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Newsletter of WILDCARE Inc

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

C/o GPO Box 44 Hobart
TAS 7001 Australia.

Ph: 03 6233 2836.

Fax: 03 6223 8603.

E-mail general:
office@wildcaretas.org.au

E-mail newsletter articles:
editor@wildcaretas.org.au

Web: www.wildcaretas.org.au

WILDCARE Inc GROUP MEMBERSHIP

By Co-Chairs Andrew Smith
and Richard Hammond

Comments made at various recent forums, including Board of Management meetings and the Annual Conference, that have the potential to have an adverse impact on membership and the financial health of WILDCARE Inc, have prompted us to respond to those comments as we understand them.

The view that 'WILDCARE Inc is in decline'.

While there has been a sudden drop in membership overall, this does not indicate an organisational decline – instead it is an unpredicted outcome of a change of processes that made it less convenient to become a member or renew membership. This is being countered in a number of ways;

- Inclusion of membership forms with Annual Park Pass Renewals
- Discussions with PWS staff about promotional messages for WILDCARE Inc
- Clarification of selling processes with Service Tasmania Staff
- Revamping of membership forms
- Consideration to revamping the web page to allow for internet purchase of membership.

An organisation cannot be considered to be in decline when;

- the number of Community Action in Reserves groups continues to grow
- the number of people purchasing memberships at Service Tasmania continues to grow
- the number of people purchasing memberships directly with the WILDCARE Inc Office continues to grow
- the number of volunteer hours provided by our members remains the same
- it continues to be the largest incorporated volunteer organisation working in the environment.

Interpreting the loss of members as the

result of a change on a form to be an indication of overall organisational decline is perhaps an oversimplification of what is actually happening. However, an analysis of the drop in membership numbers (i.e. financial membership as opposed to active membership) shows a definite correlation to the disappearance of the 'tick the box' from the old Annual All Parks Pass renewal form.

This is not, in our view, an indication of 'an organisation in decline' but an indication that people like things to be simple. Having to go searching for another membership form and filling it out does not follow the KISS principle of keeping things simple and has contributed to the decline in financial members.

Unfortunately, as with many things, if something is said often enough, particularly to people who want to hear a particular interpretation, that view will be pronounced to be the truth, and thereafter directly generate a genuine decline in viability.

The view that WILDCARE Inc is charging its members to volunteer.

WILDCARE Inc charges a membership fee which;

- enables the organisation to support members who volunteer for natural and cultural heritage conservation and park management
- provides WILDCARE Inc with the wherewithal to provide services such as newsletters, insurance, web presence, internal small grants program, database management, call-up processes, financial management and auditing
- provides the framework that enables WILDCARE Inc to provide benefits to groups (Branches) such as Constitution, Incorporation, ABN, ability to apply for external funds, option to apply for an internal grant and a communication conduit between the Agency and groups

· provides WILDCARE Inc with the capacity to negotiate and provide benefits and rewards to volunteers such as vests, and discounts on items such as the Annual All-Parks Pass.

The level of income generated by membership payments determines the level to which the above benefits, services and support can be provided.

The view that there is no need for people to join as they can come along to working bees without paying to be a member.

If a small core of group members is contributing towards the provision of the above benefits, services and support framework, while a larger non-member group of people is 'on the group's books' and benefiting from the existence of the group, then WILDCARE Inc is being asked to provide services, support and benefits to a larger group than is contributing to Wildcare Inc's capacity to provide those things.

WILDCARE Inc has always welcomed non-members who attend working bees organised by WILDCARE Inc groups.

The intent of this is so that members can bring along friends and family members who are visiting or people who are considering joining.

Regular and frequent attendance at working bees by non-members should not, however, be encouraged.

Group presidents ought to easily be able to give good reasons why being a member of their WILDCARE Inc group is a good thing to be by highlighting;

- membership benefits to the individuals beyond attending working bees
- the level of benefits provided to their group by the organisation as a result of membership fees paid, and
- the benefit to the organisation gained from fees.

It should be noted, here, that this situation is virtually identical to participating in the various activities offered to members of social or recreational clubs.

One can't simply turn up and play cricket for a cricket club without joining that organisation. Similarly, the social arm of a football club, for example, offers a range of sporting opportunities (darts, billiards competitions etc) to members that are not available to non-members.

People wishing to participate in those activities have no difficulty in joining the parent organisation.

Why should the situation be any different with a volunteer organisation such as WILDCARE Inc? Why should people expect that it should be?

Is attending a working bee a 'benefit'?

In many cases it is an opportunity that would not be available to volunteers without the communication conduit that the existence of a WILDCARE Inc group provides and encourages, both to the individual members from the group and between the groups and PWS.

This is clearly the case in a number of areas where no regular volunteer work was undertaken before the formation of the WILDCARE Inc group.

It is often an opportunity that would not be available to them without the funding that is available to groups internally and the capacity to apply to external funding schemes provided by WILDCARE Inc.

So, we are firmly of the belief that WILDCARE Inc is not in decline, and in fact continues to be a vibrant active organisation, which will soon be reflected in the size of membership.

This will depend on a number of initiatives, many identified at the recent WILDCARE Inc Annual Conference, others being developed and pursued by the Board of Management.

An important contribution will come from those members who actively promote and encourage membership of their organisation, either as an individual volunteer and/or as a paid-up member of one of WILDCARE Inc's groups.

We also expect that all group presidents appreciate and promote these ideals. 🐾





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THANK YOU!

Kylie Bevan, honorary editor of WILDTIMES, will retire from the role after this issue due to the expected arrival of a second baby in June.

Anybody interested in taking over this rewarding position should advise Andrew Smith on 6233 2836 or Richard Hammond on 0500 520 644.

Thank you for your contribution, Kylie, and best of luck with juggling the demands of two little monkeys. 🐾

WILDCARE Inc Annual General Meeting 2006

Minutes

Present – Andrew Smith (Co-Chair Appointed and Meeting Chair), Richard Hammond (Co-Chair Elected), Craig Saunders (Treasurer), Bill Forsyth, Murray Houghton, Roy Skabo, Pat and Brian McGuire, Alan Sanderson, John Hamilton, Jean Taylor, Marianne Watson, Rosanna Watson, Julie Nermut, Chris Leitch

Apologies – Geoff Doolan, Joshua Cocker, Pat Swindells, Leah Page, John Hughes, David Woolscobb, Bevis Dutton

1. Welcome

Andrew Smith welcomed members to the AGM.

2. Financial Statements

Audited financial statements presented and accepted - Moved Richard Hammond, Seconded Bill Forsyth.

(See Auditors Report in this issue of *WILDTIMES*)

Andrew thanked Amanda Winter who took on the task of preparing the 2005 finances for submission to the Auditor in February. Amanda had resigned from the position of Treasurer at the end of 2005 but offered to complete this task before fully withdrawing.

Craig Saunders provided a verbal summary of the current financial situation and emphasised that he wished to speak to the Presidents about current grants being managed by *WILDCARE* Inc.

Andrew thanked Craig for his work as Treasurer from the beginning of 2006.

Considerable effort has been made by Amanda and Craig in order to correct issues generated by the long gap without a Treasurer prior to Amanda's appointment in mid 2005.

3. Co-Chairs Reports

(See Reports in this issue of *WILDTIMES*)

4. Elections

Andrew declared vacant the positions of

- Co-Chair Elected - including the role of Public Officer
- Treasurer

Written Nomination received for position of Co-Chair Elected and Public Officer - Richard Hammond

Nominated Bevis Dutton, Seconded Robert Hamilton

No further nominations from the floor

Richard Hammond declared duly elected to position of Co-Chair Elected and Public Officer

Written Nomination received for the position of Treasurer - Craig Saunders

Nominated Bill Forsyth, Seconded Andrew Smith

No further nominations from the floor

Craig Saunders declared duly elected to position of Treasurer


Andrew congratulated Richard and Craig and welcomed them to the Board for 2006.

5. Appointment of Auditor

Peter Lindsay recommended as Auditor for the coming year. Accepted by the meeting.

6. Other business

None

Andrew declared Annual General Meeting closed. 

WILDCARE Gift Fund makes workplace giving list

WILDCARE were advised on 4 May that the Gift Fund had officially been placed on the Tasmanian Government list of approved charities for payroll deductions.

See <http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/irssm/workplacegiving/index.html#8> for further details.

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Co-Chair Reports to AGM 2006

2005 – What a Year for the Board of Management!


