



WILD TIMES

July 2017 Edition 59



Brutukan Melkamu making a pledge and holding up her commitment to return to Maria Island

Maria Island magic

GET OUTSIDE PROGRAM, story by Gina Mercer

One Friday, a group of excited people scramble onto the ferry at Triabunna with bulging backpacks – they're off to Maria Island for the weekend. Nothing so exceptional about that. But this is no ordinary group. Here are 14 young recent migrants and refugees from places as diverse as Ethiopia, the Philippines, Nepal, Afghanistan, Myanmar, China, and Syria. They are accompanied by two Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife rangers, a Wildcare officer, and a professional writer.

We all find a roost on the boat, some in the comfortable cabin, some leaning against the cold-wind railings. We're busy getting to know each other, so there's much chatter and laughter. Exclamations of awe burst out into the cool grey air as we watch the

island grow closer and notice our ferry is escorted by gliding albatross and zooming shoals of little penguins.

The plan for the weekend is for this group of dynamic young people to get to know Maria Island National Park. It's about developing connections, about feeling more at home in their new home, Tasmania. One element of the weekend's activities is the learning of leadership skills. Another is the opportunity to write about our experiences, to strengthen these connections through writing. This is all part of the Get Outside program: a unique collaboration between Tasmania Parks and Wildlife, Wildcare, and the Tasmanian Writers Centre. This brilliant program even runs to a 'library' of camping and bush-walking gear, so that

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participants can take themselves, their friends, family, and members of their community, out on independent trips with all the right equipment (tents, spot trackers, sleeping bags, fold-up shovels, etc).

Arriving at the jetty on Maria Island, we sigh with delight at the sight of the calm blue bay rimmed by white sand awaiting us. We exclaim in Farsi, Nepali, Koren, Swahili, English, Mandarin... the air is alive with many flowing languages, all remarking on the beauty of our home for this weekend.

Over the next three days we all learn so much. Sam, one of the Parks staff, teaches us about different leadership styles, eloquently acting out the difference between extrovert and introvert personalities. Not such an easy task when English is the 2nd or 3rd language for most participants, and some have only been in a position to enrol in English language classes for 6 months (some have lived all their teenage years in refugee camps).

...continued next page



Peter Williams
Co-Chair

Co-Chair report

Co-Chairs Andrew Smith and Peter Williams wish to pay tribute to the great efforts and outcomes achieved by Sally Salier during her successful tenure as Co-Chair. Sally's resignation at the recent AGM came as a surprise and she will be sorely missed.

Peter Williams was nominated and duly elected to replace Sally. Peter is committed to serving the 6,500 members of Wildcare and ensuring that their membership contributions and volunteer time is effective in addressing environmental issues across the state.

Peter is a graduate in Agriculture from Tas Uni and brings experience from a wide range of roles in the area of natural resource management. These included responsibilities for Landcare, water management and as General Manager of Parks and Wildlife. For five years Peter has been Secretary of the Friends of Bruny Island Quarantine Station and appreciates the important role Wildcare plays in helping groups on the ground.

The partnership with PWS is one of the great strengths of Wildcare and is invaluable to both. The Co-Chairs will be working with Jason Jacobi, the newly-appointed GM of PWS to ensure that the strategic directions of both organisations are aligned.

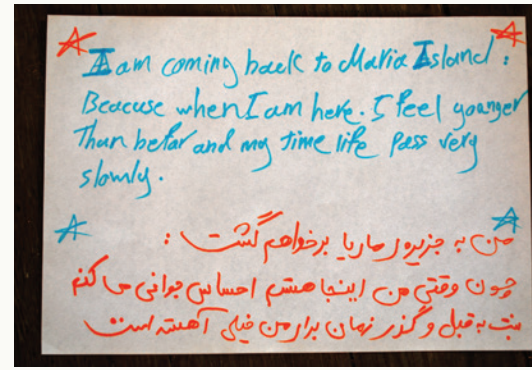
Malcolm MacDonald's contract with Wildcare ended on 30 June 2017. The Co-Chairs and board members extend a note of appreciation to Malcolm for his work and guidance over the last 4 years. In the interim the Co-Chairs, with assistance from Bob Tyson, are identifying the key tasks previously performed by the contracted CEO and how these can best be performed economically and efficiently into the future.

Maria Island magic (continued)

I have a strong sense of the deep stories each one of the young participants bears, what each has been through before arriving on this island off an island – seeking a sense of 'home'.

The biggest event of the weekend is when the participants lead a walk up Bishop and Clerk on Saturday. None of the Parks or Wildcare staff go on this walk, in order to allow the freshly learnt leadership skills to be put into practice without supervision. On Saturday morning, after a briefing in which Jodie, the Wildcare officer, acts out how we might need to crawl over the rocks on the final piece of the climb (gulp), we set off. All of us are excited and energetic, talking, and taking photos, observing everything from the small – casuarina seedpods, to the vast – the view across the ocean from Fossil Cliffs. We spot a kookaburra and discuss the difference between 'introduced' and 'endemic' species. Terms learned only the day before.

