmaster@bushheritage.org.au



Shared stories

All over the country there are passionate environmentalists whose support underpins the work that we do, and who themselves are doing some amazing things in their own corners of the country.

One of the great traditions of visiting outback Australia is camping under the stars and sharing stories around the campfire. What we've found whenever we bring groups of supporters together on our reserves, is that we all have much common ground once the conversations start to flow.

Our blog has proven a fantastic vehicle for keeping our staff and supporters up to date on happenings around the country. But as well as telling you about what we're up to, we'd love to hear from you as well and to share some of the stories that connect us.

Above: One of the great traditions of bush camping is sharing stories around the fire. Photo by Craig Allen.

- Where are you finding your personal inspiration from nature?
- What are some of the environmental challenges in your corner of the country?
- What drives you to support organisations like ours?
- How are you managing to make a difference in your own local area?

Hopefully by opening up the channels for some two-way conversations, we'll be able to shine a light on the common values and connections we have, and the shared passion for protecting the Australian bush.



Send in your stories – up to 500 words – and we'll post and share suitable content on our blog, social media channels and in this newsletter.

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Design by iconinc.com.au



Thank you

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

In memoriam

Thank you to the many generous friends and family who donated in memory of Reg Hamilton. Pamela Caster donated in memory of Meryn and Jon O'Brien's son Jack. George Dalton was also remembered with a generous gift from Cassia Conlin. Jim, Kate and Katrina Gilluley donated in memory of long-time supporter David Shepherdson.

In celebration

Many, many donations were received in celebration of Patsy Hallen's 70th birthday, and for the 60th birthday celebration of Cheryl Hercus. And a special thanks to seven-year-old twins, Kai and Finlay Thomson for donating to Bush Heritage!

Bequests

We gratefully acknowledge the estates of John Dawson Weightman, Sheila Mary Box, Terence Cornthwaite Wollaston, Brian Robert Norton Williams and Dora Vaughan Lee. We're also very thankful to have received a living bequest from Hilde Jung.

A Lawrencella flower on Eurardy Reserve, WA. Photo by Lyla and John Hansen.



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





Left: Sunset on the dunes at Ethabuka. Photo by Alistair Dermer. Above: Mick Moylan painting.

Caretakers of the desert

Keen to travel and experience more of Australia, recent retirees Mick Moylan and his wife Kerry jumped at the chance to volunteer as caretakers at one of our remote reserves.

After a month-long stint at Ethabuka, on the edge of the Simpson Desert, we left with a better appreciation for the self-sufficiency of locals.

Our assignment began at Bedourie, a small town in western Queensland, itself remote and isolated. After phoning ahead with our departure time we set off for Ethabuka.

On arrival we were given a comprehensive induction by Bush Heritage Field Officer Matt Warr, who lives at Craven’s Peak Reserve 120km away. It was a relief to finally store our meat and groceries after shopping for a month ahead in Mt Isa.

After a three-day handover, we said farewell to the previous caretakers, Wybe and Isobel, and were truly alone.

Each night before bed we’d walk out to the shed and shut down the diesel generator. When it rattled to a halt the silence was stunning. It was also suddenly pitch black so the stars on display were sensational and the feeling of isolation complete.

We soon grew accustomed to the routine and kept very busy. Our main tasks were painting three rooms in the homestead and compiling an asset register.

Matt, our Bush Heritage supervisor, made a weekly visit along with his wife Amanda and baby Isabella. He took us around some of the sights on reserve and we discovered spectacular scenery and learnt some fascinating history: Aboriginal as well as early settler.

We explored places such as Dribbler Bore, Ethabuka Springs and the Field River. Dribbler bore runs naturally as the name suggests and the artesian water runs into a pond that was crystal clear with aquatic plants and incredibly, dozens of small rainbow fish.

We identified flowering pituri plants (a narcotic traded in the area by early Aboriginals) on another of our trips and it was exciting to see stone implements, evidence of ancient and regular Aboriginal occupation.

It feels like we learnt and achieved a lot in a short stay. The asset register was completed, with over 400 items listed, tools etched with asset numbers and appliances labelled. Three rooms were freshly painted and the two showers look like new.

Making it all worthwhile, we learnt that Matt and his young family will be moving in next March now that the homestead is looking liveable, which will enable him to do more on the reserve. (Thanks, as well, to the work of previous volunteers Wybe and Isobel Reyenga as well as Ralph and Jill Farnbach.)

We’d certainly recommend the Volunteer Caretaker Program – we’d do it all again in an instant!

To find out more about volunteering visit BushHeritage.org.au/volunteers



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