

# WILD TIMES

Edition 49 May 2014



**INTRODUCING THE NEW WILDCARE CHAIR**

**A NEW WILDCARE GROUP - FRIENDS OF LEUMEAR POINT**

**ORCHID HUNTING AT NIGHT - THREATENED PLANTS OF TASMANIA**

# Editorial

The easterly rain is falling, as this edition of Wildtimes is getting ready to print. I have been sick in bed for the past few days and I have enjoyed the sound of raindrops on my roof. I have also enjoyed watching the birds from my window, dripping wet but not bothered.

I have had some time to think about the unique partnership that occurs between Wildcare and the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service – it is truly remarkable!

This partnership occurs at all levels. There is good alignment at a management level. And that allows the on ground partnerships, clearly seen in the many one-on-one relationships between Wildcare members (often Wildcare Presidents) and PWS rangers and staff.

This relationship is often manifested in the nutting out of projects, gaining funds, and trusting and genuinely working together. I strongly believe this is a great strength for both organisations.

In this edition I am very happy to introduce to you the newly elected Chair of Wildcare Sally Salier. I would like to say a huge thank you to our outgoing Chair, Will Forsythe. Will has steered the Wildcare ship well and we look forward to him getting better and back out into the field he so loves.

I hope you enjoy reading the “stories of summer” where we have collated the best moments from the summer caretaker’s program.

We introduce another new Wildcare group — Friends of Luemeah Point — and take a peek at their first get-together. And there is a beautiful story about the rescue of the pardelote on Bruny Island.



Its very exciting news that the Wildcare Board of Management has decided to invest in a new Wildcare web site. This is a significant investment for Wildcare and will promise to make all of our jobs and our communications much easier. To make sure this investment go further we have decide to ask you, the members for a small donation. We have included in this edition of Wildtimes a member donation request form. We thank you in advance if you are able to help us out.

Make sure you find the information about the inaugural “Craig Saunders Photo Competition”, with the this year’s theme being “Partnerships and teamwork — together we make things happen”

Happy reading

Jodie Epper  
Editor

## WILDCARE Gift Fund Donations

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

Point to Pinnacle Run, Ian & Sue Berry, Debbie Glastonberry, Linda Syvret, Anna Carriere, Suzanne Mallett, Simon Hinson, Lisa Marshall, Naomi & Chris Allchin-Watts, Kathy & Michael Duncombe, Hugh Johnstone, Michael Jenni, Sean-Daniel Keller, M De Carteret, Nicole Lowrey, John Higgins, Andrea & Ross Baguley, Karen Walden-Manning, Genevieve Innes, Alex McCall, Karen Bennett, Nilcole Lowry, Paul Turner, Sandra Michael, Jamie Bell, Lisa Britzman, Jade Craven, Natalie Holman, Erin Headon, Nicole Lowrey, Tracey Simpson, Andrew Smith

## Wildtimes Publication Schedule

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### ON THE FRONT COVER:

Peter Daniel volunteering at the end of the road, Cockle Creek.



## Friends of the Orange-bellied Parrot - monitoring a 'critically endangered' species

The Orange-bellied Parrot (OBP) breeds in artificial nest boxes, provided as part of the recovery program, and natural eucalypt hollows surrounding the damp, heathy sedgelands of south-west Tasmania's Wilderness World Heritage Area. Over the years, from October to April, many visitors to Melaleuca have had the privilege of watching OBPs at feed tables established to help monitor the population.

The OBP is an obligate migratory species with the entire population leaving south-west Tasmania by April to spend winter in windswept coastal marshes in Victoria and South Australia. The northern migration is protracted and birds can be found anywhere along Tasmania's west coast to western Bass Strait islands, particularly King Island.

From there OBPs move to the mainland and occupy key sites in Port Phillip Bay, south-west Victoria, and as far west as the mouth of the Murray River in the Coorong Ramsar site, South Australia.

As the OBP doesn't recognize state borders, its conservation requires close collaboration between land managers, threatened species specialists and teams of committed volunteers across three States.

With a wild population that currently includes only about a dozen breeding pairs, the future for this unique little parrot, is delicately poised.

A host of issues face the species, notably declines in habitat quality, the risk of disease (a parrot-specific circovirus) and the small population size which exposes the population to chance events (e.g. storms or bushfires) as well as issues associated with low genetic diversity.

During the early 2000s unknown factors, but possibly the extended drought on the mainland of Australia, resulted in fewer females participating in breeding causing the population to rapidly decline to a low of only eight breeding pairs.

During the last three years, with the drought broken and the provision of supplementary feed, breeding participation and success have improved and the population decline has ceased, at least for now.

The OBP National Recovery Team provides advice on implementation of the recovery program, giving the OBP the



*The volunteer's bike parked outside the bird hide during an early morning monitoring session. (photo by Ruth Mollison)*



*The view through the scope - OBPs feeding at the feed table. (photo by Marianne Gee)*

best chance to survive. In the early 1980s, a captive population was established and now stands at close to 330 individuals in six different institutions across south-east Australia.

This captive population acts as an insurance population as well as providing birds for release to the wild to bolster the wild population and improve genetic diversity.

The most recent release of 24 captive-bred adults at Melaleuca in November 2013 has shown some signs of early success with some known to have successfully bred. This has boosted the number of fledgling OBPs produced at Melaleuca from 24 in 2013 (when there was no release of captive-bred birds) to 39 in 2014.

