



WILD TIMES

Edition 41 August 2011



A COOL SCHOOL



A PRESIDENTIAL LOG ON



SNIPPETS FROM DEAL ISLAND



PHOTO COMPETITION BEST ENTRIES

Editorial

It's winter, and as I put the final copy for this edition together it's raining and cold in Huonville. So there's not as much happening in the field as in warmer times.

It is a good time though to reflect on the past year and one very good way to do this is through our photo competition. The winner for this year was David Reynolds.

His entry is on the front cover and some of the 'best of the rest' are published on the back cover, centre pages and other odd spots throughout this edition.

It's also a good time to be planning projects for when the weather does start to improve. I see lots of grant applications passing my treasurer's desk and planned working bees appearing on the Wildcare website Calendar of Events. Have a look at this one soon.

You might also notice that most of our display advertising has disappeared from this edition, reflecting a change in our discount sponsorship policy.

We are now looking for new advertisers/sponsors so see the details in this edition.

Otherwise, keep warm, and enjoy this edition of Wildtimes.

Craig Saunders



Wildcare Tasmania International Nature Writing Prize Award Winner Peter Shepherd, see his winning entry on Page 18



WILDCARE Gift Fund Donations

The following generous donations to the WILDCARE Gift Fund have been received since our last edition:

Donations over \$100

Dick Smith, James Collins, Ingrid McCaughey, Phil Wyatt, Chris Arthur, George Swain

Donations up to \$100

Andrew Smith, Tracey Simpson, Paula Barrass, Robyn Mundy, Mary Lincoln, Marina Campbell, Philippa Hartney, Julie Hunt, AT Benson, Adrian Slee, Carolyn Scott, Lois Hayes, Jennifer Mayne, Annette Reid, Graham Bourke, Mary Hawkes, Annemarie Pollard, Shauna Swanson, Christine Scott

Wildtimes Publication Schedule

EDITION #	COPY DEADLINE	PUBLICATION
42	1 December 2011	1 January 2012
43	1 April 2012	1 May 2012
44	1 August 2012	1 September 2012

Submissions to Wildtimes Editor at wildtimes@wildcaretas.org.au

ON THE FRONT COVER:

David Reynolds' winning entry in this year's Volunteer Photo Competition catches Penny Tyson, Vicki Campbell and Trauti Reynolds at Garden Cove on Deal Island.



A Cool School

A recent grant from the Wildcare Board enabled the Friends of Coningham Nature Recreation Area (CNRA) to purchase a digital camera and equipment to be used by the Snug Primary School Wildscool project.

Wildscool is about learning outside the schoolroom, where 'wild' is the school and is also 'cool', Nature is a teacher, and learning goes hand in hand with enjoyment.

The learning and enjoyment involves the CNRA and is assisted by Parks and Wildlife and the Friends of CNRA.

The project provides the children with opportunities to improve their skills in mathematics, technology, environmental science, research, cataloguing, writing and cooperating with other groups working on the same project.

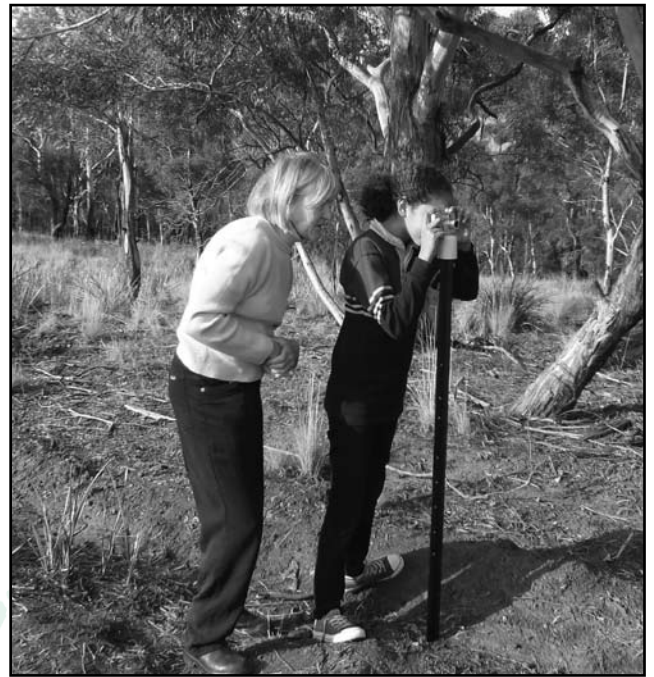
The Wildscool project at Snug includes field excursions followed by practical sessions at the school to enable the children to get a good overview of the area and meet the people from Parks and Wildlife and the local community who will be working with them.

Staff from the Channel Heritage Museum will speak about the history of the area and give some tips on collecting oral history from local residents while others will advise on creating a website and transferring data to the web pages.

The variety of the activities ensures that there will be something to interest every child, to motivate them to work steadily at their field of interest and at the same time develop new skills and consolidate old ones.

The high-quality digital camera purchased with the Wildcare grant will be useful in creating a photographic record for the school website.

The camera will also be used for biological monitoring and for



Jean Taylor demonstrating good photo monitoring techniques

monitoring erosion and vegetation recovery. Staff from Natural Resource Management South held a session to advise on the correct techniques for using the camera and establishing photo points, and Parks and Wildlife experts taught the children to use a GPS.

Parks and Wildlife plan to contribute a GPS and the Friends of CNRA have purchased software for a navigation system to be used in the project.

The aim of the project is to eventually develop a comprehensive resource covering all aspects of the CNRA and to make the resource freely available to everyone via a website.

Judy Redeker

Friends of Coningham NRA



FOCNRA member Graeme Cooksey presents the digital camera to Snug Teacher Shay Hickey

A Presidential Log On

A Presidential Log On sounds a bit like what you would find when you enter a presidential palace, but it is not. In fact, it's just what WILDCARE branch presidents, and other office bearers, do as part of their normal duties in running a WILDCARE group. Let me explain.....

As part of WILDCARE's support to local branches I have been delivering training sessions to branch presidents and office bearers, on how better to use the WILDCARE web site.

Through a special part of the WILDCARE web site (www.wildcaretas.org.au) WILDCARE presidents can log on to do group admin work.

This means that more events are being entered onto the WILDCARE events calendar, more branch/group home pages are being updated and most importantly new to WILDCARE members who have indicated on their membership forms that they want to become involved in one of the 72 WILDCARE branches/groups are being included in group activities.

The group Presidents are now in control of these electronic services through the web site, making leading their group easier and more efficient.

The WILDCARE groups that so far have undertaken the training include;

Friends of Tasman, FO Maatsuyker, FO of Deal Island, FO Woodvine, FO Freycinet, FO Cradle Mountain, FO Melaleuca WILDCARE, FO Coningham NRA, FO Maria, Central North Wildlife Care and Rescue, Jericho Heritage Centre, Dry Stone Wall Preservation Group, FO Red Bill Point Conservation Area.

Thanks to all the presidents and office bearers who have given up their time to undertake the training (and thanks for the lunches, cups of tea and dinners offered to me on my travels around the state).