By Andrew Smith - Co-Chair Appointed

- We have hopefully resolved falling membership numbers
- We have renegotiated Annual Park Pass processes, increased the discount and begun the process of reinvigorating the way *WILDCARE* is promoted, including a clear statement of commitment from PWS General Manager Peter Mooney
- Through the appointment of a Treasurer twice during the year we finally sorted out the tangled web of financial record keeping (with Amanda Winter preparing 2005 for auditing and Craig Saunders taking on new business and creating a better process and structure for financial record keeping)
- Renewed the incorporation (new Public Officer Richard Hammond)
- Finally managed to be registered as an Environmental Charity with DGR status
- Established the *WILDCARE* Gift Fund (WGF) management committee
- Begun negotiations to have the \$10,000 Booth Trust donation transferred from the TCF to the WGF
- Developed new printed material and web site material for membership and the Gift Fund
- Applied to be included on the list of approved DGRs under the State Service Giving Scheme – allowing state servants to make regular salary deduction donations through their pay offices
- Led the provision of Cultural Awareness training to Australian Government Facilitators and NRM Facilitators, under a contract with AG, and in partnership with TALSC, AEU and TPHA
- Completed externally funded projects or received new external funding for a range of on-ground projects such as the Gambusia Project, Maatsuyker Island Weeding Project, and the Briesis Water Race Track Interpretation
- Re-jigged the MOU with Forestry Tasmania in relation to Adopt-a-Track
- Begun preparing for Agfest 2006 – *WILDCARE* will have a stand-alone site for the first time in which we hope to promote our volunteer efforts, our wildlife carers, our CAREs groups, our special programs and our gift fund
- Once again offered the Wildcare International Nature Writing Award with some fantastic winners, whose entries have been published in *WILDTIMES*
- Changed our editor (now Kylie) and graphic designer (Angela from PR Partners)
- Even though our overall membership has dropped, members have continued to answer every call for assistance and have provided the same number of volunteer hours as usual – around 300,000 hours on

ground with another couple of hundred thousand hours of time spent rehabilitating wildlife

- Continued to form new CAREs groups - Swan Bay, Bell Buoy Beach, Karstwatch, Friends of Marine Protected Areas, taking our groups and networks list to 38.

So, thank you to

- Richard
- Amanda
- Craig
- Kathryn
- Board members/Group presidents
- Mike, Marianne and Chi in the *WILDCARE* Office
- Phil Wyatt as webmaster
- PWS Volunteer Coordinators/Facilitators
- Chris Leitch
- And of course all PWS, BCB, FT staff who continue to work productively with Wildcare and its members. 

By Richard Hammond – Co-Chair Elected and Public Officer

The Board of Management met five times during 2005 (as in the previous year, one scheduled meeting failed to attract a quorum) and approved funding for four internal projects totalling \$9,782:

- Weeding, painting, general maintenance – Deal Island
- Lockable secure storage cabinet – Lilloco Penguins
- Data projector – Tamar Island Wetlands
- Maintenance – Tasman Island.

Last year's plea for more branch presidents to take part in the management of *WILDCARE* and attend BoM meetings continues to generate a large number of formal apologies being received for meetings, rather than actual attendance.

This means that the load of management is falling on an increasingly smaller proportion of individuals. My sincere thanks to those who make the effort to attend.

Following long and arduous correspondence with the Department of Environment and Heritage, who initially insisted that we remove all reference to 'cultural heritage' from our constitution before we could receive Deductible Gift Recipient status, a slight rewording of the constitution restated our objectives in a manner that finally satisfied them.

We were eventually granted DGR status in October last year.

A further modification to the constitution saw the role of Public Officer tied to the position of Co-Chair Elected, rather than a public servant.

As the Public Officer, I had concerns during the year with some aspects of the day-to-day running of the *WILDCARE* office (no reflection on the volunteers who run the office) and of our financial status, particularly as a result of our declining membership.



These are being addressed by better security of our blank membership cards as well as the development of financial procedures by our new treasurer, Craig Saunders.

As a result of the granting of DGR status, we finally set up the Gift Fund Committee to oversee the management of the fund and are now able to accept tax-deductible donations.

There continues to be a degree of confusion within some sections of the State Service between the Community Partnerships Branch of DPIWE and *WILDCARE*, between Andrew's role as Manager of the Community Partnerships Branch and his perceived role as Co-Chair Appointed, as well as the perceived need for PWS to have their own database of volunteers.

This seems to stem from the belief that the partnership relationship between *WILDCARE* and PWS has somehow fundamentally and irreversibly changed now that the Community Partnerships Branch is no longer in the same organisation as PWS.

Kylie Bevan took on the role of editor of *WILDTIMES*. Many thanks Kylie.

We also engaged a local Launceston company (PR Partners) to do the graphic design and layout work for *WILDTIMES*.

I'd like to place on record my appreciation for the work done by our webmaster, Phil Wyatt.


I'd also like to thank the presidents of the various *WILDCARE* branches for their efforts on behalf of their groups, welcome the new presidents and express the hope that many more of them, or their representatives, will take the opportunity to help shape *WILDCARE*'s future.

I look forward to seeing more of them at meetings of

the Board of Management (rather than receiving their apologies).

Additionally, I'd like to thank the Rangers, Volunteer Coordinators and other staff from both agencies who work with members to achieve our mutual goals.

Finally, I'd like to put on record my appreciation of Andrew's efforts throughout the year. Without his presence in the office in Hobart, the work of *WILDCARE* would grind to a halt.

The effort that Andrew puts in on a daily basis is far beyond what was envisaged when *WILDCARE* was established in 1998 and goes well beyond what should be expected of him. It's a reflection of the day-to-day support we receive from the agency that we hope will be redressed sooner rather than later. 

WILDCARE Inc Office

By Andrew Smith - Co-Chair Appointed

Mike Bowden, Marianne Watson, and Chi Iijima (for a short time during TAFE holidays) have continued over the past 12 months to come in each Tuesday to spend half a day:

- processing memberships
- sending information to new members
- answering email enquiries
- filing correspondence
- preparing working bee fliers
- packaging fliers for mail-out.


They also coordinate the volunteers who come in to package the newsletters for *WILDTIMES* mail-outs – a reliable and happy band of members.

The *WILDCARE* Inc Office, located in the Lands Building (4th floor), 134 Macquarie Street, is supported by the Community Partnerships Section of the Resource Management & Conservation Division (DPIWE). \

Mike and Marianne work closely with Andrew Smith, Manager Community Partnership (and *WILDCARE* Inc Co-Chair Appointed) and Chris Leitch, State Volunteer Engagement Facilitator, to ensure good support and service for *WILDCARE* Inc members and *WILDCARE* Inc partner agencies.

Mike and Marianne also work closely with Nanette Jaksic and Tracey Simpson from the Park Entry Fee Unit in PWS, making sure membership cards, forms and so on are exchanged and processed as smoothly as possible.

The *WILDCARE* Inc Office is the engine room of the organisation, with much of the work being done quietly in the background. Thank you Mike, Marianne and Chi for your voluntary efforts in the office and Nanette, Tracey and Chris for your cooperation and support over the last 12 months.

If you would like to volunteer some regular time in the *WILDCARE* Inc Office, email office@wildcaretas.org.au phone 6233 2852 on Tuesday morning, or leave a message on the phone anytime. 

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WILDCARE Inc Open Space Conference 2006

The WILDCARE Inc Open Space Conference was held on 25 March 2006 at Seven Mile Beach. Wildcare Inc thanks PWS for the provision of the meeting room at the Ranger's station, with a special thanks to Paul Helleman for opening up for us.

Each year the Board of Management develops a question from which they would like input from membership, to guide the direction of WILDCARE Inc in the coming year. The question posed for discussion this year was:

What are the keys to ensuring WILDCARE Inc is sustained as a vibrant, growing and viable organisation?

The following are records of outcomes from discussion topics placed on the Open Space Conference Agenda by participants, in response to the above question. The Board will consider all outcomes and progress suggestions as appropriate over the next 12 months.

The priority score is an urgency rating, provided by participants at the end of the day, to guide the Board as to what the membership felt should be dealt with most urgently. All topics were considered to be important, with some requiring more urgent action than others – the higher the number, the higher the urgency.

SESSION TITLE Administration Support

Convenor Julie Nermot

Participants Alan, Ray, Chris, Marianne

Priority Score 9

Outcomes

WILDCARE Inc is failing in the area of administration support for members:

- Needs to canvas agencies for contribution towards a full-time trainee administration officer – one-third PWS, one-third DPIWE, one-third WILDCARE Inc
- WILDCARE Inc needs to market itself to PWS, DPIWE and government in general with emphasis on partnership.

SESSION TITLE What's the message?

Convenor Andrew Smith

Participants Murray, Marianne, Alan

Priority Score 8

Outcomes

What messages do we need to present WILDCARE Inc to the world?

To potential volunteer members

- Get involved directly alongside PWS and Biodiversity Conservation (BCB) staff
- Be a player of importance in Park Management
- Don't just talk about it – do it
- Make a real difference
- Specialised opportunities to suit various volunteer interests and needs
- Easy to participate.

To PWS and DPIWE

- WILDCARE Inc is a skilled and intelligent volunteer force with qualifications and skills
- Number of volunteer hours and

dollar value – need more information from PWS and DPIWE about hours provided through working bees and by individuals. Some presidents provide this already from their perspective.

To non-active/financial-only members

- Your membership is supporting WILDCARE Inc provide assistance to management of reserves and nature conservation, through funds for volunteerism and project funding.
- Find out what's happening around Tasmania – see how hard your contribution is working.

