



# *WILD TIMES*

Edition 43 April 2012



**VOLUNTEER TACK WARDENS**



**ROYDEN ISLAND REMEDIATION**



**FRIENDS OF TASMAN ISLAND - A WORKING BEE**



**WILDTALK AND AGM**

# Editorial

*I am feeling a bit nervous as I type this. It's my first editorial, which means I am following in the footsteps of Craig Saunders. Craig has been the editor of this newsletter for over 4 years and I can assure you they are big shoes to fill. Thank you Craig for your enthusiasm and passion for presenting Wildcare activities across the state through the stories celebrated in Wildtimes.*

Wildcare is Tasmania's largest conservation organisation, and certainly the busiest! One of the things I love about being involved in Wildcare is the flexibility and the breadth of members' contribution levels. You can be involved as little, or as much as you want.

Members can contribute in many ways to the organisation. You can be a Wildcare member, and just be pleased that your membership fees go directly towards supporting nature conservation activities. You can volunteer and participate in one of our Special Programs or Branch activities or at the Wildcare office. You can also be involved with the Wildcare Board - assisting to run the organisation at a strategic level. At Wildcare there is something for everyone.

In this edition of Wildtimes we take a close look at the bigger picture achievements of the organisation for the year as outlined at the recent Wildcare Inc. Annual General Meeting. We met some of the volunteer Board members, as well as some interesting catch ups with some of the branch activities



*Jodie Epper Wildcare Facilitator - your new editor.*

at Tasman Island, Royden Island and Schouten Island – and special programs like the Track Warden Program at Cradle Mountain over the summer.

I hope you enjoy this edition; I have enjoyed putting it together.

Regards Jodie Epper

## WILDCARE Gift Fund Donations

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

### **Donations of between \$100 and \$1000**

Wayne Binns, Peter Jackson, Tun Pin Ong

### **Donations up to \$100**

Ingrid McGaughey, Noel & Karen Manning, Sally McGushin

## Wildtimes Publication Schedule

EDITION #	COPY DEADLINE	PUBLICATION
44	1 August 2012	1 September 2012
45	1 December 2012	1 January 2013
46	1 April 2013	1 May 2013

*Submissions to Wildtimes Editor at [wildtimes@wildcaretas.org.au](mailto:wildtimes@wildcaretas.org.au)*

### **ON THE FRONT COVER:**

**Peter Gouldthorpe – taking in the majestic Tasman Island Lighthouse on a recent Tasman Island working bee. See story page 4.**



# The Pleasures and Privileges of Being a Volunteer Track Warden on the Overland Track

Knees creak,  
Hips groan,  
Files of walkers make their final descent into  
Waterfall Valley,  
Their first day's walk complete,  
Parched, depleted, burdened by over-laden packs.

Reassuring hosts, that's us,  
Offer a congratulatory welcome, a smile,  
All pain melts away, momentarily, at least!

They've arrived in the valley,  
This natural amphitheatre on a grand scale,  
Hues of every green, massed with orange and cream,  
The air a-buzz, floral sweetness hovers,  
Barn Bluff our sentinel and constant gaze.

Thus begins our role as Volunteer Track Wardens, based at Waterfall Valley, for 10-14 days during the 6 month summer Overland Track season.

Not your usual 9 to 5 job! The day often begins before 7 am as heavy footsteps on the veranda announce the first departures of the day. Info about the track, side-trip options and the likely weather are shared and a warm farewell given.

The business of breakfast, the packing and re-packing, the adjusting of pack straps, attention to blisters and sunburn, and queries about options for the new day fill the air. A routine radio sked back to base relays all is well with walkers at Waterfall Valley and an update on the weather is sought and passed on.

Home comforts abound and all mod cons are provided in our cosy 'boutique' accommodation. We have the use of a well-equipped galley for whipping up 'gourmet'. Just bring your own food and recipe ideas; Thai green curry, home-made pesto with pasta, and lamb biryani being a few of our specialties. But if you're feeling like fresh bakery items, then be prepared for a 15km return walk to cook them in the oven at the next hut, south, at Lake Windermere! A latte may have to wait!

As soon as the majority of walkers depart, heading South on their 2nd day, buckets, brooms, gloves and cleaners are gathered to spruce up the huts and toilets ready for a sparkling welcome for the day's new arrivals. As we tread the boardwalks we marvel at the new blooms of the day and take in the mountain air.

Jobs over for now, it's time to plan a few spare hours – a stroll through the flowering mountain meadows below Barn Bluff, a dash down to Lake Will for a refreshing dip, a wander in the valley in search of wombats, or a lazy day of reading, writing or resting on our vast sundeck – the helipad, soaking up the local magnificence before the rush of OLT hikers arrive from Cradle Mountain.



*Helen Young and Susan Friend take in the views as part of the job.*

For them, it's stories about the day's sights, achievements, challenges and pain to be shared and processed; most glowing from their efforts, and a few in need of rehydration and assurance that all will be well tomorrow.

If you want to brush up on your world geography, then this is the place to be. Right here in your own backyard, the world comes to you! Swiss, Germans, French, Canadians, Brits, Israelis, New Yorkers, Brazilians, Spanish, Koreans, as well as Ozzies from all mainland states, not to mention the 'locals'. All have stories to tell and endless questions needing answers – about tracks, huts, camping, time-frames, flora, fauna, geology, history, weather and water. All have jokes to share, 'tall' stories and travel stories, card games and tricks. Who needs TV, mobiles, radio or Internet? We have it all!

And they come in all combinations – singles, partners, young and old mates, reunions and birthday groups, family groups

*continued on page 5...*



## Parks Shop

**22 Main Street Huonville**

**Ph: 03 6264 8460**



- Range of pre-visit information relating to Tasmania's National Parks & Reserves
- Parks Passes
- Maps
- Books - Adult and Children's Range
- Souvenirs
- Clothing – Socks, Beanies, T Shirts and Gloves
- Posters
- And more

**10% discount  
to WILDCARE members**

# Friends of Tasman Island (FoTI)

## Working Bee – November 2011

*Compiled from report by Carol Jackson, Chris Creese & Diane Roughsedge*

*The team work started some weeks before our arrival on Tasman – there are no shops nearby for things forgotten! Thanks to the logistical support of PWS, our group of nine FoTI volunteers arrived safely on Tasman Island on 11 November, 2011. Then the helicopter took off at 11am precisely – so there was no minute's silence for Remembrance Day!*

It was a very harmonious and hard-working team who enjoyed ten days on Tasman Island. First timers, Peter Gouldthorpe, Diane Roughsedge and Queenslanders Ann and Keith Fleming were joined by former Tasman Lightkeeper, Karl Rowbottom (1971-1972) and his partner Jo Ainslie. FoTI stalwarts, Carol Jackson, herself a 'lighthouse kid', and Erika Shankley and Chris Creese completed the team.

We ate like shearers and worked almost as hard. However, we still found time to smell the flowers, watch the whales at play and explore the island on afternoon walks. Artist, Peter Gouldthorpe, even found time to do some paintings!

As usual there was plenty of mowing to do. It was six months since our last visit and the spring growth was particularly rampant. A large amount of time was spent mowing, brushcutting and raking. Apart from the usual tracks between buildings and down to the top of the haulage, we also cut around the helipad, the houses and other buildings and the Bureau of Meteorology's weather station. The amount of time spent doing this task impinged on the time available for other important maintenance and restoration tasks.

After several days of grass cutting we finally got to the main part of the works programme.

