



Befriending the freshwater lobster yields surprising results!

WILDCARE FRIENDS OF THE FRESHWATER LOBSTER

The Friends of the Freshwater Lobster is a branch of Wildcare Inc which operates the Lobster Ponds Haven Centre at Flowerdale, NW Tasmania. The facility is managed and maintained by a small group of 11 Wildcare volunteers headed by President Kevin Hyland and Secretary Russell Lewis. The group opens the Lobster Ponds Haven and Café four days per week to the public and provides an up-close learning experience about the Tasmanian Giant Freshwater Lobster (*Astacopsis gouldi*), which is the largest fresh-water lobster on Earth and found only in NW and NE Tasmanian river catchments that flow into Bass Strait.

In late August, the group was thrilled to discover the presence of more than 30 baby freshwater lobsters of varying sizes, born over several breeding cycles – dispelling the belief that this could not occur in captivity.

The practice of illegal fishing and habitat destruction has resulted in the decline of Freshwater Lobster numbers and in 1998, it was listed as protected and vulnerable. Kevin Hyland was invited to take up the opportunity of making the Lobster Ponds Haven an educational and tourist venture, originally founded by Don Bramich, with the intention of running it as a volunteer organisation.

In a period of 4 years, the Friends of the Freshwater Lobster volunteers, with some assistance from several students



Baby lobsters being transferred to other ponds

from Wynyard High School and TAFE Pathways Program, have maintained and enhanced the facility into an eco-tourism and educational attraction which received accreditation by the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania in September 2016. The group became a branch of Wildcare in 2013. Their work is self-funded and they rely on proceeds from visitor tours (\$5pp), café sales and their fortnightly sausage sizzle at the Wynyard market to cover operational and maintenance costs. They recently received their first Wildcare internal grant to supplement a grant which they had received from Cradle Coast NRM for the installation of a series of interpretive signs at the Lobster Ponds Haven.

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Working bee

A recent working bee conducted in collaboration with Wildcare Cradle Mountain Volunteers achieved great progress in maintenance of the pond in which the baby lobster were discovered. Some of the baby lobster have been redistributed to other ponds and there are a few on display in tanks for public viewing.

This is a great success story attributed to the high level of commitment of a small team of volunteers.

More volunteer assistance to help the small team with this ongoing project would be greatly appreciated – one day a week or one day a month or as required. Please contact Kevin Hyland or Russell Lewis at lobsterpondscafe@gmail.com.

Tasmanian Community Achievement Award 2017 Wildcare Inc Environmental Volunteering Award

This year Wildcare Inc. offered the 2017 Wildcare Environmental Volunteering Award, as part of the Tasmanian Community Achievement Awards.

The finalists were narrowed down to Bob and Penny Tyson (Wildcare volunteers), Sea Spurge Remote Area (Wildcare SPRATS) and Tasman Landcare Group Inc.

Bob and Penny Tyson have spent over 15 years writing weed management plans, funding applications, reports and articles. They have planned and led over 37 working bees. They have organised and led 368 volunteers, contributing 'in kind' value of \$962,500 in remote area weed management at many high value Reserves in Tasmania.

Over the last 11 years SPRATS has weeded over 14.2 million sea spurge plants and sprayed thousands of marram grass clumps. The mostly World Heritage listed coast between Cape Sorell and Cockle Creek is now largely weed free and shore-nesting and feeding birds are gaining a stronghold.

Tasman Landcare Group Inc. of Nubeena has for over 20 years, been finding innovative and practical ways to look after the environment whilst managing productive farms and recreational areas. They have planted over 50,000 native trees and installed over 100km of fencing to protect remnant vegetation. They educate and engage the broader community in sustainable land management.

At the awards night on 1 December, Andrew Smith, Wildcare Inc Founder and Co-Chair, announced Tasman Landcare Group Inc. as the winner of the 2017 Wildcare Environmental Volunteering Award. Congratulations and thank you for your efforts.