Building the capacity of WILDCARE presidents is just one part of this overall project. Through the partnership that has been developed between WILDCARE Inc and the Tasmanian Landcare Association (through the Tasmanian Landcaring Grants) seven WILDCARE branches are currently undertaking



Jodie Epper (right) with Janet Fenton from Friends of Melaleuca

projects under this program and many other groups have been funded through the likes of local government grants, Tasmanian Community Fund and the Australian Governments Caring for Our Country Community Action Grants – well done all. Some of these projects are:

Friends of Maria Island for Stages 3 and 4 of the "Sweeping the Broom" project;

Friends of Bass Strait Islands for Stages 2 and 3 of Boxthorn Control on Roydon Island (one of the Furneaux group);

Friends of Maatsuyker Island for weed control work;

Friends of Coningham NRA for weed control and community engagement with neighbours; and

Alistair and Julia Butler-Ross members of Central North Wildlife Care and Rescue for the construction of an eagle enclosure.

But everybody knows that successful on-ground projects don't succeed without the behind-the-scenes grant writing and group management activities that branch/group presidents are responsible for.

For more information on the program contact Jodie Epper the Wildcare facilitator on 0437 959 061 or wildcarefacilitator@gmail.com or Tasmanian Landcaring Grants Project Manager, Alan Barton on 6234 7117, 0428 222 816 or projectmanager@taslandcare.org.au

This project is supported by Tasmanian Landcare Association and WILDCARE Inc and funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative.

Jodie Epper
Wildcare Group Facilitator



Jodie with Julia Butler Ross from Central North Wildlife Care and Rescue



CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY



Anniversary Picnic for Woodvine

It's not often that you celebrate the anniversary of both a wedding and a nature reserve but on 29th May 2011 the Friends of Woodvine Nature Reserve hosted a picnic to do just that. We were celebrating the 150th anniversary of Daniel Long and Elizabeth Tustin marrying in 1861 and settling to farm at Woodvine.

Their direct descendants lived there until the last, Ernie Shaw, gifted Woodvine to the people of Tasmania in 1998.

About 35 members of the Long and Shaw families, Friends of Woodvine, neighbours, friends of Ernie's, and current and former Parks staff gathered to enjoy all that makes Woodvine special and to share stories and memories of the people who lived there.

There was time, too, to inspect our 'mystery object' – a three-sided cradle that both tips and swivels on its stand. Speculation abounds as to what it was for – a cradle for holding lambs to be 'marked', a chute for sorting vegetables into bags? Will we ever know for sure?

Friends of Woodvine working bees have recently installed new guttering, sealed holes in roofing iron, begun re-planking the south wall of the stable, pruned shrubs, removed bracken and, of course, weeded yet more Spanish heath.

The anniversary was an opportunity to enjoy the natural environment and celebrate with a toast:

To Daniel and Elizabeth, who had the foresight to settle in such a beautiful place and the luck to raise such a large and long-lived family here.

And to Ernie, who knew what he had was valuable, unique and very, very special and who had the great generosity of spirit to ensure he could share it with everyone, for ever.

(Woodvine Nature Reserve is situated in south-east Tasmania, 45 kilometres east of Hobart, and 10 kilometres from Sorell.

The 377 hectare property was donated to the state government by Mr. Herbert Ernest 'Ernie' Shaw in 1989 who wanted to protect the native plants and animals of the area.

The Woodvine Nature Reserve was subsequently proclaimed on 25 June 2001. Ernie Shaw died on 5 August 2005.)

Linda Forbes
Friends of Woodvine



George Whitehouse & Bob Ranson at Woodvine



Alison Forbes installing gate sign at Woodvine

ClimateWatch volunteers needed to observe seasonal changes

The timing of events such as bird migrations and the flowering of plants is often closely linked to climate. Records of phenology (the timing of periodic phenomena in the life cycles of plants and animals) over decades or centuries have proven useful for reconstructing changes in seasons.

Unfortunately, Australia has a very poor record of historical phenology. With current rates of climate change it is increasingly important to understand the implications for our flora, fauna and ecosystems.

A long-term citizen science project is now underway to collate phenological observations from around the nation.

ClimateWatch is an Australia-wide Earthwatch initiative involving over 100 different species from plants, to birds, frogs, mammals and reptiles.

The species have been specifically chosen by scientists to bridge the information gap and better understand how climate change is affecting our natural environment.

ClimateWatch is aiming for hundreds of thousands of observations to be recorded so that it becomes Australia's leading data resource for environmental scientists studying the effects of climate change.

To this end the project relies on observations from volunteers around the nation. Many of the target species – such as London plane trees, honeybees and starlings – can be readily observed in urban areas.

Tasmanian native species that will be familiar to many of us who spend time in the bush include christmas bush, Macleay's swallowtail and the flame robin.

Detailed information on the target species including what and when to record are provided on the website www.climatewatch.org.au

There are currently around 40 Climate Watch target species which occur in Tasmania, including exotic and native insects, plants and birds.

You can also make records of the breeding of three of Tasmania's frog species and the presence of washed-up marine invertebrates.

"We're looking for those subtle shifts in the timing of natural cycles across the country such as the flowers opening or the migration of birds," says Andy Donnelly, Earthwatch Science Partnerships Director.

"There are lots of things that bushwalkers and birdwatchers notice in nature that never get recorded, so we are encouraging them and anybody else to take part."

In collaboration with Tasmania's Department of Primary Industry, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) World Heritage Area program managed by Biodiversity Conservation Branch, Earthwatch has recently added Tasmania's two endemic *Athrotaxis* species, pencil pine and king billy pine, to ClimateWatch.



Rich Weatherill of Climate Watch and Dr Jennie Whinam of DPIPWE observing condition of Pencil Pines



Key scientific objectives of ClimateWatch are to:

- Develop a scientifically valid, volunteer-generated data set on the response of biological systems to climate change
- Provide credible data that informs future land and resource management decision-making
- Enhance understanding and support for 'citizen science'

Volunteer registration, instructions for participants and data submission are all co-ordinated ClimateWatch via their website:

climatewatch.org.au

Public observations of health, recruitment and seed production will be a valuable addition to the long-term program established by DPIPWE to monitor the impact of climate change on these iconic conifer trees.

"Research at the University of Tasmania has shown that Athrotaxis are sensitive to moisture stress and function best at cooler temperatures, so we would expect them to show signs of stress and declining health in response to climate change," explains Nick Fitzgerald, DPIPWE Vegetation Conservation Project Officer.

The deciduous beech or fagus (*Nothofagus gunnii*) is another uniquely Tasmanian plant featured by ClimateWatch.

Since this is Australia's only winter deciduous woody plant it will be interesting to see if the timing of seasonal events such as bud burst and leaves changing colour is shifting, as has been observed in Northern Hemisphere deciduous trees.

Certainly many Tasmanians keep a close eye on the 'turning' of the fagus; what we need is for these observations to be recorded via ClimateWatch.

A recent innovation is the development of ClimateWatch Trails where people are encouraged to make observations along the trail so that a detailed dataset can be built up over time for a specific site.

Some of Tasmania's popular short nature walks are intended to become ClimateWatch Trails in the near future.

A similar program in the UK was launched over a decade ago has now recorded over three million observations (www.naturescalendar.org.uk).

In the USA, the National Phenology Network incorporates citizen science observations through 'Nature's Notebook' (www.usanpn.org).

Most long-term records for plant phenology from the Northern Hemisphere are consistent with observed recent climate change; that is an earlier arrival of Spring (typically 2-5 days earlier per decade) and a slight delay in Autumn phenophases

such as colouring and leaf drop of deciduous trees.

The consequent lengthening of the growing season is likely to change the stability and functioning of ecosystems, particularly when combined with other climate-driven phenomena such as migration of species and changes in rainfall and snowmelt patterns.

For more information about how to participate in ClimateWatch, visit the website at www.climatewatch.org.au and sign up for the e-mail newsletter.