### Quarters 1 (Headkeeper's house)

We cut up two old water tanks to allow access for fascia and gutter repairs, stacked the pieces ready for repair. Repaired the water supply to reinstate running water in kitchen, bathroom and toilet cistern. Temporarily braced loose posts on western veranda, eased front and back doors and levered back into position and refastened loose wall framing and weather boards on room S17 (in CUMP plan). We continued



*FoTI's Les Girls - Carol Jackson, Jo Ainslie, Diane Roughsedge, Ann Fleming and Erika Shankley.*

refastening, replacing and painting fascias and soffits to allow gutter replacement and cleared earth along southern wall to prevent water ingress.

### Quarters 2

We cut up the old water tank and stacked it with two others ready for removal. We cleaned out last remaining tank and repaired leaks with hydroseal and malthoid. We repaired water pipes ready to connect proposed new water tank, repaired the water supply to reinstate running water in kitchen, bathroom and toilet cistern and repaired the toilet door.

### Quarters 3

Installation of valves to give reliable hot water supply to kitchen and the laundry and began the replacement of eroded bricks.

Other work included unpacking and stacking bricks which were delivered in April 2011; and unpacking sand and cement from fish bag and storing in oil store.

### Weeding

A weeding programme has been ongoing on Tasman Island since 2009 with funds sourced from a Caring for Country grant. Weeding Co-ordinator Diane Roughsedge said that it was often too windy for spraying. However, they managed to

Spend two days on a 'seek and destroy' Californian Thistle mission on both sides of the track, sprayed the culvert along the side of the track in an effort to keep it clear and sprayed around house foundations, fence lines etc. We checked status of weeds stored and covered with black plastic, found a large infestation of Yarrow outside the fence of Quarters 3. We checked the area from Q1 to Q2 through to the pigshed thoroughly for arum lily. This was a slow process through hip-high bracken fern, but no lilies were found. A few small wild turnip plants were found around Quarters 1 and hand-pulled. Also, the flower garden at Quarters 3 was given a good weeding, pruning and mulching and Val Jackson's fuchsia at Quarters 1 is doing well, thanks to a good mulching and some TLC.

We especially enjoyed Karl's stories of Tasman and comments like "Ten days went too quickly" ... "I could stay for ever", "A fantastic time spent on one of the Earth's very special places" says it all.

Erika Shankley



*Artist Peter Gouldthorpe painting of Tasman Island Lighthouse*



# An ordinary wildcare member with an extraordinary passion

I recently spoke to Rebecca Hubbard, a wildcare member about her passion for all things marine and here is what she had to say:

*Why are you a member of Wildcare?*

I am a member of Wildcare because I love camping, exploring and holidaying in the coast and the bush, and Wildcare offers a great opportunity to provide more support for Tassie's great National Parks which protect some of these beautiful areas.

*What is your favourite National Park/ reserve and why do you enjoy it?*

Maria Island Marine Reserve and the island's National Park is my favourite because it is one of Tassie's few great marine reserves, providing protection for our unique marine life. At Maria, you can snorkel off the jetty right next to the shore, and see amazing life – beautiful colourful jewel anemones, fish, draughtboard sharks and big crayfish!

It's not often you get to see that diversity in unprotected areas anymore. I also really love the reef at the Painted Cliffs – I've seen sea slugs, big crayfish, Striped Trumpeter and Banded Morwong there, and it has a beautiful range of kelps.

*What are you passionate about?*

I'm passionate about our oceans. I have swum, surfed and snorkeled in them since I was a kid, and I want to see them flourish into the future so my kids can also enjoy their incredible beauty and power.

*Can you tell us a story about an incident in nature that has stayed with you your whole life?*

My most distinct memory that I relate to nature is that my Grandmother worked hard so that she and my Grandfather could travel around Australia after they retired and enjoy the country. She got Alzheimer's and was unable to live this dream.

That experience has taught me that we need to value what is here today, enjoy it, and actively protect it for tomorrow, because we don't know what will happen in the future, and we can't be sure someone else is looking after it for us!



*Rebecca Hubbard, a Wildcare member and her beloved Maria Islands marine Reserves.*

*continued from page 3...*

with children as young as 7 sporting furry toys along for the ride; in fact anyone able to carry their 'worldly' goods for a week, up and down, over the 80km track.

Such joie de vivre flourishes out here. Total strangers become instant buddies, jollyng each other along the track. For some, 'mental' mountains are faced and conquered. There are those that make it and just a few that don't.

Fashions in the field were prominent this summer - lycra skins, colourful hats, a mini skirt or 2 with leggings, even detachable sleeves using Velcro, as well as an ever-increasing range of outdoor brands.

Our first aid training and OLT experience comes in handy with a variety of requests. This time treating blisters and mild dehydration were common, and sunburn, of course. Sore shoulders and hips were relieved by lightened and tightened packs. An occasional sprained ankle required a strapping and rest day. We even administered first aid on boots to reattach wandering soles. No lost walkers this time, thankfully, though some came in after dark. We left a major rescue to the Search and Rescue helicopter which was called from Hobart to winch a lone stranded walker off Cradle Mt.



*Helen Young enjoying a days work on the Overland Track.*

Job done, we hike back to 'civilization' after our 10 days in and around Waterfall Valley, feeling both privileged and rewarded. Visitors leave this place knowing and appreciating much more than when they came, filled with magnificence and wonder. The joys of volunteering await all who enjoy sharing with others.

We will be back, next season, just as Venus appears each night, beside Barn Bluff.

Helen Young - Volunteer OLT Warden

# Big dreaming...

*This year's Wildtalk was given by Rob Pennicott from Bruny Island and Tasman Island Cruises. Rob gave an inspirational talk which included not only his life's story including his humble beginnings as a door to door fish monger selling 5 fish one dollar, but his amazing and exciting story of circumnavigating around Australia as his personal quest to eradicate polio from the planet.*

Robert started his first business as a fisherman in the pristine waters of southern Tasmania, before creating Bruny Island Cruises in 1999 out of a desire to show people the rugged beauty of the Bruny Island coast.

His passion and enthusiasm for the business has seen it evolve into a world-class ecotourism experience, which has won numerous awards and accolades for his conservation and sustainability efforts, and business excellence.

Growing up in the stunning natural surrounds of Bruny Island instilled in Robert a great respect for the environment, motivating him to donate a substantial part of his business profits towards conservation efforts.

In 2007, Robert founded the Tasmanian Coast Conservation Fund in concert with Wildcare, to ensure that the coastlines that have been crucial to his business' success will be conserved for generations to come. He has contributed \$100,000 to this fund, which played an instrumental role in the successful restoration of the delicate ecosystem on Tasman Island, through a large-scale project to eradicate feral cats that were decimating the island's native wildlife, killing over 50,000 seabirds each year.

In May 2011, Robert launched his own fund, the Pennicott Foundation, which allows his business to directly contribute to its own nature conservation projects.



*Chair of Wildcare Will Forsyth thanks Rob Pennicott for his WILDTALK address at the 2012 Wildcare AGM.*

A believer in "dreaming big", Robert hopes to make a substantial difference to the world before he dies, both through his tireless conservation efforts, and his passion to show visitors the pristine beauty of Bruny Island's rugged paradise.