Since 2004, for up to six months (October to March) each season, Friends of the OBP, Wildcare Inc., in partnership with the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment, has undertaken daily monitoring, surveillance and advocacy activities for the OBP recovery program at Melaleuca.

Tasks include the maintenance of supplementary feed tables, undertaking observations of wild and released captive-bred birds, recording and reporting observations of potential predators or competitors of OBPs and interacting with visitors to Melaleuca and providing interpretation on and advocacy of the OBP recovery program.

This season, 16 Friends of the OBP volunteers assisted with the OBP monitoring program work completing 11 fortnightly shifts (some volunteers completed more than one shift). This equates to 308 person days or \$73,920 of in-kind support to the program (based on \$30/hour not including allowances). The work conducted by our volunteers represents tremendous value for money to one of Australia's most important recovery programs.

Thanks to all the volunteers for your commitment and dedication to the OBP program over the years.

The Friends of the OBP also thank the Wildcare Board of Management for an Internal Grant that contributed to the cost of flights for some of the volunteers in 2013/14 and Barbara Willson who kindly allows the Friends of the OBP to utilise her Melaleuca house during the season as well as undertaking additional voluntary observations of OBPs early in the season.

# The Pardalote Rescue at Bruny Island Quarantine Station

On December 21, a little ball of fluff landed right next to us at the clothesline, followed by a frantic parent trying to encourage the baby to fly back to the tree.

Despite desperate attempts, it could not achieve any elevation. We waited to see if it could help itself but it started being attacked by a kookaburra and a magpie, both of whom had been feeding young in the immediate area.

Eventually, Kel gently picked it up and placed it on a branch where the parents had been flying that morning.

It balanced precariously and was immediately attended by a parent who continuously fed it.

Within a couple of hours it seemed to have the strength it needed to become fully fledged, as it flew off to surrounding trees as part of a happy trio.

We heard the distinctive call of the baby to its parents. It was like an electronic beep, so much so that we were initially checking our cameras to see if the sound came from them.

Lyn Donald and Kel Callaghan

Volunteer Caretakers

Bruny Island Quarantine Station.



*First Landing.*



*Protective parent.*



*Rescue from predator.*



*Back in the tree.*



*Parent feeding.*



# From the CEO's desk

The year is off to a flying start. It is shaping up to be an exciting year of achievement, as we move forward on a number of issues which I would like to share with you now.

## Annual Report for 2013 and AGM

Wildcare observes the calendar year for reporting purposes. For the first time in its history, an Annual Report has been produced. It will soon be posted to the website.

It includes reports from the Co-Chairs, CEO and Volunteer Facilitator. It also features stories about Wildcare projects around the State, showcasing what Wildcare is all about. This has not been done previously. The ultimate aim is to have each Wildcare branch contribute in future, whether this be a few lines, a paragraph or something more substantial. You are invited to email me text and photos of your projects throughout the year, for inclusion in next year's report. I continue to be impressed with the many stories we have to tell, whether they be about challenges, achievement, resilience, inspiration or making a difference. Let's continue to share them with the world!



For those who would like a hard copy of the Annual Report, please contact the Office of CEO.

The AGM was held in Hobart on 29 March. Two guest speakers – Adrienne Picone, CEO of Volunteering Tasmania, and Peter Rice from Wildcare Deslacs – gave excellent presentations which both challenged and inspired the audience.

## Changes at Board level

Sally Salier has been elected as Co-Chair, to replace Will Forsyth. In my short time with Wildcare, I have had the privilege to work and travel with Will and have been most impressed with his zeal for all things Wildcare, his dedication, commitment and wise counsel. Thank you, Will, and I am sure everyone joins with me in wishing you a speedy recovery.

Welcome, Sally, in your new role. I look forward to working with you, as I do with Karen Ziegler from Friends of Bass Strait Islands, who was also elected to the Board. I am sure you will both make highly valued contributions.

## Presidents' Forum

Improved communication is the dominant focus in our strategic plan. Actions have been identified to enhance communication and delivery of services to members and make communication with branches, groups and volunteers relevant and timely.

One of these initiatives is a one-day forum for Presidents of Wildcare branches or their nominee to be held on Saturday, 31 May 2014 at Campbell Town. This forum is aimed at:

- Enhancing the communication process
- Providing an opportunity for Presidents to raise and discuss issues with their fellow Presidents and Wildcare management
- Offering an opportunity to network with Presidents of other Wildcare branches
- Building greater cohesion within Wildcare as an organisation



- Building bridges between the Board, office of CEO and Wildcare branches
- Identifying professional development needs of Presidents

Presidents are now invited to contribute to shaping the agenda. Please contact the CEO with your ideas, suggestions and the issues that you would like to see addressed on the day. Bear in mind that this forum is not an excuse for a whinge session! It is much more positive than that! It is about building a stronger organisation and assisting branches, as Wildcare's engine room, to do their job more efficiently and effectively. What do we need to work on? What do we need to change? I look forward to your contributions.

RSVP by 15 May 2014.

## Highlights of Board meetings

To enhance the communication process further, highlights from Board meetings will be summarised and posted to the website. This will be done as soon as practicable after each Board meeting.

## Treasurer

This voluntary Board position has been vacant for over a year. The role has been completely restructured so that it is not an onerous task. Strong support is provided by a Finance Officer and Accounts Officer.

There were not any nominations for this position at the AGM, so the role has been advertised in The Mercury on 5 April 2014. Should you wish to nominate, or know of someone who could fulfil this role, please contact me.