For information about the Athrotaxis monitoring contact Nicholas.Fitzgerald@dpiwve.tas.gov.au

Nick Fitzgerald



Pencil Pine Dieback in Tasmania



Parks Shop

24 Main Road Huonville

Ph: 03 6264 8460



- Range of pre-visit information relating to Tasmania's National Parks & Reserves
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10% discount to WILDCARE members

Shorebird Counts in North West Tasmania

Far north west Tasmania has the good fortune to host large numbers of migratory shorebirds from places as far afield as Alaska, Eastern Siberia, Mongolia and Japan. Islands and spits in Boullanger Bay in the Hunter Group, Robbins Island and Kangaroo Island in Robbins Passage and further east, Perkins Island and the Stanley area provide roosts for resting birds which feed on the benthic fauna living in the very extensive tidal mudflats.

There are resident plovers and oystercatchers here too but the migrants have bred in the very brief summer at high northern latitudes and then headed south, staging at major sites such as the Yellow Sea in China/Korea to spend the southern summer with us in Australia and New Zealand. Sometimes young, non-breeding birds will stay for our winter as well.

At various sites on their migratory flyways, especially in eastern Asia, land reclamation associated with human overpopulation is encroaching on the tidal areas on which these highly-specialised birds must feed to refuel for the fantastic distances involved.

Bird numbers have been declining for some years now and so the regular summer and winter census at our end is an essential tool in helping monitor these changes.

The key sites in far NW Tasmania are generally freehold or leasehold tenure. Over the years we have built up a happy working relationship with the local farmers and the Parks

and Wildlife Service who are instrumental in allowing access, providing transport and guiding us across tidal channels.

The data generated by binocular and telescope-wielding members of Birds Tasmania go to the Birds Tas database and also to the Birds Australia 20-20 Shorebird Survey Project which monitors sites all over Australia. Summaries are later published in the Tasmanian Bird Report and also in the Stilt, a scientific journal for the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, produced by the Australian Wader Studies Group.

Gulls, terns, swans, geese and ducks, raptors and many other kinds of avifauna also frequent these waterways and their numbers are similarly monitored for PWS and the Atlas.

But it's not all science and number crunching. Shorebird enthusiasts love the wide-open spaces, the fresh air, getting away from the telephone and honing the skills needed to identify birds roosting on the shore or hurtling by at a rate of knots. Shorebirds are generally magnificent flyers.

Freezing horizontal rain tends to dampen the enthusiasm and in Tasmania it's not just confined to winter. Neither is there ever anywhere to hide on a shorebird roost, whether it's from the sun or the rain or the wind, but that's all part of the fun!

(Wildcare members wanting to be part of the Birds Tasmania Shorebird Counts can contact Hazel Britton via Wildtimes at wildtimes@wildcaretas.org.au)

Richard Ashby



Shorebird Habitat North West Tasmania



Volunteers Required for Little Penguins Count at Lillico Beach - 14 January 2012

The Friends of Lillico Penguins (FoLP) and Parks and Wildlife Service, Tasmania (PWS) are organizing a count of Little Penguins at Lillico Beach Conservation Area to take place on the evening of Saturday 14th January, 2012.

This will be four years since our last penguin count in the colony, in January 2008. We are making an early start in planning for the event and this includes calling for volunteer counters; in 2008, 80 volunteers came to help and we are hoping to attract a similar number for 2012.

Lillico Beach Conservation Area is adjacent to the Bass Highway, about five minutes drive to the west of Devonport.

If you would like to spend an evening in the company of penguins, sitting on the beach and counting them as they return to their nests, we would love to hear from you.

You would be helping to provide valuable information about the condition of the Little Penguin colony at Lillico Beach which will be used by FoLP and PWS in their continuing work to protect and understand these fascinating birds.

We hope we can also offer you an enjoyable and memorable evening!

Taking part requires a reasonable level of fitness as you might need to walk for up to 30 minutes each way to your counting position across the uneven shingle surface of Lillico Beach.

You will also need reasonable night vision and be able to sit fairly still in silence for up to two hours. The evening will begin

with a briefing session at 8.00 pm and it could be as late as midnight before we finish.

If you are interested in joining us and think you may be available on the night, we ask you to make a note of the date and email or phone us with your contact details.

We will keep you informed about our planning for the count and closer to the time, if you are still able to take part, will ask you to register a formal expression of interest. Our contact details are:

Patricia Ellison, President, FoLP – 0459 084 742, pellison@inet.au

John Coombes, Secretary, FoLP – 03 6424 6795, jcjb@iprimus.com.au

Steve Mansfield, Volunteer Facilitator, PWS – 03 6429 8727, 0428 576 229, stephen.mansfield@parks.tas.gov.au

We are all happy to answer any questions you may have about the event.

Patricia Ellison
Friends of Lillico Penguins



Snippets from Deal Island

Friends of Deal Island president Dallas Baker provided these snippets on the life and times of this most active of Wildcare branches.

The Rocking Chair Goes Back

The Friends of Deal Island received an email from a Mr Greg Alomes saying he had purchased an old rocking chair from an antique dealer with information it had belonged to a light keeper on Deal Island.

On visiting the dealer's shop and inspecting the chair it was found that the chair belonged to John Thomas Hague who had died on Deal Island in 1924 and is buried not far from the compound on the island.

The chair had been sold to the dealer by Thomas Hague's granddaughter. Greg very generously donated the chair to FoDI and a plan was developed to return the chair to the museum on Deal Island with the working bee in April 2011.

The chair's owner John Thomas Hague was the Head keeper on the island and was searching for a stray calf with his wife and the assistant keeper when he fell down dead.

There was no radio on Deal so Mrs Hague put his body in the bathtub while a makeshift coffin was constructed.

A fisherman took the news to Port Welshpool and it was several weeks before a boat was sent to remove Mrs. Hague and her children from the island. They were transported to Hobart.



John Hague and his Rocking Chair Reunited

The chair is now installed in the Deal Island museum and a perspex box is being constructed to protect it from further deterioration.

FoDI would like to thank Mr Greg Alomes for his generous donation, as I'm sure does Mr Hague.

Have Tank will Travel

Following the success of obtaining a grant from the Tasmanian Community Fund to replace two water tanks on the visitor's house and the museum on Deal Island, a massive logistics plan was formulated to get the tanks and the working bee and the equipment in the one place at the same time.



New Water Tank Arrives at Deal Island

The April working bee headed from Tasmania by plane and charter boat, the tanks headed from Port Welshpool in Victoria on board Dale's fishing boat and we met just on dusk in East Cove.

Night was setting in quickly as several of the team boarded the boat and moved offshore for the unloading. With a lot of grunt and ingenuity the 400kg tank was rolled over the side only to watch the tethering rope detach and the tank slowly sail away into the darkness.

A quick chase by Dale in the dingy brought it to heel and it was towed onto the beach.

The following morning the tank was rolled onto a very little trailer and carefully towed up the one kilometre track to the visitor's house by the caretaker, Spud.

The removal of the old rusty steel tank was a task in itself but a base for the new addition was completed and the tank was rolled into place.

Downpipes were connected and the skies produced 84 millimetres of rain over the next two nights and 10,000 litres of fresh clean water was ready for use.

The team also helped Spud clean out the two central 33,000 litre concrete tanks prior to new covers being placed over the tops.

With one more tank to replace, caretakers and working bees can look forward to water of the highest quality.

FoDI wishes to thank all who participated in the venture and thanks the funding bodies involved.





FODI at AGFEST 2011

Promoting the Dream at AGFEST

The Friends of Deal Island recently journeyed to Carrick to mount a display at AGFEST 2011.