We would like to thank Rob for his time and for sharing a snippet of his life. More information regarding his adventure can be found at <http://follow.theyellowboatoad.com/>

## The Tower's Song

*by Karl Rowbottom*

Listen hard, look aloft

Here a sound so sweet and soft

No bird or human throat

Can sing the sound of the tower's note

The Keeper's nights are cold and long

As he listens to the tower's song

To the laymen it's just the sound of the wind

Just a noisy sort of din

The only ones who hear the song

Are the Keeper's and their kin

Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment

*Help get the*

# FOX OUT of Tasmania



Please report fox sightings or any possible evidence of fox activity to the 24 hour hotline

**1300 FOX OUT  
1300 369 688**

All calls are strictly confidential and your information may be important

Fox Eradication Program  
[www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/fox](http://www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/fox)



# Schouten Island Gorse Gnashing

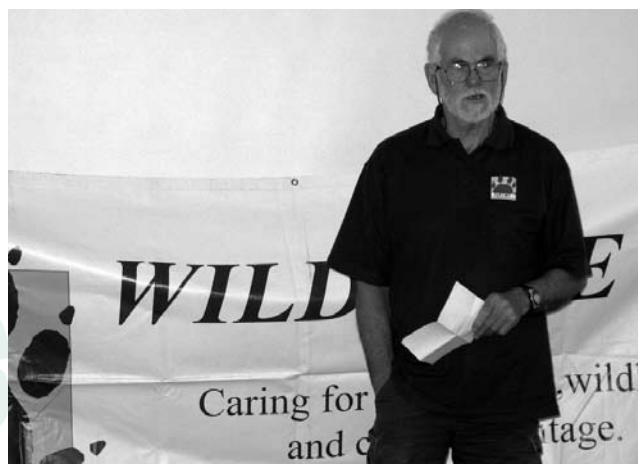
Seven willing workers duly arrived at Coles Bay by 3 pm on Monday to do the necessary paperwork and get a boat induction. Alas, the wind was too strong, so departure was delayed by a day. Undaunted, four of us set to and cleaned up the lower ranger's house, which had been vacated at short notice. The next morning we admired the rebuilt track to the lookout over Wineglass Bay, and picked up a couple of bags of rubbish on the way. Then it was out to Tourville for another couple of bags of rubbish. Then Fee put to good use and we cleared a fire break around the Coles Bay Visitors Centre. Six ute loads of branches were taken to the tip, and four routes from the beach were covered with branches to prevent vegetation break down.

The next day we had a bumpy trip to Schouten, where we unloaded and set up all the Campground Hosts gear, as well as our homes for the next few days. But Wildcare volunteers can't help themselves, and got stuck into the patch of gorse at the outlet of Chinese Creek that afternoon, as well as removing some Patterson's Curse at the back of the huts. We also acted as the first campground hosts for the season.

We shared the campsite with 10 people from the Hamish Saunders Trust for three days, and it was great to have experts in every field there to pick their brains. They donated a large box of food when they left, so there was no shortage of fresh milk and bread, ham, wine and fruit etc.

It took us 2½ days to complete the section bordered by the Waterfall track and the track to the mineshaft, clearing gorse well up the hill. Unfortunately some of it had recently seeded, but we did manage to remove several bags of seed heads. We also sprayed the gorse growing around the top of the mine shaft, with John safely roped up and three others on belay. Then it was on to the patch west of the gully beyond the mine shaft. Although quite a large area was covered, we were unable to complete it because of heavy rain.

I also mapped the area of blue periwinkle (*vinca major*) in order to prepare a strategy plan. It is spreading rapidly every year and has now made it into the creek near the beach, and crossed



*David Harris – President of Friends of Freycinet talks passionately about Schouten Island.*

the old road just beyond the mine shaft. Unfortunately the weed expert from DPIPW, Karen Stewart, was unable to join us, as was originally planned. There have been a few attempts to spray it in the past but it has been quite ineffective. Hobart City Council is currently running trials with a different herbicide which is effective on ivy, so we are hopeful that we may be able to achieve better results with spraying in the future.

It wasn't all work, and there were trips to Bear Hill, Mt Story and Sandspit Point. The scientists reported gorse on the southern bank of the creek near Sandstone Bluff, but we were unable to locate it. Greg did a wonderful job repairing the front step of the house at Moreys, replaced the rotted post for the fire restriction sign, put in a post for the Waterfall sign, replaced a board on the back shed, and sawed through at least 20 branches off a large fallen casuarina which was blocking the track, as well as taking on the task of cleaning and sharpening tools, all in his "spare" time.

Weather conditions were very windy and wet on the last couple of days, and it was touch and go for a while as to whether we would get off the island. We were whisked away at 6 am on Tuesday, before the next front came in.

Thanks to everyone for all your efforts, we all had a great time.



*Cutting and piling on the coast of Schouten Island – oh what a view!*

## A timely intervention that saves dollars and effort

### A report on a Regional Working Bee

A total of 21 people including PWS staff from 7 Mile Beach Field Centre, Huonville, Lutana Fire Crew, Tolosa Mt Field and the Friends of Mt Field gathered on a hot day at Mount Field. This was 'take 2' of the scheduled event, the first being put off by rain and snow in the spring. The main objective of this day was to remove all introduced species (pinus radiata seedlings and trees, tree lucerne, and other introduced species) from a 2 ha crown land public reserve next to the Tyenna River. This block of land is soon to become a Conservation Area under the CLAC process. This timely intervention, with assistance from others, ensures that the minimum of time, effort and dollars needed to be expended.

Following morning tea at Mt Field, participants were briefed on the day's activities, assigned to teams for different work goals and what their skills /competencies were, JSA's's and OH&S discussed, and then participants then travelled to the site. The first team of people were assigned to brush cutting and pasting of pine stumps. These pines were generally between 30 cm and two metres tall. Another team was assigned to felling larger pines growing along the Tyenna River using a PWS tree faller James Shaw and Paul Black. Team three tackled a large infestation of tree Lucerne, by removing seed pods, then cutting and pasting of stumps. The last team attacked an infestation of an introduced suckering tree that was forming thickets and excluding the chance for natives to grow in this area. This infestation was chain sawed, tree stumps pasted, and vegetative material chipped into mulch. Approximately 2000 pine wildlings and approximately 1100 stems from the suckering species were chain sawed.

It was a terrific outcome!

Another positive was, besides exceeding the weeding target set, the day allowed for a chance for the diverse group of people, from across the region, to interact, and have fun while



*Greg Kidd Friends of Mt Field and Mulcher.*

working alongside the Volunteers from Friends of Mt Field. Feedback from everyone on the day was extremely positive and the opportunity to work with people with different skills/competencies was worthwhile. The site will now be monitored over the next 12 months to observe regrowth of weed species. Local staff and the Friends of Mt Field group will revisit the site to undertake follow up work.

A number of Crown Land public reserves along the Tyenna River are scheduled to come over to PWS as Conservation Areas for local management. This working bee was seen as a trial to judge how much time effort is required to undertake this type of work on a 2 hectare patch of land and what could be achieved within a limited time frame. Following the works, a BBQ lunch was supplied on the banks of the Tyenna River. Many thanks to all involved for giving up time. Terrific effort on a HOT day! Go the watermelon! And HOT oranges! Thanks to Pip Gowen – Regional Volunteer Facilitator for co-ordinating the event – ably assisted by Mt Field Ranger Trevor Norris and Mt Field staff. The Regional Working Bees are a spring and Autumn event, with the opportunity being rotated around the Field Centres.

Written by Pip Gowen Volunteer Facilitator PWS.