The climb is long and hard. 'Scree' is one other new English word most participants only learned at that morning's briefing. We get to experience it up close and personal as we slowly clamber up the scree slope on a zig-zag path constructed by Parks staff years earlier. As we stop to catch our breath, we utter blessings to those unknown workers who laboured so hard to make our climb a bit easier. Most of the participants have never been on a long, strenuous walk in the Australian bush before. Yet we all make it to the breathtaking top of Bishop and Clerk. Once there, we share lunch and chat, and sit in silence absorbing the vast beauty surrounding us. Clouds drift across the view, our thoughts drifting with them. Many photos are taken, of course, as we seek to embed the images in our minds and devices. One woman discovers she still has mobile coverage and instantly posts a photo on Facebook. We have all connected with the environment at a deep level... and there is that strong human desire to



Ahmed Ebrahimi's piece written in both Farsi and English

share this fresh connection with friends and family.

The climb back down is slower than the ascent. The path is slippery, the rocks unstable, our legs shaking with exertion (even the legs of the super-fit female Tae Kwon Do champion). The leaders of the walk are surprised at how long the return takes but do a brilliant job of ensuring everyone stays in contact and is nurtured all the long way down. Their calm thoughtfulness is rewarded by the fact that we return without a single injury, not even a major blister to report. No mean feat for a group of fifteen largely inexperienced walkers completing a 7 hour odyssey. All the training and preparation pays off.

That evening, after eating the very welcome spaghetti dinner prepared for us by the rangers who stayed behind, we sit in front of the fire and reflect. Everyone is a little high with the joy of being out in the bush all day, the glory of what we experienced, and the elation of achievement. We made it to the top – and back! In the faces in the firelight, I see the transformation this program can bring. People who, on the first day, were understandably reserved and quietly apprehensive, are now relaxed. We are singing and laughing and telling stories, making acute observations about this new homeland. We are taking it into our bodies and hearts – allowing Maria Island to transform us, growing ourselves deep into this beautiful place we all call home.



Replacing the timber on the homestead

129-year-old homestead

WILDCARE FRIENDS OF THE STEPPES, story by Anne Thwaites

Opposite the intersection of the Highland Lakes & Interlaken roads, 25 minutes from Bothwell, stands Steppes Homestead. Harsh snow, rain and wind during the last few decades have rotted the weatherboards, window frames and the guttering. A State Government Infrastructure grant was a very welcome relief to the Friends of The Steppes group.

The homestead is at the center of the Steppes Reserve, it is 48 hectares consisting of hand split heritage out buildings including a bakery, a post office, an art studio, a washhouse and cowshed. It also has the ruins of an 1864 house and cobbled stone stables, and a more recently established information booth with a visitor's book. A track leads away to the Stephen Walker bronze sculptures. The Friends volunteers maintain the outbuildings, fencing, tracks and toilets.

Summer was the best time to tackle the project at this high altitude! The timber for the heritage weatherboards were milled to the same width as the original ones, then shaped to match their distinctive character. Some sections of the old boards were suitable for use on shorter areas. One end of the veranda had started to sag from the house, necessitating jacking up and bolting onto the house, and the stone foundations repositioned. PWS heritage funded this part of the job.

The jagged edges of the stone chimneys posed careful measuring and

fitting of the weather boards to prevent water leakage, and metal sheeting was used for fixing board ends. The window panes are of variable sizes, and some cracked ones were replaced. The frames and sills, although repaired many times, have been continually attacked by the birds. New bird resistant putty has been used on them to avoid pecking.

The Sunny Coast painters used the homestead for a weekend art exhibition, and as a part of a Week in the Central Highlands. The banksia garden area is an ongoing project, with a bench seat placed to observe the trees and bird life, and a new route cut by PWS for closer access.

Visitor numbers including group bookings are continually growing, and they leave favorable comments in the visitors book. This helps us stay inspired and makes it all worthwhile. We enjoy keeping the site a peaceful and pleasant environment.

Art card success

FRIENDS OF MAATSUYKER ISLAND

The art card series produced by Friends of Maatsuyker Island (FOMI) Wildcare reached \$3000 in sales in just over 12 months.

This project involved design, research, printing, production and sales of 11 designs for the Maatsuyker Island art card series of high quality gift cards. Artists who have an association with Maatsuyker Island, including artists in residence, caretakers and FOMI members, donated their artwork. In addition, FOMI sourced historic images of Abel Tasman's 1642 voyage journal, when Maatsuyker Island was named, from the National Archives of the Netherlands. Posters are also available of the Maatsuyker Island lighthouse and currawong artwork.