SESSION TITLE Marketing

Convenor Richard Hammond

Participants Chris, Rosanna, Bill

Priority Score 5

Outcomes

- Concentrate on Agfest
- Get acknowledgment (eg logo) on PWS and BCB stationery
- Develop a corporate marketing package for PWS and BCB
- this is what WILDCARE offers – Gift Fund, Incorp, ABN, volunteer assistance
- this is what we expect in return –
 - Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with PWS and BCB
 - Need to redo things like the Community Service Announcement (CSA) video on a regular basis
 - Messages on Agency intranets – based on suggestions from 'What is the message' workshop
 - Corporate opportunities for executives to experience the wild
 - Cradle Huts campaign
 - Stickers for bikes
 - Other merchandise eg Devil T-

shirts

- Talk to iconic Tasmanian industries like Blundstones
- Non-political Patron
- Re-jig reward/benefit system for sponsors
- Produce a rewards/benefits brochure for sponsors.

SESSION TITLE Providing more volunteer opportunities with PWS

Participants not recorded

Priority Score 5

Outcomes

Two types of volunteer activities:

- Group initiated and PWS authorised/supported
- PWS initiated and offered to individuals
- Some opportunities are there but not marketed
- Link individual new members with existing CAREs groups
- Some PWS areas use volunteers, others don't
- Friends groups advise PWS of problems and prepares work plans
- Better recognition of efforts – 'WILDCARE Inc volunteers work in this reserve' notices
- Funding for WILDCARE 'staff' to design and supervise volunteer projects as with CVA
- WILDCARE to build some capacity to design/sponsor/extract volunteer projects from PWS.



SESSION TITLE Maintaining Partnerships

Participants not recorded
Priority Score 3
Outcomes

This topic was posted on the agenda but no workshop was undertaken as it was agreed that the issue of partnership was being dealt with in other workshops. The topic was however weighted as reasonably urgent to address.

SESSION TITLE Membership Fees

Convenor Roy Skabo
Participants not recorded
Priority Score 2
Outcomes

Problems with the current system

- Complexities of National Parks Annual Parks Pass fee schedule with two different rates according to what time of year people apply to join.
- A penalty applies to people who want to join for two years – it is \$13 more expensive to take out membership of WILDCARE Inc plus a Parks Pass for two years than it is to take up the combined membership for two single years*, despite paying in advance for the Parks Pass and saving the administration costs to PWS. It is more standard for businesses and other organisations to offer a discount for longer periods – for example a driver’s licence. If PWS is concerned about discounting the two year pass by \$50, then WILDCARE Inc should consider accepting a discounted WILDCARE Inc membership fee for two years, say \$40.

*Calculation:

- Two-year park pass, including one year included WILDCARE Inc membership, plus a second WILDCARE membership: \$108 + \$25 = \$133
- Two single year pass parks with WILDCARE membership included: 2 x \$60 = \$120

- WILDCARE membership and National Parks Annual Park Passes are not concurrent which leads to confusion for WILDCARE Inc members as to whether their membership is current when their Park Pass renewal notice arrives.

Recommendations

- Make Park Passes and WILDCARE Inc membership concurrent.
- Allow a two-year discount for

WILDCARE Inc within the two-year joining/renewal fee for a Park Pass.

- The discount on the two-year WILDCARE membership should be offset by cost savings and increased memberships.
- Discussions with PWS should be conducted by a delegation of board members who have been briefed fully on the subject.
- Service Tasmania staff should be better briefed on the subject of WILDCARE Inc.
- Senior Parks and DPIWE staff should attend WILDCARE Inc Board meetings.

SESSION TITLE Finance

Convenor Bill Forsyth
Participants not recorded
Priority Score 1
Outcomes

- Promotion asking for donations from suppliers of goods to PWS
- Membership – reintroduction of the ‘tick-a-box’ method on Annual Park Pass forms
- Physical selling by WILDCARE membership
- Selling ourselves to organisations on the internet

But before these items can be put into operation WILDCARE has to be sold (promoted).

SESSION TITLE Family Activities

Convenor Rosanna
Participants Andrew, Murray, Marianne
Priority Score 0
Outcomes

- Practical and visible outcomes from efforts
- Plant trees as a family with other families
- Ask kids what they would like to be doing
- Ask families in membership what type of activities they would like to be doing as families
- Attractive places
- Projects to do at home as a family
- VET and work experience opportunities for young people
- Develop a Children and Family web page on www.wildcaretas.org.au
- PWS to include and welcome family involvement

- Working bee fliers to mention if a project is ‘family-friendly’

SESSION TITLE Benefits and Barriers - Joining WILDCARE Inc

Convenor Andrew Smith
Participants Julie, Richard, Murray
Priority Score 0
Outcomes

Benefits

This was looked at from the point of view of benefits to the individual beyond reward schemes and discount incentives to understand the motivation for joining.

- Membership fee supports projects to help environment
- An opportunity to contribute, make a difference and give a bit back
- Continue to use skills and training
- Direct contact with others
- Being ‘out there’ making a difference
- Worthwhile activities undertaken, not wasting time and effort
- ‘Local’ opportunities, flexible participation requirements
- Good company, similar people with shared values and philosophy
- Opportunities for further learning, training and skills development
- Social interaction with fellow volunteers, staff and others eg Visitors

Barriers

It was acknowledged that it was difficult for us to know what barriers existed for people who do not join, as we as members did not see the barriers to be sufficient to prevent us from joining.

It was guessed that the following perceptions might play a part:

- A perception that people are paying to be volunteers rather than paying for membership
- A perception that people are being asked to pay to work for a government organisation
- Difficulty finding the right person for information about joining and participating. 🐾



Parks Volunteering Network Australia Forum 28-30 March 2006

By Richard Hammond – Co-Chair Elected

I went to this forum expecting it to be called (as last time) the Australian Association of National Parks Support Groups – which was a conference. As it turns out, we changed the name again during this forum and I'm still confused about the difference between what we had this time and what we had two years ago. My Macquarie Dictionary defines a forum as, among other things, 'an assembly for the discussion of questions of public interest', whereas a conference is 'a meeting for consultation or discussion'. Given that the only attendees (with the exception of one invited speaker) were directly involved in volunteering in parks, I think the latter definition is more correct.

Nevertheless, the gathering was held at The Gap Bluff Function Centre in the Sydney Harbour National Park. The Function Centre was once part of the military establishment at South Head and has incredible views of Sydney Harbour.

When I was growing up in Sydney it was just called 'The Gap' where unfortunates threw themselves (or were reportedly thrown) off the cliff to land on the rocks below in a not very complete state. The Cliff Rescue Squad had an almost permanent scaffold setup at the top of the cliffs there. Also, it was just around the corner from Lady Bay (the nudist beach), Camp Cove (we won't comment on that), the Watto Bay Pub (Watsons Bay Hotel, to the uninitiated) and Doyle's (THE seafood restaurant in Sydney in those days). For a young university student living in the eastern suburbs, where else would one spend one's weekends, nights, lecture time etc?

The Forum was hosted by the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife and sponsored by the Parks and Wildlife Division of the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation.

There were three themes for discussion – fundraising, risk management and networking – with an invited keynote speaker for each theme.

For some reason I was prevailed upon (volunteered?) to give a presentation on our fundraising activities. I based it on some of the outcomes of our Annual Conference held a mere three days earlier. However, I left it to the last minute, not realising that I was first up on the Tuesday morning, straight after the invited speaker, and put it together at 6am that morning. Not surprisingly the colour scheme I chose for the presentation looked good on the computer but didn't go down too well when projected onto a big screen in daylight. The points I highlighted, though, were very similar to those put forward by the keynote speaker and ratified the approach we had decided upon at the conference – particularly in the development of our new donations brochure, with its focus on regular payroll and credit card deductions.

Large organisations such as World Vision have found that once a person signs up for a regular credit card deduction, they tend to keep donating for up to eight years and that the benefits can be substantial (an average of \$35 per month for World Vision – over \$10M per year). We're not looking for that, but the benefits to our organisation can, quite obviously, be substantial.


Delegates were shocked to learn of the dramatic loss of financial members largely attributed to a single action by a partner organisation - i.e. the loss of the 'tick-the-box' option - and agreed that the membership process had to follow the KISS principle (Keep It Simple, Stupid).

Our practices in other areas such as risk management and networking stacked up well against what the keynote speakers said we should be doing. Our newly elected Treasurer, Craig Saunders, gave an enlightening presentation on risk management within the partnership from a PWS perspective (he was attending as a PWS delegate, after all), while Chris Leitch also attended as a representative from the Community Partnerships Branch.

It was accepted that ways of developing a web presence through a simple portal, where all members of the network can post links to their own web pages, should be investigated.


As we had a delegate from New Zealand attending, it was thought appropriate that the name of the gathering be changed to Parks Volunteering Network Australasia. However, the NSW delegates advised that they were doing work with the East Timor parks managers and that East Timor isn't part of Australasia. It was therefore decided that the name of the gathering should be simply the Parks Volunteering Network. It's likely that the next biennial gathering will be in the ACT.

I'd like to publicly place on record my appreciation to Peter Mooney and PWS for generously sponsoring my attendance at the Forum. 



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WILDCARE Inc and the Aboriginal community

By Andrew Smith - Co-Chair Appointed

Connections between WILDCARE Inc and the Aboriginal community is an emerging relationship and the examples detailed below demonstrate the value of working together towards natural and cultural heritage conservation outcomes.