The members were joined by the PWS staff from Flinders Island and jointly conducted a very successful promotion of FoDI, Wildcare Inc and the Kent Group National Park.

The Lighthouse Cookbook sold very well (all funds allocated to the restoration of Deal Island and Tasman Island) and the PWS staff promoted Flinders Island, the caretaker program on Deal and the Kent Group National Park.

The public showed a great deal of interest and many people stopped to talk of their visit/s to Deal Island over the years. Visitors were encouraged to become members of Wildcare Inc especially with the Parks pass concessions.

It was a great follow up to the display at the Wooden Boat Festival display earlier in the year.

FoDI wishes to thank the Parks and Wildlife management (Northern Office) for approving the joint endeavour, especially in the leadup to the signing of the Parks/FoDI partnership agreement in July of this year.

The Partnership Agreement.

After a long and protracted gestation the birth of the partnership agreement between Parks and Wildlife Service and Friends of Deal Island finally took place on the 18th July 2011.

The agreement sets out guiding principles for PWS and FoDI to work together towards the conservation and enhancement of the island's values. The agreement lists future works projects (grant dependent) and ways in which FoDI can assist in the caretaker program.

The executive of FoDI, President Dallas Baker, Secretary Bob Tyson and Secretary Shirley Baker met with Chris Colley, Manager Northern Region PWS in Hobart to sign the historic document.

FoDI now feels the group's future is assured and future executive members have a working agreement to guide their negotiated activities. The ongoing weed management,



FODI member Bob Tyson, PWS Northern Regional Manager Chris Colley and FODI President Dallas Baker sign their partnership agreement.

heritage restoration and preservation of natural and cultural issues are assured.

FoDI would like to thank Chris for his input into the drafting of the agreement and a very special thank you to Wayne Dick, Parks Reserves manager on Flinders Island for his contributions to the successful outcome.

WILDCARE DISCOUNT SPONSORS

Wildcare wishes to thank the following sponsors offering discounts to Wildcare members:

Aggies Bed and Breakfast, Longford: 10% discount to Wildcare members

Parks Shop Huonville, 22 Main Street Huonville: 10% discount to Wildcare members

Par Avion Wilderness Tours, Cambridge Aerodrome, Cambridge: 10% discount to Wildcare members

Plants of Tasmania Nursery, Ridgeway: 10% discount to Wildcare members

Platypus Park Country Retreat, Bridport: 15% discount to Wildcare members

Sponsorship opportunities exist for businesses to support Wildcare and its members. Discount sponsors each receive a free acknowledgement in each edition of Wildtimes. For \$200 sponsors also receive a one eighth page display advertisement in 4 editions of Wildtimes. Contact our editor at wildtimes@wildcareas.org.au for details.

Wildcare Photo Competition

The response to our photo competition this year was great. I received 60 entries from 21 separate photographers. The overall quality was high and I picked the best 30 for submitting to a judging panel of PWS staff at Huonville.

Two of the four judges picked David Reynolds' photograph of Trauti Reynolds, Vicki Campbell and Penny Tyson clearing beach weeds at Garden Cove on Deal Island in 2010. Well done David.

The prize this year was \$1,000 to the Wildcare group nominated by the winning photographer. Normally this would be an easy choice but since David and

Trauti are volunteering for so many groups it wasn't so easy. David has chosen to distribute the funds to two groups: \$500 each to Friends of Deal Island (see page 10) and Friends of Woodvine (see Page 5).

I have published more of the best entries on page 23 and on the back cover.

We'll be doing something similar in 2012 so keep those digital cameras close by when you're out and about with Wildcare.

Craig Saunders



Steve Cronin in a different light on Maatsuyker Island. Photo Marina Campbell



Bob Graham and Helen Gee entertain the Tasman Island locals. Photo Erika Shankley



Threatened Plants Tasmania members at work. Photo Robin Garnett



Dave Reynolds and Alan Sanderson at Woodvine. Photo Trauti Reynolds

"Wildcare volunteers at work and play"



Dave Reynolds and ranger Ian Marmion at Cockle Creek. Photo Sam Lennox



Kate Hansford dealing with blackberry seedlings on Maatsuyker Island. Photo Marina Campbell



Moving the new water tank into position on Deal Island. Photo Shirley Baker



Very happy volunteers on Roydon Island. Photo Kat Hopkins



SPRATS volunteers digging out Marram Grass on the west coast. Photo Vicki Campbell



Wildcare Volunteers Assist at Butlers Beach Whale Stranding

About 30 pilot whales became stranded on remote Butlers Beach, on Labillardiere Peninsula in South Bruny National Park on 17 March 2011. Soon after discovery a team of Marine Conservation Officers, the local Park Ranger and local volunteers from Tassal, Peppermint Bay Tours and Bruny Islanders, arrived at the scene to find 11 whales still alive.

Assisting the whales was a very challenging exercise because the whales were very distressed, confused and tired. We tried shepherding them away from the beach several times, but they couldn't work out how to escape the shallow sand bars and shoreline. As night fell it became clear that the whales were not going to leave. Rescuers beached the whales on the sand so that they could rest overnight before fresh attempts were made the next morning. The early morning's high tide enabled the team to refloat the whales and they all escaped into the D'Entrecasteaux Channel.

These whales were able to be successfully rescued due to the rapid response of volunteers from Tassal, Peppermint Bay Tours and Bruny Islanders coordinated as part of the Wildcare First Response Whale Rescue Team. We would like to thank and acknowledge the dedication and enthusiasm of all who assisted with the rescue.

Volunteers are an essential part of whale rescue efforts and it is terrific that Bruny Island has people who make themselves available. The Wildcare team on Bruny Island was formed in 2009 and most of the team were able to assist with this



Marine Conservation Officer Kris Carlyon and volunteers assist pilot whales at Butlers Beach

stranding. I encourage anyone interested in learning more about whale rescue to contact Miriam Fokker, Coordinator of the Bruny Island Wildcare First Response Whale Rescue Team on 6260 6264 or 0402013389.

(For further information on whales visit the Parks website at www.parks.tas.gov.au and search 'whales')

Miriam Fokker

Wildtimes Advertising Policy Review

For many years Wildcare has offered free display advertising in Wildtimes to businesses offering discounts to Wildcare members: our so-called 'discount sponsors'. We have never accepted any paid advertising directly.

In recent times we have had approaches from supporters wanting to advertise but have been unable to accept because we had reached an 'editorial limit' of advertising.

So that we can free up this 'log-jam' Wildcare has recently adopted a new policy for discount sponsor advertising.

We will continue to accept advertising only from discount sponsors but we will now offer sponsorship at two levels. Any business offering discounts to Wildcare members will get a free one line acknowledgement in each edition of Wildtimes.

In addition, for a very reasonable \$200 per year, discount sponsors will be offered space for a display advertisement similar to those we have run in the past.

At Wildcare we believe this is a great offer: we have over 5,000 members each receiving a copy of Wildtimes and our on-line version is available to anyone else through our

website. If you would like to take up this sponsorship offer contact us at Wildtimes on wildtimes@wildcaretas.org.au Craig Saunders



Wildcare Volunteers Return to the Far South

*Wildcare Volunteers have again travelled to the Far South to assist Parks Staff in the removal of a large patch of Canary Broom (*Genista monosperulana*), from Coal Bins Point, near Cockle Creek.*

The initial working bee was conducted on the 26th of May, with a large number of mature plants removed.

Another patch was also discovered, and as time was running short many of the volunteers agreed to return at a later date in order to complete the task.