## New Website

The Board has made a major decision to invest in the development of a new website, utilising the services of Ionata Web Solutions.

While the existing website has served us fairly well, it is around 14 years old and well past its use-by date! A new site is needed that links us to the new social media networks and new ways of communication with each other. The need for improved online services and support to members has been a major motivation in this decision.

## Future workplan

The two key drivers of activities for the rest of 2014 are implementation of the strategic plan, of which fundraising is a prime focus.

Your contribution is very much valued.

Malcolm MacDonald  
CEO, Wildcare Inc  
CEO@wildcaretas.org.au  
(03) 6334 3990

# Wildcare AGM 2014

## From the Co-Chair

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge our out going co-chair, Will Forsyth, for his work in this position over the last seven years. He has carried out his duties with energy and enthusiasm, especially in the areas of liaising with and nurturing relationships with the volunteers in the field, to Parks staff throughout the state and on up to ministerial level. Thank you Will, you will be missed, and I hope we can continue to call on your help and expertise in the future.

Let me introduce myself briefly. I am a native born Tasmanian (a rare breed) and have spent most of my spare time exploring our great outdoors for 40 years, caving, bushwalking, kayaking, cycling and generally having fun. Then I did a ten year stint on the mainland. On my return in 2006, to my great delight, I discovered Wildcare, an amazing and unique concept, allowing volunteers to help make a difference in areas of natural and cultural heritage. I seized the opportunity to give something back to those areas that had nurtured me in the past. I joined as many groups as I could, and three years ago became a director on the Board of Management. This kind of volunteering does not appeal to everyone, but having held positions at the state, national and international levels, I have some idea of what I am letting myself in for.

At our recent AGM Peter Rice, president of Wildcare Deslacs, showed us a telling graph of what happens when a group comes together to achieve a project. We start on a high point of inflated expectation (probably where I am right now), then plummet to a trough of disillusionment before climbing up the slope of enlightenment and reaching the plateau of production. I am hoping that my plummet will be short lived, and that,

with the help of the Board and all of you members, that I reach the plain of productivity rapidly and easily.

Some of the things I would like to focus on while in this position include keeping our current active volunteers happy and enthusiastic, increasing the number of active volunteers from our membership of almost 6,000, and continuing to develop great working partnerships with Parks, Heritage, Sponsors and others. To that end I hope to get to some of your meetings and working bees in order to get to know you.

Also, I am aware of some of the difficulties members have experienced with our website, so am committed to help make it more up to date and user friendly. Hopefully we will be able to give you more news on this front in the near future.

So I urge you to help us to help you. Tell us your good stories, share your ideas, spread the word and keep in touch.

Sally Salier  
Co-chair elected



Sally Salier.



Carol Jackson & Peter Rice.



Karen Zeigler, elected as new general member talking to Adrienne Piconne from Volunteering Tasmania.



Sally Salier newly elected chair, and Pip Gowen (PWS).



Peter Rice giving a presentation at the AGM.



# Help from Victoria – thanks Mike!

Mike Mclean loves birds, so much he designed and painted an Orange Bellied Parrot mural which consists of 61 birds across 7 bus shelters at the drama centre “The Potatoshed” in Drysdale Victoria.

The mural also features the regional flora that the OBP feeds on whilst here. See accompanied photos. The second phase of this project involves a mobile version of the mural consisting of 36 of the same birds on corflute cut outs roughly 1.5 foot long by 1 foot tall.

The mural is being officially unveiled by the City of Greater Geelong on 3 April 2014, and I will also be releasing a mobile version to then work its way around locations in the region raising awareness of the OBP endangered status.

The birds attach with cable ties so easy set up and take down with no footprint. Nice to know people all around this country care for our birds!



Mike Mclean with his cut out orange bellied parrots.



# Friends of Bruny Island Quarantine Station – A Volunteer Caretaker Program

Over the summer we have had two groups of volunteer caretakers at the Station.

Firstly Kel and Lyn, and more recently Jo and Gavin and their two children. Both groups did a fantastic job in meeting and greeting visitors and during the week made good progress with other tasks.

Caretakers look after the substantial number of visitors to the station, which is now open both on Saturdays and Sundays.

Friends of Bruny Island Quarantine Station gratefully acknowledge the great work by our Volunteer Caretakers, as without their efforts the Station could not be open.

We are hoping to extend this program over the winter months.

FOBIQS were also successful in obtaining a grant from Marine and Safety Tasmania to install a floating pontoon in Quarantine Bay.

The pontoon is now installed and operational. Signage advising of the conditions for use will also be installed.



*Friends of Bruny Island Quarantine Station walk and talk.*

The ability for people to gain access by land and by water is a good step forward as it is also a step back to the past, when the only access to the Station was by sea.



*Our commiseration's to this boat owner.*



*Investigating a cave on a walk.*



*The newly installed pontoon at the station.*





# Peter Murrell Reserve burn-off

Just before Christmas 2013, the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service conducted a burn-off in the middle part of the Peter Murrell Reserve.

It was a hot fire and even landcarers sometimes say that such fires are 'devastating' and complain of how much bush was 'destroyed'. The reality is different. Australian trees and shrubs are adapted to hot fires and many species need fire to rejuvenate.

Many seeds are only released from their capsules when stimulated by the heat. Most of the orchids, for which the reserve is famous, are stimulated by fire and produce strong plants and flowers the following season.