WILDCARE Inc has seen the recent formation of a new Community Action in Reserves group called *milaythina muka* (land, sea) - our first Aboriginal volunteer group. The group intends to carry out work to protect and rehabilitate Aboriginal sites around Tasmania working with PWS and local councils.

The group welcomes non-Aboriginal people on projects, so if you have an interest in working alongside Aboriginal people, learning more about Aboriginal values and places, and giving a hand in protecting cultural places, contact the Wildcare Office (Office@Wildcaretas.org.au) to register your interest.

WILDCARE Inc was the lead organisation for a consortium of groups and organisations that delivered Aboriginal Cultural Awareness and Engaging Community training courses for Natural Resource Management Facilitators, under a contract to the Australian Government.

Two courses were conducted, one at Murrayfield on Bruny Island and the other at Smithton.

Presenters came from WILDCARE Inc, Tasmanian Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (TALSC), Aboriginal Education Unit of the Education Department, Community Partnerships Section of DPIWE, Aboriginal Heritage Branch of Tourism, Parks, Heritage and the Arts, and the Australian Government Indigenous Land Management Facilitator.

It was pleasing to see all parties felt comfortable working cooperatively as consortium partners with WILDCARE Inc.

Two components of the course provided background to assist facilitators from the Australian Government, regional NRM organisations, and non-government resource management organisations.

The first part of the course included history of interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Tasmania and how changes have affected the Aboriginal community. This is done through an exercise called 'gumnuts to buttons' and the impact of being involved in this is difficult to describe.

If ever you get an opportunity to participate in 'gumnuts to buttons' go for it. It is challenging and enlightening for non-Aboriginal people.

Presentations also covered legislation, Aboriginal site identification, physical impacts on Aboriginal sites, rehabilitation work that has been carried out on Aboriginal sites around Tasmania, and examples of other land management activities being undertaken by Aboriginal communities on Aboriginal land.



The second part of the two-day course at Smithton explored the philosophies and practices of community engagement as background to developing effective ways of engaging Aboriginal people in Natural Resource Management processes – both planning and implementation.

This covered a range of issues, including developing partnerships, understanding levels of participation, facilitating change, assessing community (and government) readiness to participate in natural resource management and cooperative processes, community-based social marketing and Planned Behaviour Theory to highlight a few.

Both courses finished with field trips. We looked at sites, artefacts and management practices on Murrayfield, an Aboriginal property run as a productive sheep farm. At Smithton we travelled to Preminghana and then West Point to look at ancient hut sites used for thousands of years by Aboriginal people on the wild west coast.

These courses have been rewarding experiences (and as you can see from the photo, very social too) and I look forward to the continued development of the relationship between the Aboriginal community and WILDCARE Inc. 🐾

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Fax (03) 6267 2438
Email lls@trump.net.au

PETER LINDSAY

CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT

WILDCARE Inc.
AUDITORS REPORT



SCOPE
I have audited the accounts of WILDCARE Inc. for the year ended 31st December 2005

The audit has been conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards to provide reasonable assurance as to whether the accounts are free of material misstatement. My procedures included examination, on a test basis, of evidence supporting the accounts and other disclosures in the accounts, and the evaluation of accounting policies and significant accounting estimates. These procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion as to whether, in all material respects, the accounts are presented fairly in accordance with Australian Accounting Concepts and Standards and statutory requirements so as to present a view of WILDCARE Inc. which is consistent with our understanding of its financial position and the results of its operations.

The audit opinion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

QUALIFICATIONS

The income of the Corporation is based on the amounts for which receipts were issued and entered into the accounting records. It is not known whether the incorporation received other income that was not recorded in the books of account.

The financial statements have been prepared on a cash basis and expenditure on some projects incurred in 2005 will not be reimbursed until the 2006 year.

AUDIT OPINION

I have obtained all the information required.

In my opinion the accounts are properly drawn up so as to exhibit a true and correct view of the financial position of the Corporation according to the information and explanations given and as shown in the accounting records of the Association.

The rules relating to the administration of the funds of the Corporation have been observed.


P.J. Lindsay
Chartered accountant

Margate
21st March 2006



WILDCARE Inc
GPO Box 44 Hobart 7001

Balance Sheet (Last Year Analysis)
December 2005

	This year	Last Year	\$ Difference	% Difference
ASSETS				
Current Assets				
Connect Cheque Account	\$13,955.58	\$40,379.56	(\$26,423.98)	(65.4%)
Gift Funds Cheque Account	\$49.85	\$49.85	\$0.00	0.0%
Accounts Receivable	\$11,612.00	\$0.00	\$11,612.00	NA
Total Current Assets	<u>\$25,617.43</u>	<u>\$40,429.41</u>	<u>\$14,811.98</u>	<u>36.6%</u>
Non-Current Assets				
Tools & Equipment	\$5,070.92	\$1,540.00	\$3,530.92	229.3%
Total Non-Current Assets	<u>\$5,070.92</u>	<u>\$1,540.00</u>	<u>\$3,530.92</u>	<u>229.3%</u>
Total ASSETS	<u>\$30,688.35</u>	<u>\$41,969.41</u>	<u>(\$11,281.06)</u>	<u>(26.9%)</u>
LIABILITIES				
Accounts Payable	\$36.60	\$1,968.82	(\$1,932.22)	(98.1%)
GST				
GST Collected	\$939.82	\$3,062.03	(\$2,122.21)	(69.3%)
GST Paid	\$0.00	(\$7,628.70)	\$7,628.70	(100.0%)
Total GST	<u>\$939.82</u>	<u>(\$4,566.67)</u>	<u>\$5,506.49</u>	<u>(120.6%)</u>
Total LIABILITIES	<u>\$976.42</u>	<u>(\$2,597.85)</u>	<u>\$3,574.27</u>	<u>(137.6%)</u>
Net Assets	<u>\$29,711.93</u>	<u>\$44,567.26</u>	<u>(\$14,855.33)</u>	<u>(33.3%)</u>
MEMBERS' FUNDS				
Accumulated Surplus/(Deficit)	\$44,567.26	\$68,720.18	(\$24,152.92)	(35.1%)
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$14,855.33)	(\$24,152.92)	\$9,297.59	(38.5%)
Total MEMBERS' FUNDS	<u>\$29,711.93</u>	<u>\$44,567.26</u>	<u>(\$14,855.33)</u>	<u>(33.3%)</u>

Profit & Loss (With Last Year)
January 2005 through to December 2005

	This year	% of Sales	Last Year (LY)	LY % of Sales
INCOME				
Member Subscriptions	\$20,027.25	23.8%	\$76,716.42	53.0%
Donations	\$1,181.82	1.4%	\$0.00	0.0%
Grants	\$500.00	0.6%	\$1,130.36	0.8%
Interest Received	\$30.90	0.0%	\$65.86	0.0%
Tas Devil Fund (Donations)	\$69.29	.01%	\$25.45	0.0%
External Projects Income	\$59,130.70	70.3%	\$43,861.00	30.3%
Promotional Items	\$0.00	0.0%	(\$49.09)	0.0%
Sponsorship	\$3,150.00	3.7%	\$0.00	0.0%
Training Income	\$0.00	0.0%	\$10.00	0.0%
Insurance Contribution	\$0.00	0.0%	\$23,000.00	15.9%
Total INCOME	<u>\$84,089.96</u>	<u>100.00%</u>	<u>\$144,760.00</u>	<u>100.00%</u>
EXPENSES				
Accounting & Audit Costs	\$845.09	1.0%	\$1,810.30	1.3%
Advertising & Promotions	\$720.00	0.9%	\$5,129.59	3.5%
Annual Conference Costs	\$13.18	0.0%	\$224.91	0.2%
AGM Costs	\$0.00	0.0%	\$145.29	0.1%
Bank Charges	\$304.48	0.4%	\$250.56	0.2%
Boat Hire	\$0.00	0.0%	\$909.09	0.6%
BOM Costs	\$1,012.18	1.2%	\$356.36	0.2%
Equipment Purchases	\$3,315.50	3.9%	\$1,964.72	1.4%
Event Costs	\$0.00	0.0%	\$336.71	0.2%
External Projects Costs	\$64,905.63	77.2%	\$98,943.81	68.4%
Insurance	\$2,234.13	2.7%	\$38,645.47	26.7%
Internet Services	\$180.00	0.2%	\$350.00	0.2%
Legal & Professional Costs	\$114.00	0.1%	\$0.00	0.0%
Meeting Expenses	\$265.91	0.3%	\$188.00	0.1%
Office Expenses	\$111.64	0.1%	\$0.00	0.0%
Printing & Stationery	\$5,628.82	6.7%	\$3,260.00	2.3%
Prize Giving	\$6,300.00	7.5%	\$0.00	0.0%
Projects Funded - WILDCARE	\$0.00	0.0%	\$4,045.02	2.8%
Promotional Items	\$681.81	0.8%	\$0.00	0.0%
Protective Clothing	\$0.00	0.0%	\$1,321.56	0.9%
Subscription Costs	\$117.27	0.1%	\$0.00	0.0%
Sundry Expenses	\$945.00	1.1%	\$100.00	0.1%
Telephones				
Telephone - (0420) 102-525	\$1,052.20	1.3%	\$104.43	0.1%
Telephone Reimbursements	\$114.50	0.1%	\$0.00	0.0%
Training Costs	\$6,164.50	7.3%	\$4,416.26	3.1%
Travel Reimbursement	\$445.45	0.5%	\$164.54	0.1%
WILDTIMES Newsletter	\$3,474.00	4.1%	\$6,246.30	4.3%
Total EXPENSES	<u>\$98,945.29</u>	<u>117.7%</u>	<u>\$168,912.92</u>	<u>116.7%</u>
Operating Profit	<u>(\$14,855.33)</u>	<u>(17.7%)</u>	<u>(\$24,152.92)</u>	<u>(16.7%)</u>
Other Income				
Other Expenses				
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	<u>(\$14,855.33)</u>	<u>(17.7%)</u>	<u>(\$24,152.92)</u>	<u>(16.7%)</u>