*Captions from top l-r: Brushcutters draggers pasters; Group shot PWS Staff and Friends of Mount Field Volunteers; Will Hallinan and Linda Walker weeding; and Tyenna Reserve with Pine Seedling Infestations.*





# WILDCARE says Goodbye to the Treasurer – ours was a treasure!!!

*Craig Saunders was the Wildcare Treasurer from September 2005 until March 2012 which, if you include a few months hand over time to the new Treasurer, this adds up to 7 years at the top job. Not only will he be a huge act to follow, but Craig's commitment and skill has been a major contribution to the success of Wildcare and its many branches.*

*I was able to ask Craig a few questions before he cycled off on another European tour. I first asked Craig what sort of experience had he in this field before taking on the job as Wildcare Treasurer?*

I have been a treasurer for many community groups over the years and we have run a family nursery business for over 20 years. I have always had a tidy mind, a good background in numeracy (as an engineer) and I am lucky to have the discipline required to look after other people's money. Just before taking on the Wildcare job I left another largish treasury job which gave me some spare time for this one.

*Why did you accept the job and what has been the most satisfying aspect of being Wildcare Treasurer?*

At the time I was working for PWS as the Southern Regional Volunteer Facilitator. Wildcare had been operating without a treasurer for a year or so and had been attempting to maintain at least the basic financial services through casual employment of a bookkeeper. We did have a stand in for a short period but this person was not working close enough to PWS and had no idea of the daily workings of the volunteer groups. I offered then to step in and do the job myself before things deteriorated further. The most satisfying aspect of the job is realising that volunteer groups have so much more energy to get on with projects in the field when they have solid financial management behind them.

*What was your biggest learning's throughout your time as treasurer?"*

In the early days I had to come to grips quickly with the financial software MYOB. That was no real problem. I've also learned to keep very detailed and up to date running records of all our financial activity because as the financial complexity has grown I can no longer keep it all in my head.

*What will you remember in 5 years time? "*

Hmm - 5 years is a long time. I hope Wildcare continues to grow and I'll look forward in 5 years to remembering my small role in providing the solid platform that allowed Wildcare to grow.

*What is your advice to others thinking of taking on voluntary positions?*

Just Do It

## Will Forsyth the Wildcare Co Chair says a few words.....

Craig is the very essence of a volunteer. Not only did he carry out the work of the Wildcare Treasurer, it looks like once he is gone we will have to call on a bookkeeper in addition to a Treasurer to do all the work that he has been doing.

Craig was also the Wildtimes editor where he wrote a good many of the articles and revamped the layout of Wildtimes. These sorts of volunteers are hard to come by.

We wish him all the best on his next cycle adventure and we hope that he will continue to be involved with Wildcare in some capacity in the future.

## 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**

**Department of Primary Industries, PArks, Water and the Environment - Fox Eradication Program**

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@wildcaretas.org.au](mailto:wildtimes@wildcaretas.org.au) for details.

# Chairperson (Appointed) Report 2012

*This year has seen a continued growth for Wildcare Inc with membership reaching 5000 for the first time. This is a great outcome considering that in 2005 membership fell to just 600 or so primarily as a result of changes to the Annual Park Pass Form. It took until 2010 to return to the 4000 members of 2004. But now we are once again building membership. We now also have over 70 Branches, or groups, operating around the State.*

Our Branches have been very effective with fund raising for projects, including from applications to granting bodies, merchandise sales (calendars, books, T shirts) and tours. When you add these funds to the voluntary effort provided by members, both for these externally funded projects and for projects funded by PWS or without funds at all, once again the contribution by WILDCARE Inc to reserve management and natural and cultural heritage conservation in Tasmania has been to a value of many millions of dollars.

The partnership with PWS continues to be strong, both on-the-ground and at management levels. This is not surprising given that WILDCARE inc has been proving its worth as a community partner for 15 years now.

The Gift Fund and its sub-funds continue to kick goals for reserve management and nature conservation, with both large and small donors now recognising Wildcare Inc as a safe, reliable organisation. The fact that Wildcare does not take any administration fees from donations means that donors can be sure that all of their donation goes to practical conservation and reserve management actions, in accordance with the intent of their donation. All the money goes to where you expected it to go. This is truly something special in a world where some charities use up to half of the money donated to cover their administration. And success has been astounding, with the Gift Fund supporting the successful eradication of cats on Tasman Island (thanks to a generous donation from Rob Pennicott), and works continuing on the Frenchmans Cap walking track (thanks to the generosity of Dick Smith). Many smaller donors also contribute to the Gift Fund, increasing the capacity of WILDCARE to make a real difference.

The Wildcare Board has been looking outside the box a bit of late, and undertook a strategic review workshop and a Succession Planning workshop. These workshops identified a number of new directions and emphasis for the organisation. One strategy that was clearly identified from both workshops was the need to move to employing two key positions - an Executive Officer and a Facilitator. The complexity and scale of

Wildcare nowadays demands a lot from both volunteer Board members and the in-kind positions provided by our partners. The Executive Officer will have an outward view from the organisation, building relationships and partnerships with other organisations, our key partners and funders. Marketing the Wildcare brand and building recognition and respect across the community will also be an important element of the duties, as will contributing to the economic sustainability of the Organisation. Wildcare is a strong organisation and can build on that strength to create even better outcomes for reserve management and natural and cultural heritage conservation across Tasmania. The Facilitator position, which has been operating for some time now on a one or two day a week basis will have an inward view of the organisation, making sure groups are supported and assisted, and that processes operate as efficiently as possible.

It is envisaged that both these positions will be part-time, perhaps growing as the organisation grows.

It was also identified that the financial management of the organisation is now large and complex, and so the Board has agreed to the approach that a book-keeper be engaged to assist the elected Treasurer.

Implementation of these strategic positions will happen as the Board identifies a financial capacity to engage them.

The Board has also created a number of Working Groups to deal with a range of topics. These are legal and policy – looking at making sure our processes and policies are adequate for how we operate now and hope to operate in the future with emerging business opportunities – development of a range of new income streams through new business which may involve services and products, and healthy parks healthy people – how Wildcare might be active within a health context by encouraging people to be outdoors and active, healthy and happy. Graeme Jones, Claire Ellis and Petrina Nettlefold are leading these groups. These three people have been appointed by the Board to the Expertise positions, which have a 2 year tenure on the Board.

WILDCARE management and processes will continue to evolve, change and flex to meet the requirements of the day. One of its strengths is that it has always been at the forefront of volunteering practice in Tasmania. Its processes are well documented, its support frameworks robust, its relationships strong. This means two things – volunteering is supported and the environment benefits. That is after all what its all about.



*Welcome to Sally Salier as a new wildcare board member. Friends of Freycinet Dave Harris and Friends of Melaleucca Patty Burbury. Wildcare members inspecting the new track at Freycinet*



## Co-Chair Report 2011/12

Wildcare Board meetings were held mainly in Hobart at the Heritage Board room with one meeting held at the Tamar Island Wetlands, hosted by John Duggin (Wildcare Board Member and President of the Tamar Islands Wetlands). Other meetings I attended during the year were the OBP Recovery Team held in Hobart with a flight to Melaleuca. I did not go on this trip.

At the end of the Overland Track Warden season Andrew Smith and I attended the debriefing and BBQ at Cradle. Along with PWS staff the season's activities are discussed. A good attendance by Wardens ensured a lively discussion on how it all went. Regular monthly meetings were held with Peter Mooney (GM of PWS) keeping him up to date with Wildcare activities.

In addition, I attended to annual Parks Conference, in Hobart. Guest speaker was Dick Smith. Wildcare was also represented at the Parks Executive Meeting along with H.O. staff hearing how Parks intended to cope with the Govt. Budget cuts.