These photos, taken less than 2 months later, show how fast the bush will recover.

Because this fire burnt back on itself in one area, there were probably more wildlife casualties than expected, as a few pademelons and potoroos became trapped. Echidnas escaped the fire (probably by digging in) and were seen in the burnt area a day later.

Birds were seen foraging on the still warm black soil, looking for dead skinks and insects, while black cockatoos were feasting on banksia cones which had their seeds exposed by the heat.

In early February a colony of 8 large fungi was discovered in the blackened soil. It was an uncommon fungus called *Laccocephalum hartmannii*, seen for the first time in the reserve.

The largest measured 31 cm across. This fungus typically appears after hot fires.

Several days later a large bolete fungus, *Boletellus ananas*, turned up in a different area of the burn. While these were interesting finds, what was most pleasing to see was the fast recovery at the base of burnt teatree stumps and the sprouting of the eucalypts.

It will be interesting to see how many different fungi will come up in the burnt area. So far close to 150 different species, of all colours, shapes and sizes, have been identified from all over the reserve.

It will now be a lot easier to put a name to most of them, since the publication in February 2014 of *A Field Guide to Tasmanian Fungi* by local mycologists Genevieve Gates and David Ratkowsky. It is beautifully illustrated and describes over 600 species.

Annie Wapstra  
Friends of Peter Murrell Reserves



*Early and fast recovery at the base of burnt teatree stumps.*



*Sprouting of Eucalyptus amygdalina.*



*Boletellus ananas found in Peter Murrell after the burn-off.*



*Laccocephalum hartmannii at tree base, seen in the reserve for the first time.*



# Another new Wildcare group – Friends of Lumeah Point

Lumeah Point is a 'pan handle' on the north-western side of Pipeclay Lagoon, with Cremorne to the east and Clifton Beach to the south.

The area is home to just over 40 residences and has nurtured several generations of youngsters over the past 40+ years.

It is a wonderful place to live, even though the wind can sometimes blow from every direction at once! The many moods of Pipeclay Lagoon are forever changing and there is never a time when there is nothing worth looking at!

We recently formed Wildcare – Friends of Lumeah Point to ensure both residents and community groups can work together with Crown Lands to protect and enhance the foreshore, which is owned by Crown Lands.

It has always been maintained by individual residents who looked after the patch outside their fence but gradually feral oysters, dust, weeds and access have become issues to be dealt with.



*The View from Lumeah Point.*

The Committee has submitted a Management Plan to Crown Lands for authority so that our community can participate in regular working bees, initially to remove feral oysters and do basic track work and signage.

The five-year plan also incorporates weed management, appropriate planting, and feral animal control.

On 1 March this year, the residents elected members of the Wildcare – Friends of Lumeah Point Committee, endorsed the Management Plan and participated in a sausage sizzle to celebrate the formation of what we hope will lead to the strengthening of a vibrant and co-operative community where many more generations will have the opportunity to grow live and grow.

Our first event is being held on Sunday 6 April when we start tackling the feral oyster problem with the assistance of Pipeclay Lagoon Oyster Growers Association (PLOGA) and Windsurfing Tasmania.



*The first meeting of the group and the sausage sizzle - yum!*



## 2014 Tasmanian Landcare Fund Applications

Applications for Round 18 of the Tasmania Landcare Fund will open on 1 May 2014.

The Tasmanian Landcare Fund is the Deductible Gift Recipient administered by Landcare Tasmania and enables people to care for, improve and manage Tasmania's unique environment through hands-on action.

Funding is provided for a range of projects with activities including weed control, salinity management, feral pest control, dune stabilising, re-vegetation, and fencing native bushland, wetlands and watercourses.

Projects may also include education initiatives and field days, encouraging others to value the environment and improve their land management practices.

Projects typically involve community volunteers, students and/or landowners.

Individuals and groups seeking funding are encouraged to obtain copies of the application form and guidelines from the Landcare Tasmania website ([www.landcaretas.org.au](http://www.landcaretas.org.au)) or by contacting Mark Ritchie at Landcare Tasmania on (03) 6234 7117.

# Friends of Maatsuyker Island - recent on-island and off-island activities

## Maatsuyker Island Working Bee

From 7-16 December 2013, a team of 10, including weeders, seabird biologists and builders, were on Maatsuyker Island for the annual Friends of Maatsuyker Island (FOMI) Working Bee. The team based themselves in Quarters 3 (Q3) which was the first time in many years that Q3 had seen so much 'action'.

Thanks to an Internal Grant from the Wildcare Board of Management, a new fridge was purchased for the island to be utilised by Wildcare volunteers and the fridge was a great asset for the FOMI Working Bee.

The weeding program was supported by a Caring for Our Country Community Environment Grant and general FOMI funds supported the seabird project and the building maintenance work.

The weeding group (Marina Campbell, Karen Ziegler, Vicki Campbell, Amy Saunders, Noah Poole and David Milne) spent a lot of time undertaking systematic survey work to locate and treat new infestations of blackberry and *Hebe elliptica* as well as revisiting weed GPS waypoints from past work.

Unfortunately the weather was damp and/or windy for the Working Bee which precluded any spraying of *Montbretia*. Nicole and Pete, two artists-in-residence on Maatsuyker for a three month stint, also joined the team and helped out with the weed survey work.