Birthday celebration

WILDCARE FRIENDS OF LILICO PENGUINS, story by Vicki Purnell

The penguin viewing platform at the eastern end of the Lillico Conservation Area has hosted many thousands of visitors over the past 21 years. A celebration was planned by Wildcare's Friends of Lillico Penguins for September 2017 not knowing that the gathering would not only celebrate the platform's 21st birthday but would also be its farewell. The structure which was originally constructed in 1996 and has had a few revisions over the ensuing years was demolished over the winter months and replaced with a newly designed platform which has been in operation since the beginning of September.

For many years, and well before the permanent old viewing platform was built in 1996, dedicated Friends of Lillico volunteers have mounted a nightly vigil to await the return of the Little Penguins. Every night, without fail, in all weathers during the spring and summer months the volunteer guides take visitors on interpretive experiences along the viewing boardwalk whilst ensuring the wellbeing and safety of the tiny inhabitants.

FOLP members past and present gathered for a sneak peek at the newly constructed platform on Saturday September 2nd before adjourning to Exposures, the onsite restaurant at Don College to enjoy a delicious luncheon that had been most ably catered for by the Don College Certificate 2 in Kitchen Operations and the Certificate 2 in Hospitality students. There was much reminiscing and no doubt embellished tales of past times spent by volunteers at the Lillico viewing platform including the finding of the fox carcass on the exit lane in 2006 and the sighting of a platypus as it was last seen heading under the deck in 2013. Much debate occurred on who was the owner of the ladies bright red high heel stiletto found during one of the many working bees conducted by the FOLP group.



FOLP party

Of course, it would not have been a proper celebration without the attendance of our two resident freeze dried display penguins.

The current penguin guiding season is well underway with around 30 FOLP members and at least 7 new trainees acting as guides. The new viewing platform with its larger footprint is proving popular with both guides and visitors alike as everyone learns how to navigate the new structure in the dark. The existing permanent solar red lighting is going to be expanded with more units being planned for the near future and this will further enhance the viewing experience of the many visitors who come from far flung corners of the globe on any one night.

Lillico viewing platform looking east



High country walkers now safer

WILDCARE FRIENDS OF MOUNT FIELD, story by Adrian Blackman and Peter Franklin

Thanks to a Tasmanian Community Fund grant and the Friends of Mount Field, two historic huts in the high country of Mount Field National Park have been refurbished. They are now better able to continue to provide shelter and emergency accommodation for walkers. One hut is situated near Lake Belcher and the other is the K Col Petersen Memorial Hut. With altitudes of about 900 and 1200 metres respectively the huts provide valuable protection, particularly in inclement weather. Approximately 150,000 people visit Mount Field National Park each year and the huts are frequently used by the more adventurous on walks to the nearby peaks (estimated usage 500 individuals per annum).

The Lake Belcher hut is used by both bushwalkers and fishing people. It is thought the hut was built in the 1960s. The F. A. Peterson Memorial Hut at K Col was built by Hobart Walking Club members and was officially opened by Sir Edmund Hillary in March 1960. Due to the harsh weather, these buildings, made from traditional materials, deteriorate rapidly and require regular maintenance. Since 2012 the Friends of Mount Field have accepted the task of helping Parks personnel with hut maintenance.

As both huts are several kilometres from the nearest road, access is a problem. A Tasmanian Community Fund grant was used to purchase materials, notably building timber and paint, and transport them to the huts via helicopter. There were no such rides for the Friends of Mount Field volunteers though—they had to walk significant distances each time before work commenced. In the case of the Lake Belcher hut, the track starts from the Lake Dobson road at Wombat Moor and involves a 5 km trek that takes well over an hour. The hut at K Col is reached by walking 6 km over the Rodway Range from the Lake Dobson road head. This typically takes about 1½ hours but for our first visit in June over two hours were spent walking the icy track.

In all it required three trips to complete the planned work on the K Col hut. The hut is A-framed, with an upper sleeping platform. The outer wall is made from stone but the interior lining had deteriorated and has now been replaced with Tasmanian Oak tongue and groove boards that we then varnished.