C/- GPO Box 44
Hobart
Tasmania 7001
Phone 6233 2852
office@wildcaretas.org.au
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Type of animals/birds you are caring for (please list) _____

Your signature _____ Date _____



Major Outcomes from Board Meetings

Meeting held 8 December 2005


- Approved attendance of Co-Chair Elected at biennial forum of the Australian Parks Volunteering Network in Sydney. This used to be called the Australian Association of National Park Support Groups and was attended by Andrew, Richard & Chris two years ago.
- Approved funding of \$2499 for maintenance work, weed control, mapping and roof replacement for Tasman Island.
- Agreed to produce a form specifically for the Gift Fund for wide distribution and to redesign the membership form for a consistent look. It was also agreed that all promotional material (letterheads, pamphlets, call-up notices etc) should highlight our DGR status.

Meeting held 9 February 2006

- Agreed to investigate the need for professional indemnity and statutory penalty cover for Board members (i.e., office bearers and group presidents).
- We were unsuccessful in obtaining funding through the Living Environment Program because we "didn't meet the selection criteria as well as those who were given grants". We therefore can't progress the position of Administration Officer in our current financial situation.
- Agreed that, while funding applications for Halls Falls Walking Track Signage and Claytons House Restoration were both deserving of funding, we are unable to provide funds because of our financial situation.

- Approved a new version of the WILDCARE Book to be placed on the web for downloading.

Meeting held 13 April 2006

- The Board received a presentation on a proposed redevelopment of the web site and associated database that will allow for secure database access, bulk emailing of call-up notices, on-line transactions, a searchable events calendar and on-line registration for events as well as reporting and recording of volunteer hours etc. The proponents are prepared to make a significant sponsorship contribution toward this redevelopment. The Board delegated authority to the Co-Chairs to approve the redevelopment provided a suitable instalment payment schedule could be agreed. The proposal was agreed to and the new database and web site should be operational by the end of July 2006. 

Group Reports

Friends of Coningham State Nature Recreation Area – John Hamilton

Coningham State Nature Recreation Area is a 479-hectare reserve located on the coast of the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, 28km south of Hobart. Its status was changed from Recreation Area to Nature Recreation Area in 1991 during the Working Group for Forest Conservation review because of its 'dry sclerophyll forest on lowland Triassic sandstone'. Other values considered to be significant were:

- sites of Aboriginal cultural significance - middens, caves and artifacts
- significant fauna - forty-spotted pardalote, swift parrot, Chaostola skipper butterfly
- landscape - scenic coastline and views
- site of an old whaling station
- recreation - walking, riding, dog walking, bird watching etc.

The reserve is a delightful spot with many tracks that provide a variety of experiences. These range from walking in wet forest, to walking along low coastal cliffs with associated heathy vegetation and also grassy ridgetop walking with fine views over the

D'Entrecasteaux Channel and Storm Bay and on to Mt Wellington.

FOCOCLS (Friends of Coningham, Oyster Cove and Lower Snug), the local Landcare group, are the overarching 'Care' body for the area, and the Friends Group was formed to help with this reserve's management issues. These include weeds, illegal off-road driving which causes significant erosion and vegetation damage, a plethora of coastal tracks, dumping of cars, dumping of garden waste and considerable littering.

Our primary focus is weed removal and our most significant weed is Spanish heath (*Erica lusitanica*), which we believe was introduced into the reserve within the last twenty years by vehicles constructing fire breaks and roads. To date most of the Spanish heath has been removed by hand pulling or by the cut and paste method. We are also attempting to control an infestation of the West Australian native *Sollya heterophylla* that has spread into the bush from three plants planted to help stop erosion on a steep slope near Legacy Beach. Occasional specimens of canarybroom (*Genista monspessulana*), boneseed (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera*) and

blackberry (*Rubus sp*) have also been removed while isolated clumps of Pampas grass (*Cortaderia species*) will also be removed. A number of specimens of Sydney golden wattle (*Acacia longifolia*) as well as specimens of golden wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*) and sticky wattle (*Acacia howittii*) have been found and removed in other parts of the reserve.

The extent of the Spanish heath infestation within the reserve is massive. However there are significant areas of relatively intact vegetation with only isolated patches of Spanish heath and our group has chosen to work on one of these. Our activity has been concentrated about the northeastern section of the reserve around the Legacy Beach track. Most of the activities have centered on the mapping and removal of weeds. We started our weed work at this site as the surrounding bushland has been classified as vegetation of very high priority (NP 1) - *Eucalyptus amygdalina*/E. *obliqua*/E. *viminalis*/E. *tenuiramis* shrubby/heathy open forest on sandstone.

Although the PWS budget for this reserve is minimal, we have had wonderful support from PWS staff in

general and in particular from Craig Saunders, the Southern Regional Volunteer Facilitator. Craig has helped greatly with on ground work, funding applications and also with boosting our morale when the tasks seemed insurmountable.

In 2003 we were fortunate to receive a \$2500 WILDCARE grant which enabled us to employ a contractor to spray a large area of Spanish heath which was threatening our weeding work by spreading its seeds (9 million per mature plant) down hill onto one of our patches. This spraying appears to have been very successful and the elimination of these large, dense patches of weeds has invigorated the group. In addition, PWS engaged a Greencorps team to work on the reserve for six months. This team helped us with weeding and weed mapping and constructed a new access track into the reserve. As a result of these two initiatives we have incorporated an extra monthly weeding session into our program and several new members have since joined us.

Working bees are held on the third Tuesday morning and second Sunday morning of each month between February and November. Although we really work hard on these days, we finish the weeding bees feeling exhilarated, as it is such a delightful area to work in and the company is so congenial. Plus we still have the time and breath to solve the problems of the world at morning tea.

We welcome new members to the group. For further information contact:

Tuesday working bees - John Hamilton and Jean Taylor 6267 4870

Sunday working bees - Phillipa Foster 6267 9515

Friends of Trevallyn Reserve – Roy Skabo

The Friends of Trevallyn Reserve have maintained an excellent record of working bees - one each month with the exception of a break over Christmas. We have an increased pool of volunteers, so each month we see a 'hard core' of regulars and a few people who can make it only once in a while. On the second Saturday of every month we are out in the bush tackling weeds which would otherwise be taking over native vegetation.

On 8 April we had a group of ten adults and several children working in an area which has a bad infestation of boneseed, cotoneaster, and several other weed species. It was particularly gratifying to see the children pulling up small boneseed plants and really enjoying the activity! Their mothers find it much easier to attend our working bees if they can bring the children along and the children are our future members.

We hope that a crew from the Department of Correctional Services will be assigned to us in early May and that they will be able to finish this area of boneseed. The crews from this

department have been very helpful to us over the past year. We have also had cooperation from the Launceston City Council who have sprayed patches of gorse and Spanish heath which contained too many small plants for us to deal with by hand. We tape the area to give them some guidance. It is good for our morale when we get cooperation like this. We also had our first visit from a PWS ranger during our working bee in April.

We are (still) looking forward to the 'imminent' release of the draft management plan for the reserve. The latest hold-up for its release was the election. Apparently the new minister has to sign off on the document even though the previous minister had already signed it.

Finally, I would like to invite anyone who would like some healthy exercise, to meet some nice and interesting people, to learn about our native flora and to do something for our environment, to join us any time.

We meet on the second Saturday of each month. Phone me on 6334 6787 or Jenny Mayne on 6331 0008 for further details.

Friends of Maatsuker Island (FoMI)- Complete Envirofund Project - Craig Saunders PWS Volunteer Facilitator and Karen Ziegler Project Manager

Volunteers from WILDCARE group FoMI and PWS staff visited the island in February for the third working bee in an 18-month program to control environmental weeds on the island.

The project was designed to control the spread of weeds from the gardens around ex-lightkeepers' houses into the surrounding native vegetation, particularly into seabird rookery areas. Blackberry and montbretia (a member of the lily family with striking orange flowers) were identified as the major weed problems.

FoMI volunteers managed most of the project themselves with funding from the Australian Government Envirofund. PWS provided volunteer training, assistance with transport costs and support while on the island.