The Working Bee marked that start of a new initiative by FOMI - the Shearwater Research Program. Surveys of the island's Short-tailed Shearwater (muttonbird) colony were undertaken to enable a new estimate of the population size on Maatsuyker and to begin monitoring of the burrow occupancy and burrow density of this species.

The seabird work (by Sheryl Hamilton and Georgie Hedley) involved checking more than 1000 burrows using a specialised 'burrowscope' - a camera at the end of a hose that projected an image to a screen outside the burrow.

To get an overall estimate of burrow density, the number of burrow entrances were counted along transects that covered a range of habitat types and topography.

Before the new population estimate can be calculated, additional burrow density data will be collected and colony boundaries will be mapped at the next Working Bee planned for the 2014/15 summer.

The building crew, Ron Fehlberg and Keith Darke, carried out much-needed floor repairs in Q1 and Q2 and identified other areas of flooring that need urgent replacing in Q3.

On the last day the whole team, including the artists, undertook some sensitive clearing of vegetation around two sites on the old haulage way as approved by Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) managers. It was very exciting to reveal an elevated section of approximately 25 metres almost intact.

Despite the very unsettled, early summer weather (with only one 'sunset over the Needles' photo opportunity!), the Working Bee was a great success.

The fantastic team worked hard, achieved much, supported each other well and, most importantly, had lots of fun.

## Island Arks Symposium III

From 11-14 February 2014, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Island Arks National Symposium was held in Hobart with over 100 participants from Australia and its external territories, New Zealand and Fiji. Christian Bell, FOMI Committee member and Wildcare Board Member, was Wildcare's representative on the Tasmanian organising committee for the Symposium.

Sheryl Hamilton and Marina Campbell gave a presentation titled Volunteer-managed weed control and seabird monitoring programs on Tasmanian World Heritage Area's Maatsuyker Island. The talk highlighted the key work undertaken by FOMI to support PWS in the management of the island to maintain its cultural and natural values. The talk acknowledged that FOMI's achievements are largely due to the committed, professional Committee who fundraise and implement on-island and off-island projects and the strong partnership with PWS.

FOMI also joined with Friends of the Bass Strait Islands (FOBSI) and Friends of Tasman Island (FOTI) to run a joint stall and display in the foyer for the duration of the event. Thanks to Ailsa Fergusson, Erika Shankley and Suzanne Skira who assisted with the construction and transport of the displays as well as the other volunteers who assisted with staffing the stall in the foyer.

Please see another story on the Island Arc Symposium on page 18.



*The new fridge arriving on Maatsuyker Island after being transported in a net under a helicopter (photo by Marina Campbell).*



*The Working Bee team in Quarters 3 with the new fridge in the background. Back row L-R: Noah, Pete, Keith, Sheryl, Ron, Amy, David. Front row L-R: Marina, Nicole, Vicki, Karen, Georgie. (photo by Marina Campbell).*

# Margie Jenkins in Conversation with Jean Taylor, Wildcare Friends of Coningham

Sustaining long term projects is a tough task for Wildcare groups. Wildcare Friends of Coningham Nature Recreation Area (NRA) has made great progress in controlling weeds, particularly Spanish heath (*Erica lusitanica*) in the reserve. Margie Jenkin interviews Jean Taylor (Co-convenor of Wildcare Friends of Coningham) about the trials and tribulations.

*MJ: Jean, what's the aim of the Friends of Con?*

JT: Coningham NRA is a large reserve (500ha) that provides habitat for a number of threatened species including Swift parrots, wedge-tailed and white-bellied sea eagles, forty-spotted pardalotes, Tasmanian devils, spotted-tailed quolls, Eastern barred bandicoots and the Tasmanian chaostola skipper butterflies, just to mention the cute species! However it also has significant weed problems, mostly Spanish heath (*Erica lusitanica*) but also several mainland native species that have moved in from adjacent properties. We remove weeds and direct visitor access in order to improve the general habitat of the reserve to protect both the threatened species and other native species.

*MJ: Since forming in 2002, the Friends of Con has secured around \$100,000. You've been hugely successful in attracting funding and managing key threats to the biodiversity in the Reserve. To what do you attribute the group's success?*

JT: We were very fortunate because just as we began to look for funding Craig Saunders was appointed Volunteer Facilitator for PWS in the South. Craig spent endless hours teaching us how to write grant applications that reflected what we really wanted and why. When Craig resigned from that position Pip Gowen ably filled his shoes and has continued the terrific support.

*MJ: You're just finishing a project on weed free links? Tell us about this initiative.*

JT: Friends of Con received funding through Round 2 of the Landcare Biodiversity Grants (\$9,790 for year 1 and \$7,425 for year 2). The grant was sought to build on weed control gains made in two areas of the reserve linked by the main fire trail and one of the main recreational tracks, and a contractor was engaged to treat Spanish heath between the two sites and beside the fire trail and track to establish a weed-free zone along these major thoroughfares.

We were pleased that the grant contained a budget for follow up. Other Wildcare groups will understand the difficulty in getting money for follow up - everyone wants to fund new work! As long term weeders, we know the absolute necessity of follow-up. We check our previously weeded sites once a year just to ensure we catch any seedlings. This is very intensive work, but we feel we need to establish a level of control before we move on to new weedy areas. We know from our experience on our own block in Kettering that the seeds remain viable for at least 20 years - though thankfully the numbers reduce each year providing the plants are removed before new seeds contaminate the soil.