The art cards are sold as a means of raising funds for projects protecting the natural and historic values of Maatsuyker Island.

These beautiful cards are for sale at the Hobart Bookshop (Salamanca Square), PWS Huonville Shop and at FOMI community events. If you're unable to make it to these venues the cards can be purchased via the Wildcare online shop wildcarea.org.au or by emailing wildcaremaatsuyker@gmail.com.

Cards are \$4-\$5 ea, bookmarks \$1 ea. Postage in Australia: orders \$30 and over free; orders under \$30 add \$5.



Speeler Plain track works

WILDCARE FRIENDS OF THE PENGUIN CRADLE TRAIL, story by Greig Clarke



Upgrading the poles in this beautiful place

The glorious weather experienced during summer and autumn allowed for several working bees to take place. These included upgrading the marker poles on the Speeler Plains and Mt Beecroft as well as track works involving power tools and the hard work of benching in some of the forested areas. There is still a lot of work to be done by volunteer and contracted labour but the PCT is still open.

We are concentrating on the areas north and south of the Leven Canyon that will provide some excellent walking for experienced bushwalkers as well as starting on the Leven Canyon section that received flood damage last year. Contrary to popular opinion working bees are fun ... so come join us for a day out and see.

Finding funds for FOTI

WILDCARE FRIENDS OF TASMAN ISLAND, story by Erika Shankley

A visit to Tasman Island in 2005, with the Tasman Peninsula Rotary Club, was the catalyst for the formation of the Wildcare group Friends of Tasman Island (FoTI). That the historic, heritage-listed keepers' quarters were, at that time, in a state of neglect was an understatement. To those who had lived and worked there, such as FoTI's President, Carol Jackson, it was a sad home-coming – in the 30 years since keepers had been withdrawn, time and the elements had played havoc with their solid brick homes and timber structures had long since blown down.

Conservation and restoration work on Tasman Island by volunteers from FoTI commenced with their first working bee on the island in April 2006 which celebrated the 100th anniversary of the operation of the Tasman Island lighthouse. Since that time, FoTI has conducted working bees both on and off the island. Recently, a milestone was

reached with FoTI's 25th working bee which coincided with the Rotary Club's visit in April this year. However, despite all this effort, concentrated funding initiatives are still required before the keepers' quarters are restored to their former glory.

The project for this year is to restore the verandah and front porch on Quarters 2. As luck would have it, the timberwork had been saved by some alert PWS staff before it blew away, and has been in storage on the island for many years.

A planning weekend at the Low Head lightstation in July will lay plans for the reconstruction of the verandah at our next working bee in November when we hope to have a couple of builders on site.

However, funds for the project have first to be raised and competition for funding through government,



semi government and philanthropic sources is intense. Instead, FoTI plans to run a crowd-funding programme, hoping to raise up to \$20,000 towards the restoration of the verandah on Quarters 2.

There will be some exciting rewards for donations. So watch this space for more details of how you can help care for this spectacular place!

Protecting Bruny's heritage german chimney

WILDCARE FRIENDS OF BRUNY ISLAND QUARANTINE STATION, story by Rob Banfield

Each Tuesday and Wednesday the Bruny Island Quarantine Station is closed to the public to allow our caretakers to have some relaxation time from meeting visitors and maintaining parts of our 320 acres of heritage and nature reserve. On Tuesday 16 May 2017 we rescheduled the relaxation activity!

Seventeen energetic Parks staff and Friends of Bruny Island Quarantine Station (FOBIQS) descended on the station and teamed with our caretakers to clear around our historic adobe chimney. Archeological interpretation of the chimney remains indicates the unusual use of clay pise, which may imply construction by German internees in 1915 as part of a shelter building in the forest. We know our internees were assigned woodcutting duties in the peninsula forest during their seven months stay on North Bruny.

Over the past 100 years several trees had grown very close to the chimney, threatening its delicate foundations and the entire structure itself. In close consultation with Parks staff and Parks heritage division, a conservation plan was developed and the working bee carefully removed these threats to the structure. The work has now made way for FOBIQS volunteers to install a permanent roof over the delicate heritage remnant, so that future visitors will be able to view the chimney for decades to come.

A productive day has had by all and a sumptuous lunch was consumed with gusto. A few other minor maintenance jobs were completed at the end of the day and FOBIQS look forward to our next working partnership with our wonderful Bruny and regional Parks staff.

PWS staff and FOBIQS volunteers during a short rest break from clearing around the chimney – what a team.



Flying the flag at Freycinet

WILDCARE FRIENDS OF FREYCINET,
story by Dave Harris

We recently spent a few days at Coles Bay catching up with PWS staff regarding our proposed permanent Wildcare display in the Freycinet Visitors Centre. We did some track work and picked up a bit of rubbish. It is always nice to have visitors say that the track is so clean!