Each of the three working bees (November 2004, February 2005 and February 2006) travelled to the island by helicopter and were accommodated (very comfortably) in

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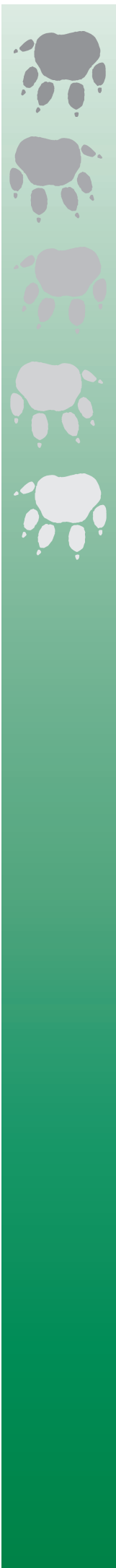
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ex-lightkeeper house 'Q2'.

The group used a range of weed control techniques in this project. These included brushcutting, backpack spraying and cut and paste. With some refinements learned on the island, these techniques proved particularly successful.

It was great to see over 18 months huge blackberry patches converted to areas with no blackberry and good native plant regrowth.

And the working bees weren't all just work! Ask any of the participants about kite flying, visits to remoter parts of the island and dinner parties with a view!

As with most weed projects, there is rarely an end! Most of the sites treated in this project will need to be revisited over many years to monitor and treat any regrowth.

The group also discovered major infestations of another weed on the island, a native of New Zealand, *Hebe elliptica*.

FoMI plans to work with PWS staff and the island's volunteer caretakers to continue this valuable work and have submitted a follow-up application to Envirofund to tackle *H. elliptica* and to also survey areas of the island not covered by the last project.

If you've never been to the island, consider joining us in this exciting venture. You can contact FoMI through secretary Fiona Taylor at Fiona.Taylor@utas.edu.au

A note from PWS: Congratulations to FoMI for a great job well done, and particularly to project manager Karen Ziegler for dedication and professional attention to detail. It was great working with you.

President Report and AGM – Jason Whitehead

Friends of Maatsuyker Island met in Hobart on 23 March for their AGM. It was reported that over the last 12 months the group has been involved in a number of activities, which included:

- Submission of a Tas Community Fund grant application to conserve and restore former lighthouse-keepers quarters
- Day trip by boat at Easter
- Input to PWS's Reserve Activity Assessment on proposed Maatsuyker Island wind generator project
- Opening discussion between Arts Tasmania and PWS re 'Artists in Residence' program on Maatsuyker Island in 2007
- Weed Control Program working bee in February 2005



FoMI volunteers Dallas and Shirley Baker holding on at Maatsuyker Island. (Photo Karen Ziegler)

and February 2006, lead by Karen Ziegler, FoMI, and Craig Saunders, PWS, with FoMI volunteers

- Completion of Envirofund (Round 2) final report
- Work in collaboration with PWS to establish visitor guidelines to Maatsuyker Island
- Current works in progress:
 1. Landcare grant application
 2. Envirofund (Round 8) grant application for ongoing weed control programs
 3. AGFEST – FOMI display as part of WILDCARE display.

Our new Executive Committee was nominated at the AGM and the following members appointed:

President:	Jason Whitehead	
Vice-President:	Karen Ziegler	
Treasurer:	Jodie Epper	
Secretary:	Fiona Taylor	
General Committee:	Christian Bell	Ailsa Fergusson
	Jean Jackson	Kate Kiefer

With the 'official business' out of the way the group was then treated to two talks. Karen Ziegler highlighted the strategies and outcomes of the weed control program and volunteer working bees that were held on the island in November 2004, February 2005 and February 2006. Methods to date appear to have been successful in controlling and/or removing blackberries, montbretia and Hebe elliptica from the target areas, but ongoing follow-up is essential.

Kate Kiefer followed with a fantastic slide show about her research as a botanist with the Australian Antarctic Division and living and working on sub-Antarctic islands.

As the newly appointed President of FoMI I'd like to thank the 2005 Committee for their enthusiasm and who, with the encouragement and assistance of Craig Saunders, PWS Regional Volunteer Facilitator, made last year's FoMI activities such a success.

I look forward to working with the new FoMI Committee to continue these efforts, and more, in 2006.

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Maria Island Weeds - David Reynolds

Canary broom Weed Management.

The working bee held on the last weekend of October 2005 was part of an ongoing program to help control the spread of canary broom on the slopes of Skipping Ridge on the eastern side of Maria Island. The broom is encroaching onto the path to Bishop and Clerk and cliff faces above the sea. Canary broom is one of two species of broom to be declared a weed in Tasmania, and is seen as the single biggest threat to the island's natural value.

Methods used to control broom on this site were to hand pull smaller plants, cut and paste larger plants, and minimise the spread of seed pods on the plants.

Fifteen volunteers and two PWS personnel were involved over the weekend. Accommodation was at the 'workshop' and several stayed at Prero's. An enjoyable BBQ was held on the Saturday night.

Volunteers came from as far as Launceston and Hobart with some participants being WILDCARE and TNPA members. Thanks goes to PWS Ranger, Richard Koch and Volunteer Facilitator, Leah Page for coordinating the program.

The canary broom weed program continues on the island with a second working bee in February, with future activities to be slotted in with Rangers on the island.

A conservation project on an old shearing and cart shed at Darlington may be programmed to start during summer of 2006 after consultation with PWS Rangers.

Any people who are interested in the ongoing weed management on Maria Island and the conservation project should contact me by email: reynoldsfamily@netspace.net.au

For safety and management reasons there are limits to the number of volunteers that can be employed on the above weed programs and conservation projects.

Friends of Snake Island - Craig Saunders PWS Volunteer Facilitator

No snakes on Snake Island!

No, there aren't any snakes on Snake Island, and after about five years of dedicated work, there aren't many weeds either!

Snake Island is a small island in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, close to the Bruny Island shore and opposite

Woodbridge on the Tasmanian mainland. The Friends of Snake Island group was formed in 2001 from interested members of the Tasmanian Sea Canoeing Club, Kettering Yacht Club and other locals who were keen to see the natural values of the island preserved in the face of an invasion by the weed Spanish heath (*Erica lusitanica*).

Five years later, after numerous working bees, Christmas parties and with the help of a grant from the Australian Government Envirofund, the group have all but rid the island of the invading menace.

Where there was once acres of impenetrable heath there are now open native grasslands with planted and naturally regenerated trees such as White Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*), Blackwood (*Acacia memanoxylon*), Sheoak (*Allocasuarina verticillata*) and Banksia (*Banksia marginata*).

Along the way the group has learned many lessons, made a few mistakes and had many great times. A range of weed control methods have been used: volunteer cut and paste, contractor spraying and most recently brushcut and spray regrowth.

While the formal Envirofund project may be over, and the regular working bees winding up, the group realises that long term follow-up will be required to maintain the island as a great stopover and campsite for boaties in the Channel. Annual maintenance trips should continue long into the future...

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Friends of Snake Island prime movers Greg Baxter (Kettering Yacht Club) and Tony - with antlers - Gaiswinkler (Tasmanian Sea Canoeing Club) celebrate achievements on the island.





Tasman Island Working Bee - David Reynolds

After an aborted start to our trip to Tasman Island on 27 March due to strong winds and rain squalls, the party of five volunteers returned to Cambridge the next day for the 20-minute helicopter flight to the island.

With a total of seven volunteers from Friends of Tasman Island (FoTI), two staff from PWS (Seven Mile Beach) plus nearly 500 kilos of equipment and food for the six days on the island, the helicopter flew three additional trips to and from Safety Cove (south of Port Arthur) to pick up equipment and the rest of the people.

The major tasks of the working bee were to brush cut tracks to the buildings and surrounds, helipad to lighthouse and the overgrown track to the top of the haulage way, a heritage assessment of the remaining buildings, cleaning the three quarters (ex lighthouse keepers' residences) and other minor works on the island.

Since it has been 30 years since the last keepers left the island, the grass and vegetation has recovered very thickly in places, making brush cutting of the tracks a three day effort by all concerned.

Places on the island were difficult to access because of thick vegetation on the plateau and cliff edges. Working an average of eight hours a day, we then enjoyed walks in the afternoons exploring the island's spectacular scenery, particularly the view towards the cliffs, looking north to Cape Pillar, the Blade and along to the distant Cape Bruny headlands.

Our six days on the island included several days of brilliant sunshine, then days of winds up to 60 knots, rain squalls and very rough seas. Sea eagles, Wedge Tail eagles and Yellow tailed cockatoos graced the sky.



The heritage assessment of the houses took about five hours assessing damage to the buildings, mostly weather related (wind and rain) and missing timbers. Weeds around the houses and other locations were recorded and sites GPSed. Samples were taken for identification.

For the stay on the island we used the quarters nearest to the lighthouse.

This house was built in 1906 (see photo) for the lighthouse keepers and their families.

It is in good condition with three bedrooms, lounge, kitchen, bathroom, toilet/laundry, gas fittings and electric lighting. We brought a generator to the island for power.

We planned to leave the island on 2

April, to coincide with the Rotary (Tasman) Open Day celebrating 100 years of the opening of the lighthouse, however this was cancelled due to a forecast of bad weather. We flew out at midday on the next day.