*MJ: What have been the highlights for you as convenors of the Friends of Con?*

JT: John Hamilton and I share the convenorship of the group, and we both agree that the absolute highlight has been the



*Friends of Coningham have time for a cup of tea.*

people we have met through the Friends of Con. Over the years we have had various people assisting us both for short and long term periods, and we remain friends with them all.

A second highlight has been the privilege of working in the bush and making a difference. We've loved the bush all our lives and enjoyed the recreation it has given us, so it is a pleasure to give back a little.

*MJ: ...And what are the challenges ahead for the group?*

JT: Our biggest challenge at this stage is what will happen to the group when we are no longer able to run it. I am 67 and John is 78 and while he is physically still very active, we are not sure just how long this will continue. Also, the people who volunteer with us are all of similar ages - we struggle to attract younger volunteers.

*MJ: How can people get involved with the Friends of Con?*

JT: We have regular monthly working bees on the third Tuesday of the month February to November and we welcome new volunteers.

For more on the Friends of Con, see [http://www.wildcaretas.org.au/groups\\_details/coningham](http://www.wildcaretas.org.au/groups_details/coningham) or the group's blog <http://friendsofconinghamnra.blogspot.com.au>

To discuss becoming a Wildcare group convenor, contact PWS Volunteer Facilitator (South) Pip Gowen on (03) 6264 8463 or [pip.gowen@parks.tas.gov.au](mailto:pip.gowen@parks.tas.gov.au)

The Landcare Biodiversity Grants are delivered by Landcare Tasmania, in partnership with the State Government's Private Land Conservation Program through funding from the Australian Government's Clean Energy Future Biodiversity Fund, see <http://www.landcaretas.org.au>



# Cataloguing of Objects on Maatsuyker Island

An interesting project has started on Maatsuyker Island. FOMI members Rosanna Cameron and Anne Piesse spent eight days in 2013 cataloguing, photographing and measuring over 400 objects on the Island.

Back in Hobart, Rosanna compiled the information into a detailed database. The database has been created using FilmmakerPro so it can be searched, adapted and added to at any time and in almost any way.

Many objects have multiple photographs so identifications can be made, the condition noted and conservation and preventative conservation techniques applied when necessary.

It is not possible to make the actual database available online, but a PDF of the hard copy of the catalogue can be accessed on the Wildcare web site through the FOMI link by clicking going to [http://www.wildcaredtas.org.au/groups\\_details/maatsuyker](http://www.wildcaredtas.org.au/groups_details/maatsuyker)

The listed articles cover many areas relating to the Island's History. The ages of objects range from contemporary objects to pieces which date back to the building of the tower. As it is hard to remove things from the Island, the Island has become a time capsule.

Things which in earlier times would have been perceived as rubbish are today viewed as a continuing archive of the Island's history. We have included embroidery made by current caretakers which has been left as a memento on the Island and historical things from the tower or found objects discarded in

the gullies and bush.

There are domestic objects including ceramics, dolls, matchbox cars, a shoe last, furniture and a delightful small pair of patent leather shoes.

There are a variety of bottles, which would once have held anything from medicine, jams and sauces, to cleaning liquids and poisons.

There are detailed photos of the mechanism in the tower, which could be of interest to other lighthouse enthusiasts.

They can access the images and pass us further information, which can be added to the full database. There are detailed shots of the haulage way, engine and the old whim.

There is also a full record of the plaques placed on the Keepers' Tree by past Keepers and Caretakers. The best way to find out the full scope of the objects is to browse through the PDF itself.

As can happen when there is a limited time, the project was not quite completed. There is a fascinating tool shed with around 150 objects which, we hope, will be added soon.

The project was carried out with the assistance of the Australian Government through the Australian National Maritime Museum's Project Support Scheme (MMAPSS) and Wildcare, who gave its financial support for transport to the Island.

Rosanna Cameron, FOMI

## Catalogue of Objects on



# Maatsuyker Island

Part 1 - 2013



FOMI (Friends of Maatsuyker Island)

# Orchid Hunting at Night

Orchid enthusiasts can generally be recognised by the black stripes on their clothes in spring. If they see recently burnt bushland or wetland they start hunting. Being relatively slender plants, native orchids tend to respond quickly to the removal of competing vegetation and take the chance to emerge and flower.

Previously we have described how volunteers in Threatened Plants Tasmania (TPT) assist managers of protected land to monitor populations of threatened orchid species (see Wildtimes 44, p. 4). This monitoring provides information about the life-history of plants and can assist with decisions about the need for a planned burn. Such was the case at Gunns' Surrey Hills property in January 2012. We noted a long-term decline in emergence and flowering of the crowded leek orchid, *Prasophyllum crebriflorum*, and our report recommended that a burn may be due.

In June 2012, staff at Gunns were able to burn the sub-alpine grassland, which is the home of our monitored population of crowded leek orchid plants. Because the burn also removed our above-ground bracken markers for each of our monitored plants, we visited the site in early December 2012 to systematically re-discover our on-ground metal tags. At this time we also measured any orchid leaves that had emerged.

When we returned to the site in January 2013, we were surprised to discover that the emergence and flowering rate for our monitored plants had further declined compared with January 2012. The orchid plants had not read the script, and were certainly not cooperating with orchid enthusiasts' folklore!

By analysing our monitoring data from December 2012 and January 2013, we found that 38% of our monitored plants' leaves had emerged by December but only 10% were seen in January.

When we compare burnt and unburnt places (the burn had been quite patchy), the rate of emergence was similar in December, but by January a much higher proportion of the leaves that remained were in unburnt places.