A month later Parks Staff and volunteers returned to the site on a beautiful winter's day and finished the job.

Ranger Sam Lennox couldn't speak too highly of the volunteers' work. "The volunteers have allowed the staff to undertake weeding projects that simply wouldn't be possible without their help."

The scale of the efforts in just 2 days amazed Parks and Wildlife Field Officer Peter Price who has always placed the task in the 'too hard basket'.

Over the past year Wildcare volunteers have been directly involved in a number of weeding working bees in the far south, all of which have been highly successful.

There is now momentum growing to form a "Friends of Cockle Creek Group" which would be a great means of continuing the exceptional work that has been done in the region so far.

If you would like to be apart of such a group please call Pip Gowen, PWS Volunteer Facilitator at the Huonville Office, on 6264 8463.

Huonville PWS Ranger Sam Lennox



PWS Ranger Ian Marmion working alongside volunteer Mike Bowden at Coal Bins Point



PWS Staff and Volunteers at the Coal Bins

Rehabilitation - Millingtons Beach Conservation Area Orford

The Millingtons project coordinated by local Wildcare members Chris Peterson & Mick Fama, involved the removal of approximately 1.9 hectares of pine trees at a weed infested site adjoining Millington's Beach at Orford, and these pines were in turn replaced with native species to restore original coastal vegetation.

Approximately 300 tonnes of pines were felled and removed along with a significant amount of slash. The project was funded by the Australian Government Caring for our Country Community Coastcare Program.

The project received grant funding in 2009, and was subject to a long planning approvals process which included the



Before – Radiata Pine forest at Millingtons Beach

preparation of a Parks & Wildlife Reserve Area Assessment (RAA), the preparation of a Fauna and Flora study, an Aboriginal Heritage Assessment, Forest Practices Plan, and a series of Fauna Surveys.

The physical works finally got off the ground in June of 2011, and a local logging contractor Peter Bresenhan carried out the harvesting works to a very high standard.

In order to remove the pines but keep the native understorey the contractor and his tree faller had to exercise significant skill.

A community planting day in July consisting of Orford locals in conjunction in with Parks & Wildlife was the held to revegetate the area and some 500 trees were planted.

This was followed by a day involving students from Orford Primary School that involved the planting of another 100 trees. Parks will now fence the area in the coming weeks to conclude the project.

Spring Bay Wildcare will then maintain the area in conjunction with Parks over the long term.

The project has received overwhelming support from the Orford Community.

Chris and Mick would like to acknowledge the local Orford community volunteers, the great support and encouragement from the Ian, Blaz and Lee from the Caring for our Country Program, to Paul and Alena from Parks for project support, David Metcalfe, General Manager from Glamorgan Spring Bay Council, for local government support and resources, and Craig from Wildcare for administrative support and advice.

Chris Peterson
Spring Bay Wildcare



During – Logging in Progress



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Wildtimes Book Review

Viv and Hilda

Meeting the Robeys of Maria Island

Kathy Gatenby, 2011

Forty Degrees South Pty Ltd

Viv and Hilda (Meeting the Robeys of Maria Island) is Kathy Gatenby's passionate story of Viv and Hilda Robey, settlers and farmers of (South) Maria Island.

John Vivian Robey, a South African soldier wounded on the Western Front in 1918 met Evelyn Hilda Saunders, a volunteer member of the British Red Cross at Walton-on-Thames Military Hospital, England in January 1919. Their friendship blossomed into a romance and shortly after 'Viv' returned to South Africa Hilda joined him and they were married in Cape Town on 20 March 1920.

Hilda had been to Tasmania before the war to visit her brother and so after some unsuccessful attempts at farming in South Africa Viv and Hilda chanced their future by taking up a land offer on Maria Island. It was a time of prosperity on the island. The National Portland Cement Company was operating at Darlington in the north and so the Lands Department offered land in 300 acre lots south of the isthmus.

Kathy's book is then Viv and Hilda's story of over 40 years on Maria Island. But it is also Kathy's own story. Kathy moved to Maria Island in 1968 as a six year old daughter of the island's first ranger Rex Gatenby.

She first visited the Robey farm in 1969 and with her father sorted through the remnants of Viv and Hilda's life there. After Hilda's death in 1964 Viv had returned to South Africa in 1965.

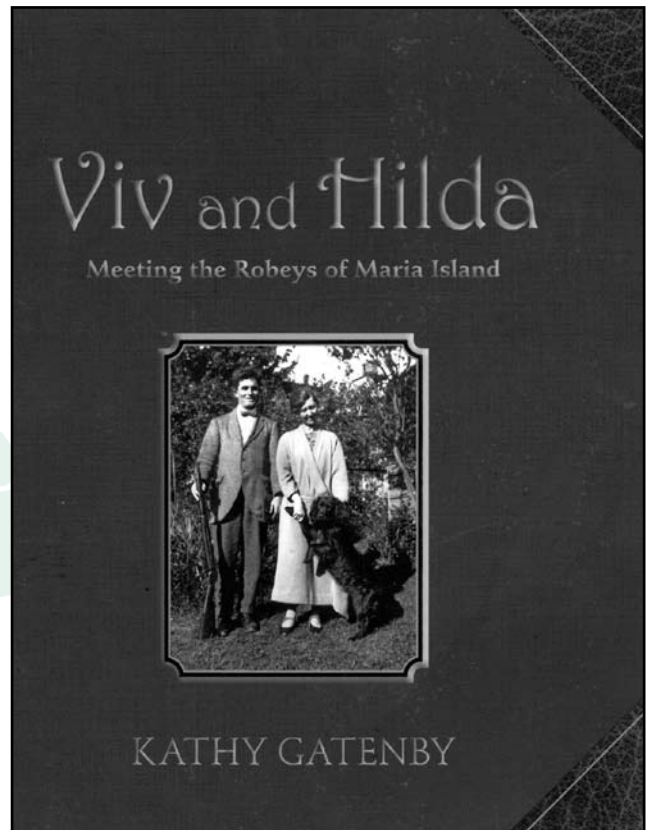
Kathy has maintained a passionate interest in Maria Island over many years and as a grown up has returned to the story of Viv and Hilda. Her account is beautifully written and illustrated with many photographs of Viv and Hilda's life on the island.

In Kathy's own words, "Viv and Hilda's story invites us to reflect upon the resourceful, inventive and resilient nature of those who shaped our country's cultural landscape, and to ponder the possibilities of where love can take you."

Viv and Hilda: meeting the Robeys of Maria Island is available from all major Tasmanian booksellers or direct from the author via email at Kathy@gatenby.com

David and Trauti Reynolds provided this postscript to the Viv and Hilda story.

Wildcare volunteers have been involved with Robeys since the mid 1990s. A small group of us came to the farm four times within a year to tidy up and paint the farmhouse. The frail cottage needed careful handling. We slowly worked from room to room, finding and saving as many artefacts as



possible (with view to turn the house into a museum). We cleared up years worth of cobwebs, dust and animal droppings, encountered rats and a resident tiger snake and finally secured the doors to keep out wildlife.

We also cleared thickly growing bracken from around the hut for fire safety.

In recent years we have returned to weed out the arum lilies around the homestead and Spanish Heath further afield on the farm. At the end of this year volunteers will return for a clean-up of debris from collapsed buildings and fences. David and Trauti.

Craig Saunders



Robey's farmhouse in 2011

2011 Wildcare Tasmania International Nature Writing Prize Award Winning Entry

Earlier this year award winners in the 2011 Wildcare Tasmania International Nature Writing Prize were announced. First prize of \$5,000 cash and a writer's residency in Tasmania was awarded to Peter Shepherd of New South Wales.