Overall the time spent on Tasman Island was an experience none of the participants will forget – with its remoteness, scenery, good company and many jobs undertaken and completed.

FoTI hope to return to the island in the future, as the work to be done on future projects is large and varied. The group has made applications for further grants funding.

FoTI would like to thank AMSA, PWS (Seven Mile Beach), Rotary and others for their help in achieving the successful outcomes of the working bee and particularly WILDCARE for the project funding grant.

Participants were Carol Jackson, Sandy Leighton, David & Trauti Reynolds, Denise & Bonnie Schultz, Chris Creese. PWS Carol Markby, Phil Wicks.

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Group Reports (from BoM 13 April 2006)

Friends of Tasman Island (FoTI)
– Carol Jackson

FoTI have been very busy over the past six months, with a dedicated core group meeting at least monthly, and over 70 people on our mailing list.

During this time FoTI has developed valuable and effective working partnerships with PWS, Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), Australian Maritime Museums, Lighthouses of Australia and Tasman Peninsula Rotary.

Access to the Island is, and will continue to be, our most critical issue. Access by helicopter costs about \$3000 one way for a working bee and gear.

Funding: We have been, and are still, busy applying for funding including a recent submission to the National Heritage Investment Initiative for funding to develop a Strategic Conservation and Management Plan for the whole island. We are currently applying for funding from the Australia Post Community Development Grant to purchase a generator and associated equipment for comfort of future working bees. We are also applying for Enviro funding to complete fauna and flora and weed management plans. WILDCARE and Landcare funding allowed our first

working bee to happen.

Visits & Working Bees: We completed an initial visit to the island in October by piggybacking with the Australian Marine Systems annual maintenance visit to the Island, thus greatly reducing the cost. Thanks very much to Leah Page (Coast Care Community Support Officer) for organising the necessary approvals and the Job Safety Assessments in conjunction with Brian Campbell. The assessment team consisted of Brian Campbell (PWS ranger), Phil Wicks (PWS field assistant & builder), Mike Dowling (asbestos consultant), Andy Cianchi, (photographer) and Christian Bell. Mike conducted a very thorough inspection of the asbestos on the island and has produced a detailed report for PWS. The good news is that Quarters No 3 is ok as a visitors' house.

We have been working closely with PWS, Rotary and AMSA to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the commissioning of the Tasman Island Lighthouse. AMSA donated money and resources to assist FoTI in the production of a brochure associated with the event and are willing to open the lighthouse for the Rotary visitors.

We completed our first working bee in the week prior to the planned Centenary Celebrations on 2 April. It was a fantastic week – we laughed, ate and accomplished a lot despite worsening weather as the week progressed. The main tasks targeted public safety, minor maintenance to buildings and assessment work for future works plans etc. PWS hazard signage was erected at appropriate sites to inform visitors of the risks to personal safety posed by natural and industrial hazards of the Island. Over two kilometres of tracks were brush cut and restored (after 30 years of regrowth!!!) to ensure they are clear and safe for visitors using them. Minor maintenance focused on preventing unauthorised persons and weather from entering the three quarters, an assessment of the storage shed, cleaning, brush-cutting, GPS'ing everything and weed eradication.

It was such a shame that the weather didn't abate for the planned celebrations. FoTI is excited that they have been rescheduled for Sunday 23 April, with the added interest of the Mercury Newspaper and the ABC TV wishing to report on the celebrations.

FoTI has recently decided to charge an annual membership fee of \$10 to

cover some of our costs.

Northeast Wildlife Carers (NEWC)
– Peter Power

NEWC was established in 2003 to help existing wildlife carers share caring experiences and support.

NEWC has a member base of 12 dedicated members who are in constant contact. We have two branches, in the north in the Break O Day municipality and in the south in the Glen Morgan Bay municipality.

We are recognised by local authorities such as local Police, Councils, Vets and PWS. Most importantly we are recognised by members of the public. We receive regular phone calls from distressed and concerned members of the community who have either injured an animal on the road or found an orphaned joey. We respond to these calls immediately and work with the local vet to rehabilitate the animals with the sole objective of releasing them back into the wild. We also receive calls from tourists on a regular basis.

We are now negotiating with the Department of Roads to erect wildlife signs at hot spots throughout our municipalities to lessen the carnage on our highways, which is a very slow process.

Our aim this year is to increase our member and support base and to seek funding from Government departments to help make our carers work easier and more enjoyable. We intend to use the funding to build better and more secure housing/nursery pens.

We also aim to establish a stronger network of carers, who can support and help each other, and share caring experiences and ideas.

Our group consists of twelve members spread throughout the north and east coasts of Tasmania. The senior members are: President – Peter Power Secretary – Caroline Shemwell Treasurer – Sharlene King

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chairpersons and other WILDCARE members for their continued support throughout our time as members of the Incorporation and hope to continue working alongside WILDCARE Inc. and its members.

We can be contacted on 0417017105, 63751189 or 63722973 or by email lawrencepower@bigpond.com



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Group Reports (from BoM 9 February 2006)**Friends of Swan Bay (FoSB) – Josh Cocker**

The focus of our group is a strip of National Park reserve that extends several kilometres east of Native Point Reserve, bordering the Tamar River.

The strip is 40 to 60 metres wide and is bound by the high tide mark and Windermere Road.

Our focus is a one kilometre length of the coastal reserve heavily invaded by boneseed and other exotics.

Our current membership is 11 dedicated weed removers. Our group was formally constituted in November 2005 under the guidance of Janice Miller.

Concerned neighbours had been cleaning up the National Park coastal strip for many years.

In February 2005 after heavy storm damage, exhaustive vegetation clean-up was undertaken. The need to remove the vegetation ultimately brought in PWS authorities to sanction our activities.

The main activities of the group have been the removal and burning of vegetation and the 'cut and paste' eradication of woody weeds.

Four large piles of vegetation were burnt with the help of the local Dilston Fire Brigade. Also 28 small truck loads of vegetation were removed for disposal on private land.

Some 88 man hours had been dedicated to the reserve by the end of January 2006. So far 300 metres of the reserve have been cleared of woody weeds.

FoSB joined Landcare Tasmania and are pleased to report receipt of an administration grant of \$550. The funds will be largely used for purchasing equipment and poison. These funds have been passed to Craig.

FoSB are delighted that a group of CVA volunteers will assist with weed removal for two days in February.

This very kind assistance was arranged through Kay Bailey of the Tamar Valley NRM.

A long-term concern to local residents is coastal erosion. DIPWE geomorphologist, Tim Cohen, suggested that several trees be removed so that erosion is not exacerbated by the trees falling in a storm.

Otherwise in his opinion the rate of erosion was not high and further intervention was not required.

Friends of Kate Reed Reserve – Rodney Milner

The Work for the Dole Project has started in the reserve with David Ross as supervisor.

At present there are eight in the team who are continuing with the track work and weed control that the group has been working on.

To date the team has worked well and progress is excellent. There are two issues in the reserve that we need to discuss with PWS. Firstly, the ongoing problem with motor bikes continues, with recent track work damaged.

The other issue concerns a Conservation Offset, a process which allows a developer to clear a piece of bush containing threatened species in return for protecting similar species in the same area. In this case an area of bush in Prospect was to be cleared for subdivision and in return Kate Reed

Reserve would be fenced from the Silverdome and has been surveyed off onto its own title.

Unfortunately the boundary chosen in fact allows more bush that was part of the reserve to be cleared so we urgently need to raise the issue with PWS before it goes any further.

Gambusia Project – Rodney Milner

The Management Guide and Workbook is at the printers and should be ready in the next couple of days.

The main focus over the next week will be to distribute it statewide.

This is the final part of the Tamar Island Wetlands Volunteers CAREs group project and as a result the project will become solely a WILDCARE project with some changes to the Steering Committee.


I would like to thank all those who have assisted with the project.

Tamar Island Wetlands Volunteers CAREs Group – Julie Nermut

Summer has been very busy with many tourists visiting from overseas and the mainland.

We also had increased numbers of local families who came to enjoy the centre and walks, and also to participate in the many activities organised by the Summer Ranger.

World Wetlands Day on 2 February was celebrated at the centre with over 150 visitors enjoying activities based on a theme of life in the wetlands.

Visitors also participated in guided walks and a sausage sizzle. 

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Cartledge Agency would like to thank all WILDCARE members for their past support and look forward to future dealings.

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Land for Wildlife Scheme

By Iona Mitchell– Tasmanian Land for Wildlife Coordinator

The Tasmanian Land for Wildlife scheme is strongly supported by trained volunteer Land for Wildlife assessors through a collaborative partnership with WILDCARE Inc. Since January 2005 there have been 85 new properties registered largely through the efforts of 18 active Wildcare volunteer assessors statewide. Their support, contribution and giving of their time and knowledge to this nature conservation scheme is highly commendable.

Land for Wildlife is a completely voluntary, free, non-binding nature conservation scheme. Its aims are to encourage, support and recognise

landholders taking a positive approach to the integration of property land management with nature conservation on private land and to promote community participation in nature conservation.