Meetings were also arranged with Govt. Ministers when necessary to pass onto them our plans and activities. I met with Brett Torossi, a prominent developer in Tasmania. She has successful ventures in the tourist industry and her opinion was sought about South Bruny Lighthouse venture. This venture was brought to Wildcare by Peter Mooney. Later in the year Andrew and I met with PWS Cradle management and discussed a proposal to have a Track Warden scheme in the Cradle Day Walk areas. It was instigated and proved a successful scheme working in the 2012 New Year period.

I attended Friends of Maatsuyker, Deal and Tasman meetings, listening about their workings and intentions. I spent a week on Maatsuyker during a volunteer caretaker changeover, a working bee of two weeks duration on Deal Island. I would like to be advised by Friends of groups when and where their meetings are held enabling Wildcare to be represented and to assist when necessary.

We have become closer associated with the Tasmanian Land Conservancy (TLC). Their CEO attended a Wildcare Board meeting recently and whilst I attended a TLC field day at Chancy Vale.

The Orange Bellied Parrot Recovery Team and Wildcare met with the sons of Barbara Willson to raise a MOU regarding the Willson Melaleuca house for use as a bird hide and volunteer accommodation. Barbara will still use the house during periods when she travels to Melaleuca. This will reduce the overcrowding, at times, of the PWS quarters.

The study tour to the Golden Gate NP Conservancy is still on the agenda to give Wildcare guidance on how they built their abilities to have a CEO and staff to assist, so ably, the G.G.N.P. How Peter Mooney wants us to assist the PWS. Wildcare Inc. has a wonderful and fruitful opportunity to grow and assist Parks in the future but Wildcare Board members must not regard this as Wildcare entering "A festival of radical ideas".

**Will Forsyth, Co-Chair - Wildcare Inc March 2012**



*Captions top l-r: AGM lunch; The Presidents of Friends of Cradle, Friends of Tamar Wetland Centre, Friends of Freycinet and Friends of Deal Island take the opportunity to catch up; Welcome back the three returning board members Bob Tyson, Shane Pinner, John Duggin and Welcome to Liz Charpleix pictured here with Viv Muller from Threatened Plants Tasmania.*

## Treasurer's Report 2012

2011 was another in a line of very active years for Wildcare Inc, reflected through a year of concentrated financial activity.

Branch activity, driven by both grant and non grant income was at record levels. Particularly pleasing was the increase in number of branches successful in obtaining grants – an area that in the past had been reserved for just a few of our larger branches.

In the Wildcare Office it was also pleasing to see the dramatic increase in membership with consequent increase in income from this source. This increase has enabled us to allocate a record amount to our Internal Grants Program and also allowed us to carry a very healthy surplus forward to 2012, providing a strong platform for growth through the employment of support staff in 2012-2013.

The chart below illustrates the growth in membership income over the life of Wildcare Inc, demonstrating just how important this contribution is to the continuing financial health of the organisation. Profit and Loss and Balance sheet and auditor's report can be found at [www.wildcarea.org.au](http://www.wildcarea.org.au)

As required by our constitution I have attached the audited financial statements (Profit and Loss Statement and Balance Sheet) for the calendar year 2011. For the first time this year I have presented separate statement for Wildcare Inc and our Wildcare Gift Fund.

Members should understand that Wildcare Gift Fund is not a separate legal entity to Wildcare Inc. The formulation of statements in this form is a result of the requirement to account separately for Gift Fund funds as a result of Wildcare Inc status as a Deductible

Gift Recipient (ie we can offer income tax deductibility for donations to the Wildcare Gift Fund)

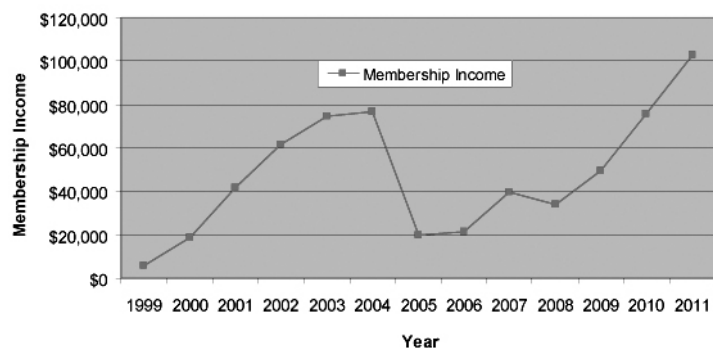
I have attached 2 other documents that will be of interest to members. The Wildcare Project List is a snapshot of all projects (or jobs) Wildcare Inc was engaged in at 31 December 2011, including their cash holdings at that time. This list clearly demonstrates the broad areas of Wildcare activity across Tasmania.

Secondly, I have added a detailed breakdown of Wildcare Inc administrative income and expenditure for 2011. As the organisation grows our administration budget must be carefully managed to ensure that this part of our activity best supports our broad objectives.

Finally, after 7 years I will not be re-nominating for position as Wildcare treasurer for 2012. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in this position and wish my successor similar good fortune.

**Craig Saunders, Treasurer - Wildcare Inc March 2012**

Wildcare Membership Income by Year



## New Australian Flag presented to Friends of Deal Island

During the November working bee on Deal Island, the sail training ship, Young Endeavour, spent a day in East Cove. The 27 trainees and several of the crew visited the museum and then the lighthouse. The Captain invited members of the Friends of Deal Island to pay a visit to see over the ship. This duly took place late in the afternoon, and 7 of us had a conducted tour, and an opportunity to chat with crew members and trainees.



*President Dallas receives the new flag from Captain Damien with onlookers Helen Statham, Will Forsyth, Lorraine Cotter, Nigel Saunders, Shirley Baker and Bob Tyson.*

Prior to our transfer back to shore, Captain Damien presented Dallas President of Deal island with a new Australian flag. He had noted that the present flag had become so tattered that it was not possible to decide whether it was the Australian or Tasmanian flag.



*Next morning the new flag flies at the Deal Island Lightstation as Young Endeavour heads out to sea.*

# 2011 Wildcare Tasmania International Nature Writing Prize

Here is another of the award winning entries from our 2011 Nature Writing Prize. Elizabeth Bryer's entry won one of the runner up prizes of \$250.

## Of Stars and a Lake

Elizabeth Bryer, Yarraville Victoria

I.

Brine tinges the lake pink. The water is so still that the reflected clouds seem to be real ones floating in it; the lake's name means 'sky' in the Boorong language and, standing here, witnessing the clouds and the blue drift across the mirror surface, it's hard to imagine anything more appropriate. A susurrant of wind blurs the water clouds for a moment. The sand is soft beneath my feet and I dig my toes into it until they find the layer that is still night cool. Some orange chats flit and dart by me and grow smaller as they head into the glaze that hangs over the horizon and forces me to squint details into being. I sit down a moment near the salt crusts that surround the water, the patterns they make like tortoise shell; I draw my own patterns in the sand, feeling the sun on my skin, smelling the acidity of the salt. Right now I can't imagine, in the middle of this flat, outstretching expanse, being anywhere else.

II.

Last night I stood outside on broken cement. It lurches across the entire backyard of the lopsided house that I've been calling home for a month now. At my back was the glow of the house and, within it, the muffled movements of my housemates. To my left was a rusted clothesline, its wire cords spangled haphazardly towards a corrugated-iron gate that opens onto a narrow, bluestone alley, and to my right, beside the outdoor toilet, were potted chillies that keel with the strain of bearing fruit without much direct sunlight.