The outer walls of the Lake Belcher hut are wooden. Some of the boards had rotted so they were replaced and the entire exterior walls painted. Two trips



Top: Helicopter collecting timber

Middle: Chris and Peter at work on the Lake Belcher hut

Bottom: Lake Belcher hut The workers at the hut, Jack, Chris, Greg and Peter

K Col Greg and Zelko outside the hut



were required and the work was restricted to midsummer so that the paint could dry properly.

Both the huts will need regular ongoing maintenance and the Friends of Mount Field has scheduled the tasks for the medium term. One of the first of these will be to give the Lake Belcher hut another coat of paint, especially those last repaired timbers that only got a single coat before the paint ran out; the group will need to obtain funds to enable this action.

Two grants – two stories

FRIENDS OF CONINGHAM NATURE RECREATION AREA, story by Jean Taylor (Co-ordinator)

This year the Friends of Coningham Nature Recreation Area (NRA) was grateful to receive two grants from Wildcare. These are the results of those grants.

Story One

Once Were Warriors

In former days our group ranged far and wide over the 500 hectare Coningham NRA, finding and destroying weeds – particularly our arch enemy Spanish heath. However, over the 15 years of the group's existence age and ill health has wearied us and these days we need to employ contractors for follow up weed control in some of our sites. One such site is called 'the airstrip' as it was once cleared by a local government politician as an airstrip with the intention of flying superphosphate over to his farming properties on Bruny Island, an idea that never got off the ground (ho, ho) we were told, as it proved impossible to drive loaded lorries up the steep hills in winter. The airstrip lies on the saddle at the top of the Sheppards Hills and is the watershed between the north and south facing slopes. As such it is of vital importance to remove weeds that could flow down either side of the reserve. Our initial weeding occurred in 2007 and as can be seen from the

photo, many piles of large Spanish heath resulted.

In subsequent years we have monitored the site annually – hand weeding or spraying regrowth when necessary. The 2017 Wildcare grant allowed us to employ a contractor to spray any regrowth he could find 10 years after the first weeding. Spanish heath plants are now very few and isolated. However they are still there and we feel it is important to remove those we can find. Hopefully any further regrowth can now be followed up during walks in the reserve.

Story Two

Oh No, It's Fluffy*!

For some years our Wildcare group has facilitated WildsC'OOOL at Snug Primary School and funding was sought to help with the costs of the 2017 program. The 2017 program included two day activities with the school in the reserve and excursions to both the Woodbridge Marine Discovery Centre and the Raptor Refuge Centre.

To enhance their visits to the reserve the children were involved with;

- Wildlife Management – a monitoring program for small mammals in the reserve



Plant protection – WildsC'OOOL style

- Recreation Management – enabling visitors to know what they can do where via sign production and
- Invasive Species Management – weed control and rehabilitation of native bushland and involvement in the Bruny Island Cat Management Program.

As part of the monitoring program, movement sensing cameras were installed at various sites and detected devils, bandicoots, bettongs, potoroos, wallabies, quolls and possums plus (to the horror of one small boy), the eponymous Fluffy* a much-loved family cat.

A further spin off from the program was the potential enlistment of a local mountain biking club into weed control. As Jen Mudge, Senior Ranger with PWS, was leading the children around the reserve she pointed to unapproved mountain bike tracks with the result that another small and very irate child confronted his parent and demanded track approval be obtained. Just goes to show the value of WildsC'OOOL.

Unfortunately we are no longer able to include photos of children in articles such as this, but we can include the result of their labours – in this case planting of local species in the reserve.