Our analysis also revealed the average width of leaves in burnt places was 3.9 mm compared with 2.6 mm in unburnt places. We know that more robust leaves are associated with plants that go on to produce a flower spike. The leaves in burnt places were therefore more likely to become flowering plants in January, had they not largely disappeared.

The most likely explanation for the disappearance of plants between December and January is that grazing animals are following the orchid enthusiasts' principle and targeting burnt places. But their orchid hunting is not limited to admiring and photographing orchid plants. The robust leaves in the more accessible burnt sites are a tasty night-time snack!

In January 2014 we visited our crowded leek orchids again, following a year with no disturbance. The proportion of flowering plants had increased from 2.2% in 2013 to 8.6% in 2014, still not a high proportion but now with the hoped-for upward trend.

Apart from the grazing pressure that we are now starting to understand, there is still much to discover about the crowded leek orchids. Nearly every year that we visit the site we find twenty or more new untagged plants in flower. Meanwhile less than half of our previously tagged plants were seen in 2012-13 following the burn.

Maybe plants are short-lived, possibly because of the grazing. We also have little idea of the total population of living crowded leek orchids as the small leaves of non-flowering plants are virtually impossible to detect. Over time we hope to tease out more details of their life story.

Further details about the method and results presented in this article can be found in *The Tasmanian Naturalist* number 135 (2013), pages 46 to 55.

For more information about how to get involved in this monitoring or other TPT activities, contact our president Alison van den Berg at [president@tpt.org.au](mailto:president@tpt.org.au), or sign up to our mailing list at [www.tpt.org.au](http://www.tpt.org.au).

Phil Collier



The endangered crowded leek orchid, *Prasophyllum crebriflorum* (photo by Robin Garnett).



Volunteers monitoring the crowded leek orchid at Surrey Hills, January 2013 (photo by Phil Collier).



# Summer Volunteering

Southern Region Summer Volunteer Program Story - October 2013 to End of April 2014

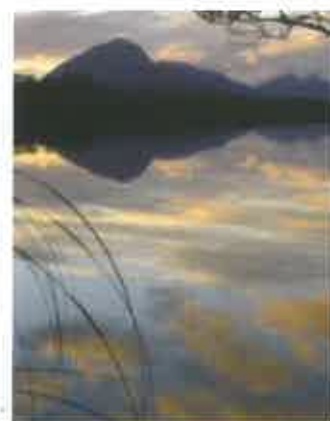
- Twenty Eight weeks.
- Five Southern Region sites – Melaleuca, Maatsuyker, Cockle Creek, Bruny Island Quarantine Station and Cape Bruny Light Station.
- 62 people placements (2 people each month) with most placements 2 months, Maatsuyker is 4 - 6 months.
- Average of 6 hours a day per person worked.
- 10 416 hours contributed.
- \$312 480.00 - estimated conservative financial contribution @ \$30/hour, in time and effort.
- One - third of the people new volunteers and two - thirds of the people were return volunteers - some to a different site.

The high quality and professional effort by volunteers has provided enormous benefit to Parks and promoted Wildcare as a partner organization. Volunteers provide, amongst

many other things, a key visitor services function in meeting and greeting and sharing their experiences in our parks with visitors. Many feedback cards were received with positive comments about volunteers and Parks.

Return and experienced volunteers add a very substantial bonus to the position, in that they often come with a range of skills, such as on-ground weed management experience from a variety of sites around the state. For example at Cockle Creek, Sally Sailer and Christine Sedevic with the assistance of Dave and Christine Harris and Dave and Trauti Reynolds, weeded and wrote a report on their activities for PWS.

Many, many thanks to all the new and return summer volunteers on southern region sites. Your commitment to caretaking our special places and welcoming our visitors is outstanding, and your support of our field staff over the very busy summer is very much appreciated.



# THE SUMMER OF VOLUNTEERING

"The strangest question we were asked: 'have you got an *Antechinus* in your freezer?'"

"Watching sea eagles circle around the light house."

"Being able to watch wedge tailed eagles at a really close distance."

"Trying to walk up a hill at 5.30 am in belting rain & gale force wind."

"Meeting overseas people and other mainland Australians and hearing about their travels and listening to how much they enjoy Tasmania. Saying things like "No place on earth like it" and "Beautiful places with few other people about" and so on. It makes one appreciate our own home state and environment more."

"Not just one stand-out thing, but the sunsets, sunrises, the peaceful bay and the clear calm sea where you could see the fronds of kelp floating around as if through glass."

"Seeing 50 Eastern Quolls on a night time drive on Bruny Island."

"A Snares Penguin just popped out of the water right in front of us on Maatsuyker Island."

"What will always stay with me is the raw beauty of the place. Never did I take it for granted. And with the constant weather changes you were able to see the place in many different guises."

"A pod of whales coming into the bay below Maatsuyker Lighthouse whilst we were having coffee and cake on the balcony for Anna's birthday."

"Raising the Australian flag on Maatsuyker Lighthouse for the Sydney to Hobart West Coasters"

"I found that it gets under your skin. An experience that I will never forget."

"We loved the sunsets. That quiet time of dusk when the people have gone and it is just the two of us, and the scenery."

"At Melaleuca, being asked why Parks built the boardwalk underwater - and they were serious."

"When I called the Tax Office from Maatsuyker and explained where we were, the girl replied, "is that, like, in Australia?" I replied, "if it means I don't pay any tax, then no!"