I was out there by myself and the chill was biting my fingers, ears and nose. I was craning my neck to gaze upwards and was disconcerted by what I saw: a feeble darkness whitewashed by the surrounding house- and streetlights. It was not black, not the black of the sky I grew up with; more like a dim grey. And, worst of all, there was no winking prickle of stars. The stars were there, of course, but that knowledge didn't comfort me; all I could focus on was that I, stuck down here in this heaving, contracting city, couldn't see them; the celestial animals were absent. An uneasiness settled in my gut.

I grew up in dairy-cattle country at the southern extreme of the Great Dividing Range, where the stars splintered the night and the sky wasn't a square patch framed by buildings but a globe stretching overhead and all around. Whenever I looked for the Southern Cross I saw it in a hundred different stars: all the stars made cross shapes, I thought. Which didn't deter me from my quest to identify the famed cross, the one with a name. If I could name it, I could claim a relationship with it. That pulling feeling I had when looking at the stars: I wanted to be able to explain that, hence my determination to identify the one constellation I knew existed, the one on the flag and the one that was 'radiant' and 'ours' in the national anthem. If I had known about the star animals, no doubt I would have searched for those, but at that time the Southern Cross was the only constellation that haunted my imaginings on clear

nights.

Once, Mum took my brother and me to the house of an elderly amateur astronomer, which was perched atop a craggy overhang on the far side of the local weir. The water cradled remnants of a township flooded seventy years past; from the astronomer's lounge room I gazed at the weir's surface as it faded in the deepening dusk, imagining creaking houses at rest in their aquatic grave, imagining water flowing through windows and doors and coating furniture with a silty glow.

The astronomer had invited us to observe a celestial event through the telescope she had perched on her roof, but I was set on asking her to point the metal cylinder towards the Southern Cross. As darkness pressed around us, my brother and I grew quiet and polite with anticipation. But the clouds didn't disperse and, hours later, we crossed the weir again, our stomachs sloshing with tea and chocolate slice and heavy with the pang of an opportunity lost.

At other times, I tugged at my dad's mates while they sat by a barbecue or fire and ask them to point out the constellation. Some were especially patient, extending a finger or beer can in its direction, crouching to share my line of vision or explaining its position in relation to particularly bright stars.

'There, that right there, you see it?'

After an initial straining of concentration I always nodded, despite my doubts; I felt sorry for whichever grownup was trying so vigorously to close the distance between his comprehension and mine. But I never believed that the cross formation I was looking at was the same one my would-be educator was contemplating. When sloppy with seasickness on a tinny one day, the seasoned fisherman I was accompanying told me how difficult it was to relocate good fishing spots. All he had for guidance, he said, were the hills of the shore and his own judgement and memory of the distance and angle between them and his boat; distance was calculated by the hills' size and angle, by the hills' shape. Through the fog of lurching nausea, I managed to appreciate something of this difficulty and thought that it was the same case with the sky. How to locate one constellation in an ocean of stars when the only points of reference are copious scatterings of more of the same?

The sudden recollection of my early lack of success in identifying even the most conspicuous of constellations sent me, a few weeks ago, searching star maps and texts, looking for what others saw, wanting a way into the mystery that is the night sky. Ptolemy's forty-eight constellations in his *Almagest* were



intriguing, but I soon found that there were other stories and that some of these were older, local ones.

I stumbled across a reference to Indigenous Australian star knowledge, specifically Boorong knowledge, and what I found there captured my imagination immediately. Without a doubt my understanding incorporates gaps, simplifications, misinterpretations and fabrications. Yet even so, the wonder of my first, imperfect glimpse into this other world of knowledge was enough to propel me into the cold yard last night with a sudden urge to search the sky for the Boorong constellations, and to make me drive 350 kilometres to sit by this lake today.

I came to the third-hand Boorong knowledge through a trail of articles by archaeoastronomer John Morieson, who has made tentative steps towards analysing a 150-year-old paper by pastoralist William Stanbridge, which details what the Boorong chose to tell him about their knowledge of the stars from their home at Lake Tyrrell in north-western Victoria.

According to Morieson, my elusive Southern Cross composes part of two of the Boorong's constellations. It is a tree with a ring-tailed possum perched atop it and the dark cloud to the lower left of it, the Coalsack, is the head of an emu whose shape stretches along the Milky Way, the latter a constellation found in many Indigenous-Australian cosmologies. At the March equinox, when the Southern Cross is upright and the ring-tailed possum has been able to escape the clutches of the giant emu, on the terrestrial sphere both emus and possums begin to breed.

Then there is the constellation that, for whatever reason, came to occupy my dreams: Neilloan, the ancestral malleefowl. There are seasonal meteor showers that radiate out from Neilloan, something that mirrors, theorises Morieson, twigs and earth flying through the air as the malleefowl kicks material onto and off the incubation mound. The constellation's brightest star coincides with her powerful kicking foot and the Ring Nebula, an oval-shaped interstellar cloud—an egg?—is located close by. Tellingly, Neilloan appears in the evening sky when it is time for the malleefowl to make mounds and disappears when it is time for laying eggs, which were prized food.

This and other constellations, then, acted as a seasonal calendar. The night sky functioned as a kind of repository of information—a textbook, to use Morieson's expression—with constellations serving as memory aids for mapping through time the rhythms, seasons and vicissitudes of the land. And the stars were not only reminders of seasonal occurrences like the providence of certain foodstuffs, but, through the stories attached to them, also served as moral guidance for how to uphold the law, make responsible family members and be good citizens.

III.

Standing in the concrete backyard last night, searching the sky for the stars in vain, my uneasiness morphed into disenchantment. The cold bit harder and I retreated inside. At times I'm overcome with a sense of claustrophobia for the smallness of the life you are forced to live in a city, the kind that is dictated by its clogged grid, the transience of its relationships, its unhingedness; the kind that, I suspect, sits more uncomfortably with those of us who grew up elsewhere. When I woke this morning the feeling was here so I attempted to dispel it by taking off for a while, borrowing a car and heading northwest to the country that my thoughts

have been inhabiting of late, the place where the Boorong shared something of their knowledge with one of the pale, inappropriately clad men who was new to this wide brown land where the sun shone stark. The place that formed a people who could think so poetically about the night sky and the relationship between its movements and those of the land. And now I'm sitting here, the sun and wind on my skin, looking out.

In these, the winter months, Lake Tyrrell is covered by a shallow sheen of water. It only floods on the rare occasion that enough rain falls heavy in Victoria's central highlands to cause the Avoca River to run high and overflow into Tyrrell Creek. The pale sky is bright with wispy clouds and the flatness of the land encourages a sense of infinity. This is wind-made country, unlike the land farther south whose soil was deposited by rivers, and the brushing of the wind against my bare skin, its tugging at my clothes, is a constant reminder of its land-shaping power.

Around the lake edges are crusts of salt, which stripe the sunlit expanse white. When the water evaporates, as it will in a few months' time, salt crystals will form. The sources of the salt in the soil and groundwater of the Murray-Darling Basin are the weathered rocks and the surrounding seas, which have carried vast amounts of salt here over millions of years. The story of this land through those millions of years, like that of land anywhere, is an epic of metamorphosis, of advance and retreat, of drama on a timeframe and scale so immense that it is hardly fathomable to short-lived creatures such as ourselves. I can't hope to speak for this land, but if you haven't heard it speak—if you haven't witnessed the weather roll across it, the colour and texture of its soil, its perfectly adapted vegetation and animals – you need to meet it second-hand if anything of what we can learn from the Boorong's decision to tell Stanbridge of their constellations is to have meaning.