(*Name Changed to Protect the Guilty)

Erica piles top of Sheppards Hill



Drier devil

WILDCARE FRIENDS OF WELLINGTON PARK, story by Adrian Blackman (Secretary)

Devils Throne consists of several rocky outcrops on the Wellington Range to the west of kunanyi / Mount Wellington. Standing on top of one of the cliffs there gives splendid views below of the Huon Valley and Huonville to the southwest and a wide vista of most of the mountains of the Wellington Range towards the north. Part of the walking track to Devils Throne has just been rerouted by the Friends of Wellington Park thereby avoiding a long, wet and degraded section—a drier walk to the 'Devil' is now possible.

To get to Devils Throne one starts at the car park just past Big Bend and follows the Thark Ridge track (itself recently improved by the Friends of Wellington Park). Once the ridge saddle is reached the track to Devils Throne branches off to the right (the main track leads to Mount Montagu). The old track from here to Devils Throne was 2.7 km long. Part of it traversed a plain and was usually wet and boggy; additionally, sections were becoming wider due to walkers trying to avoid the water. Peter Franklin, president of the Friends of Wellington Park, came up with the idea of rerouting this section onto nearby rocky ground to improve walker enjoyment and to lessen environmental impact. Parks and Wildlife personnel

Some of the workers



agreed and they, together with the Friends group surveyed the new route.

The new section of track was planned to be 800 metres in length, a daunting task for volunteers to construct. The undertaking was made more difficult since the site is about 1100 metres in elevation and it takes a little over one hour to walk there (tools had to be carried too!). Work commenced in February 2017 and was completed four months later in mid June. Towards the end of this time the winter weather lead to problems in selecting suitable visiting times and occasionally there were small patches of snow on the ground while working. A total of five days were spent building the new section of track. Volunteers from both the Friends of Wellington Park (who are also Wildcare members) and the RAMBOs walking group contributed many hours to the project with Peter's enthusiastic coordination. Parks and Wildlife personnel took an overall supervisory role and also helped with the construction several times.

Since the new track section is now on hard ground there will be less damage to the surroundings caused by walkers. Part of the new track traverses an interesting eucalypt woodland. An additional bonus gained is the improved view—down into the Mountain River



Top: The cleared track

Above: Richea along the track to Devils Throne

valley and then up to Collins Bonnet and Mount Connection. These benefits were gained by removing and trimming vegetation, moving rocks aside and also by placing locally sourced rock into hollows and into a few potentially wet spots to make a firm, flat and dry walking surface. The old section of track has now been closed for rehabilitation.

The walk to Devils Throne from Thark Ridge is now 2.8 km long and is a combination of old and new sections. A local walking group has already used the new track and has expressed their appreciation and thanks. Additional future improvements to older sections of the track are envisioned including bypassing a steep boulder field and trimming encroaching vegetation.

The one way walking distance from the car park to Devils Throne is 4.7 km so a visit there can easily be accomplished in a day. As an aside it is possible to take a different route back and this circuit walk is recommended for the more experienced walker. This is on a more southerly track leading back to the Thark Ridge track. Once there, a short detour leads to the 'Municipal Marker' - a historic rock cairn marking the intersection of the boundaries of Glenorchy, Hobart and Kingborough Municipalities.

Woodvine Nature Reserve

WILDSC'OOOL, story by Ingrid Albion

WILDCARE FRIENDS OF WOODVINE NATURE RESERVE, story by David Reynolds

Wildsc'ool

Wildsc'ool connects next generation to Woodvine Nature Reserve

Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service and Wildsc'ool Dodges Ferry, in conjunction with WILDCARE Friends of Woodvine are working together to learn about and care for Woodvine Nature Reserve.

Woodvine Nature Reserve was originally established as a farm in 1862 by Daniel Long and Elizabeth Tustin. The 377 hectare property was donated to the Crown by Mr Herbert Ernest "Ernie" Shaw in 1998, who wanted to protect the plants and animals that lived there. The Woodvine Nature Reserve was subsequently proclaimed in June 2001. Ernie's legacy lives on in the next generation through the community and students from Wildsc'ool Dodges Ferry.