Peter is an award-winning freelance nature writer and poet. He is director of the Wilderness Coast Writing Centre on the Far South Coast of NSW, and presents many of the courses. A former award-winning advertising writer for Sydney radio, Peter "jumped ship", moving full-time into writing and the environment in 1999, studying environmental science at SCU and Social Ecology at UWS.

For two years he was Writer-in-Residence at Byron College in Mullumbimby, where he also ran various nature writing courses, focussing on heart, place, activism and connection. He also wrote and performed standup comedy.

Peter's essays and poetry have appeared in ABC's Organic Gardener Magazine, Island Magazine, Muse, The Echo, a bucket of local journals, and in 2010 he was included in Wildbranch: an anthology of new American nature and place writing (as the only non-American). In 2009 he won the Inverawe Tasmania Nature Poetry Prize. He is thinking of calling Tasmania a second home, or at least applying for honorary citizenship.

Here is Peter's award winning entry.

In the Land of Nod

My tent is covered in bird poo.

It stinks.

The sun has risen early - it's a sun thing, this rising and heating - and through the sweat and the faint tinge of percolating nylon I can hear the soft lapping of warm turquoise water on 200 trillion billion pieces of smashed white coral. It's a very visual sound. The sound of a postcard. Yesterday and the day before I had risen a little earlier, in a tent a little less stinky, and stood on that coral sand, staring at that water. My mind still can't get around the idea of standing in a postcard that's moving. The city mind, raised on pictures and promises, is limping and gagging. These things aren't real, it says (almost gibbers). So I stand on the beach, a little below where my dome tent is perched, staring and wondering what I should be doing. There is no answer. Or, there is, but it requires a slow osmosis for my brain to register what my body already knows: relax, you're doing it already.

But there goes my mind, ever helpful, searching for ideas. It constructs a list:

- * Sit down.
- * Go and open a coconut.
- * Take a walk around the island.
- * Write something.

- and then smiles sheepishly and hopefully at me. It's both disturbing and liberating when your mind acts this way. Liberating because maybe, just maybe, there's more to you than all these thoughts of doing and worrying. A big fat nothing, perhaps. A very exciting, very large, very warm, aquamarine, green-leaved just being there and doing it's own thing despite-your-thoughts kind of nothing. The kind that grows into an idiot grin.

So I ignore myself and keep standing. Then I do what I did yesterday, and the day before: I watch the noddies nodding.

They're smallish dark grey birds, these noddies, birds that

live on remote tropical islands with other flying creatures of varying sizes larger than they are. Find one on its own and it looks intensely vulnerable, liquid black eyes and neat white circles on their heads that look just like caps, giving them their other name - white capped noddies..

Out there, though, over the reef and the deeper blue of the drop-off, above the turquoise and the lapis lazuli, in their own translucent blue forever, they are magicians. They are superstars. Imagine every best circus trapeze you've seen, the greatest sports players from somersaulting footie forwards to flying fieldsmen, and you're imagining the world's greatest nerds in comparison to noddies.

Noddies are blades, they are boomerangs; they are the space between the curl of a tiny wave and the hush of a wind, a moment passing through someone else's time that's already a distant memory. They are more like atoms than anything else I can think of; bubble-chamber curves of immeasurable fluidity. Their sheer number is overwhelming, but like atoms there is so much space between them.

This is their morning multi-blued calligraphy. Soon they will come back to roost, to the forest clinging to this tiny coral cay, passing over my head, over my tent, what was once fish and crustaceans and insects now white blobs upon said tent, blobs that in my better moments I will describe as bird art.

2.

It's traditional to give some idea of one's whereabouts. Names help. You could try Masthead Island. For location you could try 60km east of Gladstone off the Queensland Coast. But notice what they are in relation to: landmasses, book names. They infer an unspoken given that the closeness of this place to a town, to land, to all that we know in roads and maps and ways of life, is the measure by which we can understand them.

I don't think so. It's a distraction, I reckon. Here's my thesis: there's more than one planet on this planet. More than one point of reference, more than one map. On other planets on



this planet, the continents and the oceans don't even look the same; they mass together differently. Their connections and relationships aren't obvious to us.

Beyond the geopolitical borders (those two-dimensional scratchings) our maps have hints at these other, un-named-by-us countries. Arrows. In different colours, they swirl around the edge of continents and across them. Wind currents, ocean currents and - tellingly - migration routes. What is a migration route but a path traced across ancient land? Why not a country of depth and height and elemental navigation tracks; of dips and distance and the lineage of places returned to? Just because we can't stand on it, doesn't make it less real. Isn't most of earth these deeper resonating places - oceans and air? We all know about songlines stitching this Australian continent together. Look up.

Don't birds sing?

Come. Come here as a bird. Across the waves you skim, the colour beneath you awakening from dark blue to light blue to turquoise - the colour of home, of rest. The colour change is depth change, from the deep drop-off beyond the reef to the shallower coral. Then we're above the sand, white sand, blindingly white sand, those 253 thousand billion million surf-pounded fragments of reef and shell. The white iris around a green forest. A forest calling to the wingborn - to you. The very shape of it is a wing, rising to meet you in its many-voiced dialect: southerly wind, silver gull, the taste of salt and thickening earth, the soft click of leaves and heat, and the piping, yelling raucous of thousands of fellow noddie conversations. You follow the path of breeze and scent, the shape of it, like sliding a well-worn slippery dip that shifts ever so slightly with each tidal flight. To home. To the centre dot of a clouded, sea-sprayed address. Amidst a tangle of soft branches lies a splotch of old leaves and guano glued into a flower-shaped mattress (a flower that looks like it's kind of melting). It's a perch, a nest, a launching spot.

Around you are 100,000-odd kin jostling, crooning, loving, looping seaward and back, tracing a chaotic three-dimensional mandala. They come gliding and banking with you. Shouting at you, to each other; to the eggborn. You nod, to a passer-by, to the sky, and a lime green leaf brushes you, drawing you into the breath and tangle of the forest. The trees. They cling lightly and stubbornly here. Which is to say: deeply and fiercely, to the shallow layer of humus. They claw rootly to the cracks of old sunworn reef. The heart of the forest bears traces of ancestral giants, trunks metres wide, ghosting the tropical and cyclonic heights: a reminder and a warning of what the weather can bring. The leaves are waxy and ovoid, the branches packed dense, with large, free spaces below. The only change from their shape and shade are the casuarinas by the wide camping beach, a cool ssshhing forest where campers huddle and noddies don't.

It's difficult, on a dry coral skeleton, to build a forest. You've got to take it slow, for one. And you've got to take what organic stuff's available, and make the best use of it. You have, of course, your own leaves, a proven standby of soil creation for millennia. And due to your location - the rest stop par excellence

for seabirds and migrating shorebirds - you begin to develop a taste for guano. By taste, I mean you start to work with your fungi community, grow a way to thrive on the acidic white paste that's like a constant rain. Low and behold this starts to form rock - phosphate rock - and your low wave lapping world begins to rise a little higher. The guano speeds the forest's growth, and so there are more leaves, more soft trunks to fall and break down. But it's still not enough nutrients. What to do? Learn to catch yourself some instant fertiliser.