"Anna wearing the Maatsuyker windsack and dancing down the track."

"Our most interesting experience was late one evening, when around 10pm and about to turn in, we looked out the kitchen window and saw a faint glow coming from the top of the lighthouse. The moon was shining. But on looking through the binoculars there was definitely a glow from inside. So I picked up the torch and walked up to the tower, opened the door and looked up. Sure enough, a faint light could be seen at the top of the tower. I climbed the stairs, and found a low wattage light had somehow been turned on. I found the switch, turned it off, climbed back down the stairs, walked back down the path to the house, and was about to go in the front door, I looked back up to the lighthouse... and the light was back on! All a bit spooky. The ghost of lighthouse keepers past?

Who or what was turning the light on? No way was I going back up so I turned in for the night, making sure all our doors were locked. Next morning we went up to investigate and eventually sorted out the problem. It seems there must be a timer on one of the light switches and most likely one of the people from the tour group must have turned on a switch by mistake."



# - THE SPECIAL MOMENTS

"After listening to a visitor go on about how much he was going to volunteer, Anna offered him a plastic bag and suggested he could get started on collecting rubbish on the beach. He declined."

"Trying to arrange to vote whilst on Deal Island. The Electoral Commission were no help whatsoever and then threatened to fine us if we didn't vote!"

"At Melaleuca, Par Avion kindly gave me a bottle of wine to thank me for something I'd done for them. They then took it back because they'd forgotten to bring any wine for their customers. This was repeated a further two times before I actually managed to drink the stuff."

"Brewing our own beer on Maatsuyker Island - called 'Gale Ale' of course - and then making a fantastic fruit bread using the yeasty residue."

"Leeches and mud in the Maatsuyker drains!"

"Mending the Maria Island bicycle hire fleet"

"Being conned into digging more drains on Maria Island when the Rangers claimed it was a fascinating archaeological dig!"

"Gazing at the heavens and asking each other AGAIN, "what cloud do you think that is?" whilst doing our Bureau observations."

"Opening a resupply of cleaning equipment at Melaleuca and finding a lovely Christmas cake in the bottom. Thank you Parks!"

"On Maatsuyker Island, we got our first ripe tomato after only six months!"

"We replicated the Lightkeepers' night time watches on Maatsuyker Island - simply magical."

"Two walkers were standing on the Cockle Creek bridge one evening when two quolls came trotting past them across the bridge. They stopped, inspected the people briefly, then continued on their way. They were less than a meter away. Shortly after, a wallaby also crossed the bridge. So you see, it is necessary to keep the bridge open, at least for the animals!"



# Island Arks

The 3rd Island Arks National Symposium was held in Tasmania 11-14 February 2014 and over 100 participants from Australia and its external territories, from New Zealand and Fiji gathered in Hobart.

Island Arks is Australia's major forum addressing conservation issues with regard to its islands.

Wildcare was one of the principal sponsors of this year's event. The Symposium was held at the Bahai Centre of Learning on the Hobart waterfront.

The main focus of Island Arks is control and eradication of feral animals and weeds, as well as the conservation of Australia's seabirds and small mammals. Islands are recognised as being highly vulnerable to extinction events, important in biodiversity conservation terms and equipped with some advantageous attributes that make conservation activities more effective than on their mainland counterparts.

The Symposium attracted leading experts in the field of island conservation biology.

Three of Wildcare's Friends groups participated at the Symposium: Friends of Maatsuyker (FoMI), Friends of the Bass Strait Islands (FoBSI) and Friends of Tasman Island (FoTI).

FoMI and FoTI worked on a joint stall and display in the foyer for the duration of the event and FoBSI set up a display in the main auditorium. There was also a display on Wildcare activities at the registration event held at Elizabeth Pier.

FoMI and FoBSI delivered two well received presentations about their work during the course of the four day forum. Certainly the work that Wildcare does is at the forefront of community volunteer engagement in the conservation of temperate islands.

The audience consisted of island conservation practitioners, researchers and staff from government agencies and non-government organisations.

They provided much positive feedback as to our efforts to conserve Tasmanian islands; this work is far in advance of what is happening with temperate islands in Australia and most other temperate islands on the planet. Many advantageous contacts were made during the event that will serve Wildcare well with regard to extending our partnerships.

Thanks to Sheryl Hamilton and Marina Campbell for preparing and presenting on behalf of Friends of Maatsuyker at Island Arks; Katriona Hopkins and Karen Ziegler for preparing and presenting on behalf of Friends of the Bass Strait Islands; Ailsa Fergusson, Erika Shankley and Suzanne Skria who assisted with the construction and transport of the displays; and all the other Wildcare volunteers who assisted with staffing the stall in the foyer.

Christian Bell, FOMI Committee member and Wildcare Board Member, was Wildcare's representative on the Tasmanian organising committee for Island Arks.



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# The Craig Saunders Annual Photo Competition

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

The subject this year will be:

**“Partnerships and teamwork - together we make things happen”**

The 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 1 August 2014.

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

Photographs must have been taken over the period 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014 and not previously published.

The winning entry will be published on the cover of Wildtimes Issue 50 due 1 September 2014.

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

So get those digital cameras clicking 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





*Hats, tools and smiles are all a volunteer needs  
(well nearly all).*



*Adam Gititins helping a visitor at Cape Bruny.*



*Get Outside - leadership training.*



**WILDCARE Inc**

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

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