In 2017, 58 Year 6 students from Dodges Ferry Primary School participated in an excursion to this very special Reserve. The day's activities included:

- a bioblitz walk around the reserve to study the many creatures that could be found;
- plant identification;
- a history walk to view the original home (of 14 children) and other farm buildings and;

- a chat with Dave Reynolds from Wildcare Friends of Woodvine who spoke of why his group volunteers on the reserve and the activities they have engaged in prior to and following the recent Dunalley fire which swept through the Reserve.

Parks and Wildlife Service field officer Angelique Keil said, "It was great to spend the day with the students because they were so enthusiastic and keen to learn about their local reserve". "It's terrific to be involved with Wildsc'OOOL as it is an inspiring initiative educating the next generation. I am very grateful to the teachers, PWS staff and the Friends of Woodvine for their collective contribution to providing a great experience for the students on the day."

Friends of Woodvine Nature Reserve

Thank you community event

With the encouragement of Pip Gowen, the PWS Regional Volunteer Facilitator (South), action has commenced to help conserve 12 significant photo journals that Trauti Reynolds has collated over many years.

The journals document many working bees and care-taking activities on the offshore islands of Tasmania. These



Top: Ingrid, Angelique, Dave and Pip admiring the amazing work of Trauti Reynolds Historic Photographic Journal

Above: Plant ID 'Spotto' was enjoyed by students

Bottom: Tired yet Happy Wildscool Dodges Ferry

include 3 months stints, care-taking on Deal Island (Kent Group National Park), short stays on Shouten Island (Freycinet National Park) and weeding and working bees from the south-west at Melaleuca to east coast National Parks – Tasman Island, Maria Island, Shouten Island and locally Woodvine Nature Reserve.

Trauti, a volunteer in many Wildcare Inc. Friends groups, started the journals to record the work of various groups and other volunteers in our special reserves. They record Trauti's friendship with fellow volunteers; images of heritage buildings and the condition of the environment.

Tired yet happy Wildscool Dodges Ferry



The whole group with Trauti (centre)



Thanks again Chloe

Chloe Baker and the wonderful Swansea Primary School community really excelled themselves this time.

Chloe organised a Save the Whales day at the school on 23 November and this was attended by Discovery Ranger Riss Giddings from PWS, and Dave Harris representing Wildcare. Riss gave a fabulous talk to all the students about whales and had them all enthusiastically 'saving' Mark the whale. They loved it. Afterwards Riss judged a whale colouring in competition.

Chloe then presented Dave with a large heavy tin which contained the magnificent sum of \$540! As the driving force, Chloe, a grade 6 student, raised this with her own stall, by distributing money boxes at various locations around Swansea, and by the school community of students and parents. She is a very special young lady indeed.

Chloe is aware that this money goes into the Wildcare Gift Fund, and Riss and Dave discussed with her and her mother some ideas of how it could best be spent.

It was a great day and what a wonderful achievement.

Leven Canyon

WILDCARE FRIENDS OF THE PENGUIN
CRADLE TRAIL (PCT), story by Billie Hicks

Support from PWS staff including Rangers, has facilitated a strong bond between volunteers and the Parks and Wildlife Service.

At Woodvine Nature Reserve in November 2017, the journals were symbolically handed to the LINC Tasmania Collection Representative (Jill Waters, Senior Archivist) by Trauti.

Convenors of Wildcare groups, PWS Rangers and staff were acknowledged for their strong, collaborative working relationship and the significant results this has generated for PWS reserves. Jason Jacobi, PWS Deputy Secretary, presented Trauti with a bouquet of flowers and a thank you card. After the formalities, a light lunch and drinks were provided and we enjoyed a tour of the site and its buildings, learning some of the history of the families who lived at Woodvine from 1861. About 45 people enjoyed this sunny and special event.

Trauti and I would like to acknowledge the support of Wildcare Inc., PWS Rangers and WildsC'OOOL pupils from Dodges Ferry. A special thanks to Jill and Emeline from Community Archives area in LINC Tasmania Collection. An email from Fiona Everts (Ranger, Freycinet N.P.) thanking Trauti for her many contributions to Freycinet weeding/working bees was whole-heartedly supported, and we would like to thank Pip Gowen for her encouragement, co-ordination and the skills that brought together the event at Woodvine.