The first noddie I found, on my very first day here, was sitting on the sand just inside the forest, just beyond the casuarinas in the shadows and scatterings of tiny sticks. It didn't run. That's surprising, when you're used to fear in animals. Birds, in cities, generally know better. But I'd had no experience, of course, with such non-human country. The noddie was never going to run away. It was land-predator blind. Nor, in a similar way, would it see a snake, or a rat, or a fox or a cat. It would have let me come up to it, even if it wasn't trapped and being slowly killed.

Like the venus fly trap and pitcher plant, the Pisonia tree, *Pisonia grandis*, grabbed the only idea and the only meal that worked: the noddies themselves. Here's a darkly beautiful system: the pisonias provide a home, a near infinity of branches and forks. The noddies bring guano, bits of fish and crustaceans. The pisonia, quietly and continually, grows a seed head. It's a packed mini-maze of branches, like a tumbleweed only smaller. The tree drops these to the ground below. Each ball of twigs is packed with seeds - and they are intensely gluey. Not the sort of thing you want to get a feather stuck on. There's not just one sticky seed, there's dozens and dozens. Land on or next to one of these, and you probably won't fly away again. You'll stay there, anchored to a ball of twigs and branches, until you slowly die.

In New Zealand and the islands of Oceania, this tree is known as birdcatcher.

Gently, I picked him up - who wouldn't? - and began to pick off each gluey seed. I soon learned to pull them along each feather with my nails - ripping them off simply tore and frayed each barb. There he sat, in my lap, letting me do whatever: rip, pull, stroke, console, rip, curse, console, pull. Finally I put him on a branch, hopeful. After a minute, he flew down to the ground, his feathers, I guess, dodgyfied, and into the pisonia seeds again. I wanted to believe otherwise. So I picked him up again, pulled all the new seeds off. Put him gently back on a branch, with clear paths over the sand. He seemed defeated, though, dispirited. When, finally, he tried to fly and landed in the seeds again, I had to walk away and sit on the beach for a while.

3.

It's near midnight, and I'm sitting around a campfire, beneath the tarp of a camp kitchen, playing the animal game with a feisty Kiwi bloke. It's simple, the animal game. Someone runs through the alphabet in their head, someone else says "stop", and then you go around whoever's there thinking of an animal that starts with that letter. Rules developed over the years: A double (for example, flying fox) meant you got to skip a go, and therefore have more time to think. Thinking further back than the Pliocene was too far; gender and babies weren't allowed (no gander or calf), you couldn't write stuff down.



And strategies: keep your controversials and doubles up your memory sleeve; pick the obvious first, try and pre-empt the other players' choices.

Some people - competitive types, borderline nerds - take the game seriously. So it was that we'd started with 30 campers and now, in the deep valley of the night, it's down to him and me. It's 'S' (the biggest game letter besides 'B' - not that I'd know) and we're up to 15 minutes between answers.

"Um... Stingray..."

Like two drunks taking swings at each other, or pirates slamming down another shot of rum, neither of us - red eyed and exhausted - will back down, no matter how long it takes to think of another animal.

"Snoring... Bird."

Swiiing...

"Scarab. Beetle."

The surf breathes a ssshhh in and out on the beach. A lullaby.

Whhhhack... "Sand Fly..."

We wait, thinking. Finally, after a while a noddy squeaks somewhere. Dreaming, perhaps.

Something heavy and soft thwacks into my solar plexus.

"Whark?" Says the dark feathered phantom now at my feet.

"Shearwater," I say, focussing.

"That's a good one," says the Kiwi. Then he notices, too.

"Oh," he adds, standing to look. He or she walks a few circles, clearly confused (the shearwater, not the Kiwi); waddles past me, takes off again, back on track.

More of them come, then, scooping the dark like owls; grey ghosts passing through our camp at a fairly steady altitude of one metre.

This flight pattern, this memory path through a familiar forest, is what those early hungry sailors must have meant with their tales and metaphors of a 'living larder'. Why, you could simply pluck them out of the air as they flew near the cooking pot! The story goes that they tasted - surprise and joy and homesickness! - like mutton. Of course the same deal met the Dodo of Mauritius and the Moa of New Zealand.

The shearwater clan is vast. The Short-tailed Shearwaters (there's a double!), the nesters of Tasmania and nearby coastal mainland, dance a planetary figure-eight, loosely from the Arctic to Australia. They alone number in the millions. The ones floating around us - around the two red-eyed campers - are Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, the largest of the tribes, who seem happy to frump about the Pacific in an area of about 20,000 kilometres, nesting from Hawai'i to Perth to here.

Numbers like these are ungraspable. Hundreds of thousands to millions. Vast winged empires: flying foxes, butterflies, shorebirds. Maps of worlds that appear to us to overlap because they are layered by height, by temperature; some are written in the code of seasons, others hinged to vast continents of fish and ocean currents and temperatures. And edges softly sharing at the overlaps. The shearies, for instance, wait 'til it's

dark to glide nestward. The noddies are in the morning. No traffic congestion.

We don't notice the numbers. Partly because we don't generally occupy a soft overlap, with bulldozing and melting. But also because we don't visit their worlds still intact. It's mostly sailors, scientists, adventurers. Entire planets etched in coral, rock and greenery, surrounded by infinities of blue, often seethe with the flap and stretch of wing, the calling and courting, the aerial haze of this winged mind going about its everyday on these tiny parts of their world we are able to glimpse.

The vast and the singular. One noddy swoops just a little to the right, one has a kink in a cross-current loop from a run-in with a particular gull, one prefers particular waves. Two shearwaters dig a home tunnel in the sand; make a door if there's enough sticks and debris. (Privacy! Woohoo, my little Wind Lover...) Lay one egg - the family jewel - then fatten the hatchling to a puffy round-cheeked ball twice their size on stomach oil and fish mash (goatfish soup is popular.) They leave themselves so thin, these two, that they have to just leave, finally, back into the eight. Puffball is left to starve down to flight weight, then follow, adding itself to the path stitching continents and life and clouds and planets and continuity together.

I hear a few more wharks? of late night collisions about the camp, as the Kiwi and I slug on, now with about half an hour of tired silence between each answer. Finally we agree to postpone - "I'm not giving up!" "That's right!" "It's not over!" - the game. Relieved, honours intact, I stumble to my tent.

I dream of bones.

Something rises from the old leaf of the ground, from the shadows, and waits there, breathing. It is a spirit bird. It is hungry because it has no bones. It grabs the sticks around it, fashions them into a shape. The tiny sticks click and rustle. They come together in an odd way, these stick-bones, for this spirit doesn't know what a bird looks like in this land. But it wants to find out. It drools dust and sand, waiting. Then somebody flies down. Curious, maybe. The spirit grabs 'em. It's so hungry. Sucks the whole body in. Takes time. It discovers grey feathers and the memories and dreams of flying. The spirit begins to move up the tree, spreading through the branches, repeating itself over and over.

Until it becomes a story, over time, amongst other stories. "If you nest near the sky," goes one story, stay low, keep watch for sun beaks. It's even a dance: bob and look up at each angle in turn, bob and look up. There are stories, too, and songs, of sky and joy, of eggs and play. But there is another one that speaks below the roots of the forest and into the subterranean tidal heart. Even to the elders, this tale speaks of an ancient pact almost as old as the bones of coral.

"Don't land on the ground," admonishes the parents. "Or the Bone Bird will get you."

The next day I go for a walk deeper into the forest - and fall into it. Along a shaded sandy path, over a couple of low pisonia trunks, when my leg disappears to my knee. When I lift my leg to look in the hole - thwump - my shin disappears again.

I look and see with new eyes: mounds and tunnel entrances.



Lots of them.