Forty-five to 48 million years ago, after Australia had rifted from Antarctica, the southwestern part of the Murray Basin was invaded by the sea. Once the sea had retreated, the uplift of the Pinnaroo Block altered drainage until, 3.2 million years ago, it started to dam the ancestor of the Murray River. By 250,000 years later a huge freshwater lake, Lake Bungunnia, had formed. It inundated vast tracts of South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria in its 40,000-square-kilometre expanse. When it began to drain through a breach in its raised southern margin 700,000 years ago, Lake Tyrrell formed from a remnant of one of the ancestral lake's southern arms.

Because the Pinnaroo Block had turned this country into an inward-draining system, the only escape from which was via the one river, the area became an arid groundwater-discharge zone. The upward groundwater flow in the subsurface meant that the salt in the rocks and the salt that had been laid down by the sea were also propelled towards the surface. Hence the salt in the lake and in the region's soil, salt that, located as it was before European arrival, made for arid, difficult country but, located as it shall be should the water table continue to rise, will make for a lifeless wasteland.

That the lake is neither dry nor brimming with water now attests to the land's variability over time, to its changing character as it ages. These days, Lake Tyrrell is kept permanently moist by the groundwater that reaches the lake through small springs on the floor and through seepage concentrated around the toe of surrounding slopes. These water sources, combined with



the lessened evaporative effects of the comparatively gentle winter sun, are the reason for the sheen of water extending to the horizon today.

Opposite me, across the expanse of water, the land rises skyward. It's a bluebush-and-saltbush-speckled lunette that traces the eastern margin of Lake Tyrrell, and not long ago it was covered in mallee woodlands, a vegetation group dominated by multi-stemmed eucalypts with a flattened canopy; nowadays we have to travel a little farther west to see it. Mallee scrub all over Victoria has been severely depleted since the arrival of Europeans, who—my ancestors among them—in an effort to wrest this place into a memory of home, in an effort to bend this country to a will formed on the expectations of a different, distant land, have cleared it for crops and have grazed their sheep across what remains of it.

The mallee is an ecosystem that is without the appeal of a rainforest or a wetland, the kind of ecosystem whose importance is not intuited upon the contemplation of it (your gaze might not venture beyond its grey, scraggly growth, beyond the way its trees approximate unhealthy, stooped old men). Its appearance doesn't inspire the instinctual reverence one might feel when in the thrall of contemplating towering trees or vibrant colours. It has its own magic, though: the way it stretches on and on, clinging low to the ground; the way it can offer you relief from the scalding sun and even a swig of water to ease your parched throat.

The mallee's lack of concordance with European aesthetics has perhaps contributed to its ferocious clearing; up to 70 per cent of its extent across Victoria is now gone. It has at the very least contributed to people's latter-day struggle to comprehend how such an ecosystem could have been responsible for something as immense and life-giving as the reduced rates of salinity in the upper strata of soil that the Europeans encountered upon arrival (the mallee's perennial, deep-rooted nature decreased drainage below the plant-root zone, which kept the water table down and, thus, ensured the saline groundwater maintained a level at which it didn't flow into the river or rise to the topsoil). That its underground trunk, or lignotuber, from which its multiple stems arise, is a storehouse for water in times of drought is a survival mechanism that I find my thoughts returning to in wonder.

Of course, it was here, amongst the mallee vegetation, that the Boorong would have observed the malleefowl, a shy, unassuming creature that weighs up to 2.5 kilograms, measures 60 centimetres in length and 45 in height, and can live to 30 years or more. Its plump body appears almost at odds with its slender neck and petite head. Its underbelly is grey and white, and a black band stripes the length of its throat and breast. The upper body is boldly barred and is fringed and streaked grey, white, black and rust, which provide excellent camouflage in the dappled light of the bird's habitat.

Malleefowl are monogamous and probably pair for life. The male constructs an incubation mound for eggs by digging a hole, filling it with leaf litter, waiting for rain to dampen the litter and then covering the organic matter with sand. An average mass of 3,400 kilograms of material is collected. He then moves 850 kilograms of sand to open the mound for egg laying; once the female has laid a clutch of up to 24 eggs, the male works the mound, on average, 5.3 hours per day, opening it periodically to test the temperature with his tongue and to increase the solar-heat input.

Malleefowl eggs are not only numerous – the external incubator frees the malleefowl from laying only the amount of eggs that she can keep warm beneath her body – but are also remarkably large, three times what the ratio of bird size to egg size is generally. They are also some of the driest in the world. Usually, loss of water during incubation creates an oxygen-filled air cell within the egg, which allows chicks to breathe while still inside, before they pip the shell with their beaks and gradually muscle their way out. The lack of water in malleefowl eggs means that no air cell is created, which is perhaps why they emerge explosively, an act they manage not headfirst but feet first: a powerful kick breaks the thin shell and the malleefowl chick is free.

Chicks must then dig upwards through as much as a metre of sand to daylight, which can take up to three days of concerted effort interspersed with periods of rest. When they emerge atop the mound they roll down to the ground and scurry into the scrub, where, thanks to the development allowed by that large egg, they will soon be able to run, feed and fly, all of which they will need to do if they are to escape, without parental assistance, predation by foxes, cats, raptors, goannas, currawongs and ravens.

IV.

Malleefowl were widespread across southern Australia until Europeans arrived here, and must still have been widespread when Stanbridge accepted an invitation to sit by his Boorong neighbours' campfire. He, who the Boorong had observed clearing the mallee scrub, erecting fences and introducing sheep, was ushered into the role of student of Boorong notions of the night sky and, through that, was made privy to something of their knowledge of the land.

The Boorong he met and the ancestral Boorong before them, of course, had long been students of the land itself. Patient observance—of life cycles, of seasons, of animal behaviour, and of which celestial bodies acted in comparable cyclical ways—led to the formation of their complex, multilayered astronomy, which in turn was a guide for living well. Perhaps the Boorong were trying to tell this newcomer something. Perhaps they interpreted Stanbridge's willingness to listen as a willingness to take up some of the practices that would ensure the health of the land to which he had ventured uninvited.

At Lake Tyrrell, the lunettes devoid of mallee scrub, the malleefowl's official threatened status and the salinity that will put an end to Australia's 'food bowl' speak to me of other, very different practices. It may be fanciful to see in the Boorong's sharing of their knowledge with Stanbridge a larger motive; after all, they and Stanbridge were not representatives of their time and place but were individuals acting as individuals do, replete with their own whims and curiosities and desires. But whether or not such was the Boorong's purpose, Stanbridge wasn't, and for the most part we still aren't, listening.

Far-off birds wheel across the sky, clusters of shrubs dot the dunes and the sun glints the water white. The sky is clear, so I've decided to stay on tonight, to see the sky lake when it is a night-sky lake, a lake of stars. It seems that the Boorong, and the land and its lake, did have some effect on Stanbridge: at first, he named his station after the village of his birth, but later, he renamed it Tyrrell Downs. Its new name is the name it has been known by ever since. So his station's name carries echoes of this land's sky, and of its lake—Sky Downs, after what the Boorong called the lake, that apt metaphor.