Since the flood damage in June 2016 the Leven Canyon section of the Penguin Cradle Trail (PCT) has been difficult to traverse due to river bank erosion and many tonnes of trees across the track.

Two PCT committee members walked from Gunns Plains through to Tulip-tree Creek (Leven Canyon) recently and were impressed with the work completed by Tasmanian Tree Services who were contracted for repairs. Having walked this section prior to this work, the difference is outstanding.

The main work undertaken was track clearing and re-routing certain sections. The work was made possible with funding from the Patricia Dukes Foundation. The WILDCARE Gift Fund monitors our group's use of the funds for the purpose in which they were intended. There is an area past Morning Tea Rock (an affectionate name) and Tulip-tree Creek that needs attention as the climb up from the rock is tricky and the track in parts is narrow.

The track from Gunns Plains through to Griffiths Ridge near Loongana has now been cleared and more work is planned later in the year.



International signal flags

WILDCARE FRIENDS OF MAATSUYKER ISLAND, story by Jenny Scott

Last year FOMI embarked on an ambitious project, to make two complete sets of signal flags. One set is for the Maatsuyker Island lighthouse ground floor International Signal Flag cabinet, intact with a full set of tin canisters for storing the flags. The flags will be flown at the lighthouse on special occasions. The second smaller set is to be used by FOMI at community events on mainland Tasmania. There are 40 flags in each set. Robyn and Amanda were the drivers of the project, researching the materials and manufacturing. Amanda, with Ailsa, completed over 100 hours of designing, cutting, marking, bagging and labelling the flags so they could be sewn by volunteers. At the FOMI AGM we had an auction to raise money for the project. This event snowballed to the extent that we had over \$1500 pledged and most of the large flags sponsored by the end of the evening. Others have been sponsored in the weeks since. The maker's name, and the sponsor's name, are embroidered by hand at the base of each flag.

It has been an extraordinary journey, culminating in a series of six flag-sewing workshops held concurrently with FOMI's art exhibition 'Inspired Solitude' at the Rosny Schoolhouse Gallery. Funding for materials came from an

Maatsuyker light tower in dress flags *Gwen Egg*



NRM South Bite-Sized Grant of \$500 and a wonderful anonymous donation of \$1000.

The flag-making workshops, tutored by the ever-patient and good-humoured Amanda, have been very productive and great fun. The precision and concentration required by us volunteers in ironing, pinning, and sewing the double seams into exactly the right orientation has been a challenge, as has the embroidery of the names for some! I can't even imagine the precision and concentration which Amanda and Ailsa put into the design, cutting and labelling of each piece of each flag. We have been a part of the exhibition – not exactly a performance art installation, but certainly present and happy to engage in conversation with the art patrons, who have in turn been tolerant of the noise, laughter, clattering of sewing machines and threads all over the floor. While some who attended the exhibition were FOMI members, there were also some new faces who first saw the poster on the Wildcare website. It has been a great project, and not finished yet – with the canvas hoist sleeve and ropes still to attach to each flag. We will end up with two extraordinary sets of flags, hand-made and hand-embroidered, each with its own distinct personality. A fantastic resource, and heritage items for the future!

WILDLY FUNNY

Jokes for kids and kids at heart!

What do you get when you cross a glove with a Tasmanian Devil?

I don't know, but you wouldn't want to shake hands with it!

Thank you

to these people for their donations:

Paddy Pallin P/L
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Saffire Freycinet Guests
Craig Parsey
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Lyn Pope
Rebecca Barber - Thylacine Dog PJ's
Fiona Connolly
Mathew Cloudsdale
Ellie, Ashlen & Jameika
HV Caravan Park
William Keating
Arthur Tran
Jane Forest

Share your story

Send your submissions to wildtimes@wildcaretas.org.au



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