Even as I back up, making apologies, how can it be enough? What happens when the shearwaters come back tonight and find their family home destroyed? Is there an egg in there, trying to stay warm?

Arrogance and stupidity: two things I've brought with me to someone else's land. This is someone's home. This is someone's family.

I stumble back to the beach. From the shadows of the forest - one of the last remaining pisonia forests in the world - the Bone Bird is watching.

4.

Once again it's near midnight, a near full moon washing the world. I'm woken by my feet being pushed up, pushed up. There, silhouetted against the green nylon of the tent, is a perfect hemisphere hulking the entire width of my modern, flimsy shell.

Chelonia mydas, the Green Turtle. She has paddled from a Masthead Island of 35 years before. This beach, this white ring, the welcome circle of this country, is Turtle Call, too; a boomerang of long, quiet return; a love song of completion as long and slow and deep as a blue whale's echo, where she brings the heavy joy of her memory and eggs.

I was sleeping on such a memory without even knowing it, our paths through the world crossing in this exact sandy spot. Her shadowed head rises and gasps, hissing quietly from the Triassic as she drags herself to the side of the tent and begins to - flip! flip! - spray my wall with sand.

Here is another map, one painted with depth and deep blue tracks. There's inverse topography, mountains rising, tipped by swaying forests, swirled by slow, thick winds. Patches coloured with places to rise and breathe. And the ancestral cartography of deep time, rolling into the squinting distance. Mystery, too. Blank areas we can't follow. Here there be turtles.

By torchlight I watch as moons in miniature fall into the womb of the beach, shining pearls piling on top of each other and, eventually, the flip! flip! as thick rubbery paddles fill in the hole, then pat down the top, both in practicality and benediction.

Hours have passed as I've knelt in the sand. The sky slowly begins to grey and blush pink. We've met at the edge of things, she and I, and, for me, part of the language written in the borders is curiosity. I hope that translates into respect. I pray, in that quiet place between the exhausted turtle and the rising noddies, that I, and others, may grow back into understanding. Into listening. And sharing. At least enough to walk a map that overlays softly. To be, even in some way, a part of a nation of planets once more.

Perhaps, on this side of the Triassic, a clawed, leathery-skinned, fang-jawed something-sauros (called Clarence, maybe), sat on the edge of the jungle, watching this turtle's greater grandmother. Instead of, like me, a pair of old shorts she had the beginnings of feather nubs - her descendants growing, with the slow measured malleability of evolution, into birds.

Noddies, perhaps.

I wonder: what passes for their days? So much can happen. Death for a baby here is a moment's distraction by a parent, a chance breeze, collecting food - the silver gulls hover like a terrible ache, wings arched, kiting the ocean breeze that rises up and surfs the trees. Death here is a wrong landing, an innocent glide to the forest floor. Some years the baitfish do not rise, and the forest is a moan of starvation and quiet. Some years there are cyclones. In '97 half of the nests and the unborn were raked into the dark side of chaos, parents scattered wind-frayed like confetti. Did you hear it on the news? Some days there are sun.

And yet. There is always another scale, a sacred order of things (or poem, or music.) Many pisonia seeds stick in just ones or twos, unnoticed. The glue also dissolves in prolonged exposure to sea water. Here is the Bone Bird's deeper poem: The noddies spread the trees, the trees eat the noddies; the noddies, with their guano, and the trees, with their leaves, make a new kind of rock, one that builds islands where before there was just flat, fragile reef. These new islands are a new place to land and make nests. New generations of noddies can spread their wings. Life can grow.

And this: the island itself is moving slowly north east. At its head, pointed like the bow of a ship, sand is building up, an arrow into a southerly current. And behind, the forest is falling into the sea. It is swimming its own path, as islands have done for eternity, for their own reasons, and, perhaps, for a poem we'll never understand. It is paddling slowly like a grandmother turtle. It is quietly flying through the waves like a dreamtime noddy.

I follow next to the turtle as she pushes herself, gasping, back down the beach, slowly crossing her own tractor-trail from the night before. Lying on my stomach, using my elbows like flippers, I keep pace a few metres away. During one of her rests, she turns her head toward me.

And sees through me. Milky eyes stare into a dimension of time and planet unfathomable, yet the echo of it grips me and I shiver. I am too short-lived, my kind, too new, for her to focus on. Too much a part of this strange gravity. She seems to see into infinity.

I stand, then, and watch her path from this shared place on our maps, the island curve of her heaving to the green lip of her planet. Where she waits, exhausted and relieved, for her own tidal gravity to come and release her; to restore to her, once more, her wings.

Maps aren't flat. Neither are countries, or planets. Stand here a while, amongst 284 billion trillion bits of crushed white sand and coral, and you have the cleanest, most scoured feet and toes in history. Stand here and discover new continents, old countries and strange languages shifting and spinning together. And the hint of the familiar. Like family. Like loss. Like the wind in your face. Like a noddy dipping his head, hopeful, and she inclining her white-capped, dark-eyed head - the noddy version of a smile. And a yes.

And he's nodding like a crazy thing. And at least one of us is grinning like an idiot.



Happy Birthday Maatsuyker Island

The Maatsuyker Island lightstation celebrated its 120th birthday on 1st June 2011.

Friends of Maatsuyker Island and past lightkeepers, caretakers and their families celebrated the event with a film night and birthday cake in Hobart.

Special guests included Marlene Levings and Alan and Monica Campbell (former keepers), Ailsa Fergusson (great granddaughter of the lighthouse tower architect), Gwen Egg ('star' of one of the short films), Peter Donnelly (retired cameraman) and Cate Grant (ABC TV).

Films screened at the celebration included *The Lightkeeper* (1959), *Southern Lights* (1963), *Home of the Need-won-Nee* (1975), *A Big Country* (1975), and two segments shot earlier this year for ABC TV News and Stateline.

All featured spectacular footage of Maatsuyker and Tasman Islands (for which Peter Donnelly had received his first major cinematography award).

The films gave us rewarding insight into the different phases of Maatsuyker's history – from the Tasmanian Aboriginals who travelled there to harvest muttonbirds, to the keepers and their families whose lives revolved around the running of the lighthouse station, and, more recently, the volunteer caretaker and working bee programs.



Maatsuyker Birthday Cake Cutting: Alan and Monica Campbell and Marlene Levings

The highlight of the evening was a telephone hook-up with the Maatsuyker caretakers to sing 'Happy Birthday'.

The caretakers had celebrated their day on the island by decorating the lighthouse tower with signal flags – maintenance of the lighthouse tower.

Fiona Taylor

Friends of Maatsuyker Island



Maatsuyker Island Light Station 120 years old



More entries from our 2011 Volunteer Photo Competition



Greg Kidd at Coal Bins Point. Photo Mike Bowden



Wayne White reassures Forester Kangaroo 'Brook'. Photo Stephanie Clark



Team leader Karen Ziegler hamming it up on Roydon Island. Photo Claudia Rector



Threatened Plants Tasmania members identifying rare orchids. Photo Robin Garnett



'Johnny Lawson' in care with Wildcare Injured and Orphaned Bush Babies. Photo Kimbra Cresswel



Mike Bowden at Coal Bins Point. Photo Sam Lennox



Fred Lemon keeping warm on Roydon Island. Photo Tuesday Phelan



WILDCARE Inc

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

C/o GPO Box 1751 Hobart TAS 7001 Australia

Phone: 03 6233 2836

Fax: 03 6223 8603

E-mail general: office@wildcaretas.org.au E-mail newsletter articles: wildtimes@wildcaretas.org.au

Web: www.wildcaretas.org.au