# Royden Island Remediation – not your typical R&R

*Friends of Bass Strait Islands - Wildcare (FOBSI) have been working on the control of boxthorn on a number of the outer islands of the Furneaux group at the eastern end of Bass Strait since 2002/3. Some of these islands now are boxthorn-free and we are at the stage of carrying out brief maintenance visits to them at intervals of 2-4 years to ensure there is neither regeneration nor recolonisation.*

In 2009 we began work on Royden Island. This 37 Ha island is located just 1km west of Flinders Island. There'd been grazing activity on the island at times since the 1860s but the island is currently in an essentially natural (if boxthorn-infested) state. Unusually for the smaller islands in this area, Royden supports quite extensive shrubby vegetation.

Members of Flinders Island Landcare hired an excavator in 2006 to clear some of the worst areas of boxthorn infestation but subsequently couldn't manage the time or human resources to carry out effective follow-up. Chaos ensued with new growth coming up through great thorny heaps and tangles of dead material.

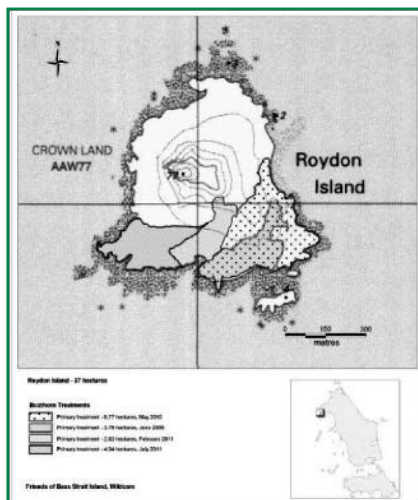
When we first visited Royden in 2009, the scale and extent of the problem seemed daunting. It was however a great opportunity to collaborate with the local Landcare group and we'd had good experience to date with the success of our strategic, thorough control method on other islands. In any case, Royden impressed us all as just so beautiful it seemed worth the effort to try to remediate it.

Since that first visit, FOBSI has run 5 working bees to Royden. The map shows how far we've progressed with primary control work. Approximately 1/3 of the island now requires only maintenance checking-over for boxthorn regeneration/re-establishment.

This year we will run 2 fortnight-long working bees on Royden (March & May) funded through the Tasmanian Landcare Association. Working on boxthorn control is never easy or pleasant but it's incredibly satisfying to remove it from native landscapes, especially the island country of the Furneaux, (re-)making them accessible to nesting sea birds and visiting humans alike.

A summary of the method we are successfully employing in the control of boxthorn is given below:

Always aim to work from least infested areas toward core infestation/s.



Map of Royden Island

The size of the area targeted at each stage of a project should be of a manageable size to allow thorough follow-up on an annual to biennial basis.

Primary treatment of boxthorn will involve the "cut and paint method" utilising secateurs and loppers for



*Min Campbell and Karen Ziegler the spunky chainsaw chicks on Settlement Point Flinders Island showing shrubby veg the scale of boxthorn (hole in vegetation).*

smaller plants, and handsaws and chainsaws for larger specimens.

Cut each stem as low as is feasible.

Apply herbicide (a 1:1 Glyphosate /water mix with pink dye marker is recommended) to each of the cut stems within 10 seconds of cutting. The marker dye allows the person working to distinguish which stems have been treated.

When approaching a boxthorn plant to cut it, take the time to ensure that small plants or seedlings on the edge of the plant are not missed or obscured when removing the larger plant. Treat these peripheral plants first.

Treat the stem or stems of the main plant. Cut as low as practical but preferably below 10cm.

Sweep the ground around the cut stems with gloved hands to ensure that no side shoots, small suckers or seedlings remain.

When tackling large boxthorn plants, initially cut the bushes quite high and then re-cut the stems low to the ground to get a fresh surface onto which to apply the herbicide.

Plants should be pulled apart and/or rolled over to check that all stems have been cut and to minimise ongoing contact between trunks and soil which could allow regeneration via vegetative 'layering'. Cutting all stems of plants also allows them to be removed for burning or at least placed so as to minimise ongoing hazards to birds, other fauna, workers and/or visitors.

Wherever practicable and acceptable to all stakeholders, cut boxthorn should be burnt. This makes follow-up of any seedlings and/or regrowth much simpler and safer.

Large plants that have been roosting/nesting habitat for starling colonies need to be burnt as soon as possible because the birds are the main vector for boxthorn seed dispersal.

Following initial treatment of an island, schedule follow-up visits to occur 12-24 months later to check on success rates, kill any plants that survived (looking particularly for regrowth from roots), and to remove any new seedlings. Schedule further visits at intervals appropriate to conditions and degree of infestation on the island and adjacent areas. In general, an interval of around 3-4 years should prove effective and adequate.

To get involved with FOBSI, go to our page on the Wildcare site [www.wildcarea.org.au/groups\\_details/bass\\_strait](http://www.wildcarea.org.au/groups_details/bass_strait) and register your interest &/or contact kat hopkins [kathopskip@hotmail.com](mailto:kathopskip@hotmail.com) or Karen Ziegler [kiziegler@bigpond.com](mailto:kiziegler@bigpond.com)





# Wildcare Photo Competition

Wildcare will again this year be sponsoring a photo competition open to all members.

The subject this year will be:

## **“Wildcare volunteering – it’s a life”**

*This year’s prize will be \$1,000 paid to a Wildcare Branch (nominated by the winning photographer) to assist with that group’s work.*

Any member may submit a maximum of three digital photographs, to be emailed to the Wildtimes editor at [wildtimes@wildcaretas.org.au](mailto:wildtimes@wildcaretas.org.au) no later than Friday 27 July 2012.

Photographs should be in JPEG format with file size around 1-3 MB each.

Photographs must have been taken over the period 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012 and not previously published.

The winning entry will be published on the cover of Wildtimes Issue 44 due in September 2012.

Entrants must make all entries available to Wildcare for publication in future issues of Wildtimes or other publications as required by Wildcare Inc.

So get those digital cameras clicking (or whatever digital cameras do these days) or search through those photos already in the can from this summer’s work in the field. I’m sure your group could use the prize!

Jodie Epper



## A note from Alaska

In previous Wildtimes we have featured Alaskan's Clay Alderson and Claudia Rector as they followed through on their dream volunteer experience in Tasmania, working at Hastings Caves, camp ground hosting at Cockle Creek and removing African boxthorn at Roydon Island. 12 months on they are still talking about us.

Feb. 2, 2012

Wild care,

Enclosed is our renewal of our Wild care membership. Since we are traveling this winter we do not have our 2011 Wildcare membership card so we were unable to access the web site for renewing our membership.

We certainly do enjoy receiving "Wildtimes" on-line and read each article with enthusiasm. It is nice to see that many of the people we met in our travels are still active in Wild care programs.

We do hope to return to Lassie soon for another tour of volunteering with PWS. We so enjoyed meeting and working with PWS staff that we would consider it a privilege to be able to renew friendships and to continue helping with PWS programs.

SKAGWAY  
ALASKA

Sincerely  
Clay and Claudia  
RECTOR ALDERSON







*Wildcare volunteer in the wilds of Mount Field.  
See story page 8.*



*Former Tasman light keeper, Karl Rowbottom,  
working on eroded brickwork at Quarters 3. See  
story page 4.*



*Helen Young trying to find space – volunteers accommodation on the  
overland track program. See story page 3.*

## **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](mailto:office@wildcaretas.org.au) E-mail newsletter articles: [wildtimes@wildcaretas.org.au](mailto:wildtimes@wildcaretas.org.au)

Web: [www.wildcaretas.org.au](http://www.wildcaretas.org.au)