We now have new accommodation options for our volunteers to use prior to embarkation by boat to Cooks Beach and Schouten Island for the summer programs. Well, the only option is a tent but it is a nice one, and it only took 3 of us 3 hours to erect and check out. Where to put it was another moot point but come December it will be in place somewhere, trust us.

The highlight of our stay was bumping into Jason Jacobi and other very senior PWS executives who were having a planning meeting there. It is nice to have the boss know we are around.

We canvassed a number of businesses in the Coles Bay area seeking donations to our cause and had some success so we are looking to ramp up our efforts in this regard. We also called in to the magnificent Saffire Resort to thank them personally for their very generous and continuing support in aid of the Devil research. You never know, they may think that the Friends of Freycinet are bits of devils as well!

Our new volunteer accommodation – yes it's a tent and a very nice one.





A boxthorn that had been growing beside this iconic coastal landmark has just been removed and is almost burnt away to ashes at right. Working bee participants (left to right): Don Stewart, Meredith Burgin, Graeme Martin, Bill Harvey, Russell Bauer, Kat Hopkins, Sieglinde Hopkins, Mark Alexander, Jenny & David Caldwell.

Eight first timers

WILDCARE FRIENDS OF BASS STRAIT ISLANDS, story by Kat Hopkins

Our Wildcare group Friends of Bass Strait Islands (FoBSI) have run two successful working bees in 2017 achieving yet more boxthorn eradication in the Furneaux Islands. We began this work 15 years ago and have so far completed primary control on 12 offshore islands as well as at the Settlement Point muttonbird rookery, a number of Coastal Reserves and the Wybalenna historic site on Flinders Island. Our primary control effort is ongoing on Roydon and Goose Islands, as well as on sectors of the Castle Rock coastwalk.

Funding and resources to enable the running of the two working bees this year were obtained from Landcare Tasmania, NRM North, the Wildcare Board of Management, Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife service (PWS), Furneaux Landcare and substantial private donations, both monetary and material. Thanks particularly to Mark Baldwin, Colin Milne, Mike Nichols, and Flinders PWS Rangers Wayne Dick and Cindy Pitchford.

Good weather and dedicated volunteers maximised the time available to clear approximately three more hectares of Boxthorn from Roydon Island. Follow up survey and removal of any seedling regrowth was also

completed across the entire Wybalenna site, adjacent Erita peninsular coastal reserves, the Settlement Point rookery area, most of the Castle Rock walk's extent and throughout the nearly ¾ of Roydon cleared of boxthorn since 2009.

2017's first FoBSI working bee was organised by group president Karen Ziegler, focused its efforts entirely on Roydon Island, and ran from 21 April-5 May. Our second working bee was organised by group secretary Kat Hopkins, focused on Roydon but made use also of some non-boating conditions to achieve some very good work on Flinders, and ran from 29 May-10 June. The 20 Wildcare volunteers involved include eight first-time participants.

WILDLY FUNNY

Jokes for kids and kids at heart!

Why do mother wallabies hate rainy days?

Because the children have to play inside all day.

Thank you to these people for their donations: **Andrea Hill, Robert Brooke, Pieter van der Woude, Bruny Island Chapel & Cemetery Assoc Inc, Gary Polglaze, Hester Fleming, Saffire Freycinet Guests, Craig Parsey, Geanenne Innes, Rita Kronstorfer, Peter Lawrence, Marie & Richard Rolls, Thomas Finney, Tracey Simpson, Andrew Smith, Robert Brooke, Raelene Mibus, Dick & Marion Jex, Vivienne Bozoky Friends of Fernglade, Michele Boiron, Graham Long, Joanna Long, M & J Rockman Foundation, Paul Dowsett, Angela Martin and Megan Alessandrini, Kate Meares, Jane Forster, Iluka Big 4 Holiday Centre, Devils Corner Wines, Father James Collins, Freycinet Marine Farm, All 4 Adventures, John Halys, Emma Sells, Andrew Young, Jason Ferguson, Laura Banks-Smith, Alannah Wiggins, Scieta Ipola, Succulent Sensations & Water Wonders, PG Dukes Pty Ltd, Michael Tee, Ryan Endall, Ann Fardell, Rose Masidi, Helen Stephens, Louise Lovering.**



Share your story

Send your submissions to wildtimes@wildcaretas.org.au
Deadline for the next issue is 30/9/2017.

WILDCARE Inc

Tasmania's largest incorporated volunteer organisation, caring for wild places, wildlife and cultural heritage.

Post: c/o GPO Box 1751 Hobart TAS 7001

Phone: 03 6165 4230 Fax: 03 6223 8603

E-mail: office@wildcaretas.org.au

Web: www.wildcaretas.org.au