The Land for Wildlife Scheme was first established in Victoria in 1981 to support people keen and willing to maintain native vegetation and wildlife habitats on their property. It has grown into a national program with the Land for Wildlife Scheme established in Tasmania in 1998. Currently in Tasmania there are 520 properties registered, covering 41,700 ha with approximately a further 40 properties in the process of being assessed and registered.



The survival of our native wildlife (plants and animals) and natural diversity depends on conservation or restoration of suitable habitat as a means of protecting our land, waterways and wildlife in the future. Protection of diverse ranges of wildlife habitats today will assist in reducing the risk of species becoming threatened in the future. WILDCARE Inc volunteers are contributing to this through their active support of the Land for Wildlife scheme. 



WILDCARE at Agfest 2006

By Richard Hammond – Co-Chair Elected

In previous years we've been buried in the Landcare or DPIWE tent. This year, we decided to go it alone.

As a new exhibitor, we weren't sure that we'd be allocated a site until the end of January. This didn't leave much time to prepare a display, especially when you consider that displays like those of DPIWE are organised many months in advance. However, we persevered.


Photographs and descriptive text were provided for Maatsuyker Island, Deal Island, Land for Wildlife, Friends of Trevallyn, Adopt-A-Track, Tamar Island Wetlands, Whale Rescue, Orange

Bellied Parrots, Wilmot Heritage Trail and Mt Field.

A 9m x 6m tent was borrowed from the Wild Animal Health Unit of DPIWE and was erected, luckily, on the Tuesday afternoon. Wednesday was quite wet and windy but the displays were finally set up. Plants were borrowed from the Habitat Nursery at Liffey. Many thanks to Herbert & Sally.

Over the three days we ran a PowerPoint presentation showing various aspects of WILDCARE and its activities, including fund raising and membership concerns. The new membership and gift fund brochures were handed out to all visitors to

the site, as well as a number of people who were bailed up outside by intrepid volunteer, Bill Forsyth. A steady stream of visitors came through the tent, most genuinely interested in the organisation. Some 300 copies of each brochure were handed out and it will be interesting to see how many result in new members.

Many thanks to all volunteers who came along to help put up the tent and displays, and to run the display over the three days – particularly Julie, Ian, Bill, Josh, Helen & Jenny. I've probably forgotten a couple – if so, my sincere apologies. Also thanks to Chris & Andrew. 



Narcissus Walker Survey

By Richard Hammond – Co-Chair Elected

Funny things happen when you get off your backside and actually do something 'in the wild'.

After years of trying to make sure that all our volunteers do things correctly, I decided it was time to actually do something myself, so I put my hand up to do a stint on the Overland Track Walker Survey at Narcissus Hut.



First of all I had to go through the seemingly unending paper work demanded by PWS, and then had to get myself reaccredited for First Aid (Diving First Aid being my previous certification, completed well before the wet suit shrank). I accomplished this in December, to find that the CPR rules were about to be changed worldwide in the very near future – however they still haven't been formally adopted in Australia.

As I arrived at Narcissus Hut I found my kid sister, her husband and their daughter (along with another five in their party) sitting on the jetty waiting for the ferry. I lost half my three-day supply of ice-cold stubbies in one hit.

Then I was told by many small groups to keep an eye out for a woman in a party of eight who'd hurt her ankle and should be coming along in the next day or so. This turned out to be my sister, who'd beaten them all down the track, even with a sprained ankle (admittedly, she hadn't done all the side trips the others had done).

I had to cope with a lost walker who'd come for a day walk, taken off by himself, couldn't speak fluent English, didn't turn up for the last ferry back to Cynthia Bay and had been spotted heading north from the Pine Valley turnoff at a pretty good speed. He apparently finally realised that he was going the wrong way and turned up at Narcissus about two hours after the last ferry had left. In the meantime, the Rangers were gearing up for a full-scale search the next day.

I saw lots of interesting t-shirts but the pick has to be this one. I promised a copy of WILDTIMES to the owner if I could include the photo in this issue.

I met lots of very interesting people including a group of Germans who kept referring to another group of 'mad Germans'. I couldn't understand the reference until they turned up with a brand new two-burner primus stove and a 3kg gas bottle carried under the arm – they'd been walking, burdened like this, for five days. There was also a runner who'd done the entire track with nothing but a water bottle and some food in less than a day (even this is nowhere near the record – actually the record-holder was walking in one of the groups that came through).

I discovered a survey marker that according to the surveyors should have been 200 metres downstream and on the other side of the river. They're now checking their records.

The heat and humidity were quite high, and only relieved by jumping in the river, while the flies were horrendous. Apart from this, I totally enjoyed the experience and am trying to work out why I haven't done it before. 🐾

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The Parks and Wildlife Service would like to say thank you to all **WILDCARE Inc** members who give so willingly of their time to help us protect and conserve our natural and cultural heritage in Tasmania.

Thanks for all of your hard work and dedication!

A very special thank you to the **WILDCARE Inc** Board of Management for all of their support for volunteer projects within Tasmania's National Parks.

WILDTIMES publication schedule

Issue #	Article Submissions Due	Publication Date
28	31 Aug 2006	Sep 2006
29	30 Nov 2006	Dec 2006

Publication dates are subject to receiving a sufficient number of articles to allow publishing to go ahead.



WILDCARE TASMANIA NATURE WRITING AWARD 2005

The following story by Adrienne Eberhard was judged one of two runners-up for 2005, with the other by Dael Allison published in Issue 26. The winning story by Mark Tredinnick was published in Issue 25.

CAVE, SKIN, WATER

Beginnings: once you start searching there is no stopping until you reach the first drop of water, the first layer of silt or mud, the first bite of the apple ... This story begins with the confluence of cave, skin and water, connections that stretch back tens of thousands of years, and can be traced to places all over the earth. But it's here, where a thousand years is forever, as well as the blink of an eye, that really matters.

One long-ago night, we lay in a tent on the banks of a stream, outside the dark entrance to Wargata Mina. I took your hand and placed it on my breast - an unconscious, histories-old gesture - as rain poured down outside, soaking the earth to a sponge, raising the river to a roaring rush that threatened to toss our tent, sending us sailing on high seas like Noah's Ark. You spread your hand, touching my breast through a layer of wool, as if leaving a white imprint surrounded by blood or ochre, claiming my heart in the depths of green, dripping forest. When we woke, forest had turned to ocean and we waded the track, then swam the dangerous seas of Farmhouse Creek to make it back to dry land and safety. Somehow, that night's torrent of water unleashed a river of emotion in which we have been swimming ever since.

We returned to this place of beginnings, several years later, and as we lugged diving gear deep into the cave, our torchlight danced, suddenly spotlighting the hand reaching out to white, virgin wall, the mouthful of blown ochre, tender, moist; searing the rock. We were entranced, amazed, caught in a story that was ours, and not ours, begun in a place that had claimed us and that we had claimed too.

These stencils are the reverse of a child's hand-painting where the joy is in the paint itself, the coating of the hand in bright colours, the imprint alive with veins and striations, a first naming. Rather, they are ghost prints,

the hand a white space, vacant, colour blooming around the hand instead. More startling like this; everything left to the imagination. Was this also a naming? A way of saying, collectively, 'We were here;' the first graffiti, 10,000 years old.

All the sites found so far are away from the light, in the dark zone, where people must have gone with burning brands held aloft, the cave entrance left behind for a place unknown, unknowable. Was it an act of daring? Something young people did, urging each other on, away from the light, into the beckoning dark. Did their giggles alter to hushed silence, fear and reverence combined? Or was it something far more spiritual, men and children led by an elder, each ceremoniously laying a hand on the rock, then blowing out the mouthful of ochre and spit, the cave like a cathedral around them.

How many years have we spent in caves, and in the velvet and emerald rainforest that flanks many of them: enormous myrtles with tiny serrated leaves, red-rimmed as if touched by fire, the luminous-green of sassafras shaping sunlight, elongated manfern trunks stretching like giraffe necks or giant pythons, matted with spongy-brown hair, the ground covered in myrtle confetti, studded with the bright heads of toadstools, branches stepped with fungi plates. How many times have I followed you, legs disappearing into rotten, fallen trunks, clambering over, sliding down, breaking through to pungent earth beneath, despairing of catching you, of keeping up. Learning to slow down, breathe, pace myself with the forest, then felt green fingers loosen their hold, luring me instead, with windows into a new green where light pulsates and everything is. I began the long wait for you, allowing the trees to absorb me, relaxing into stones and springy moss, the sound of water lulling me back to another forest, another cave, to the possibilities of beginnings.

It is here, more than anywhere else in the world, that time loses its

significance. In this bush it seems that time stands still, moves sideways into concentric rings. The notion of a continuum becomes pure theory, nothing more than an idea. So many caves in which no one – European, Aborigine – has ever set foot. Caves explored for the first time, their luminescence a secret, their straws and stalagmites, chambers and piles of rockfall, their squeezes and passageways, previously navigated only by air and water.

When Jesus developed his following near the Sea of Galilee, these stencils were 8000 years old, perhaps even older. When the pyramids rose out of the sand, these hands had graced cave walls for 4000 years.

What does time mean?

You took me to this island's most famous cave, named after Coleridge's gorgeous, opium-induced dream. I was eighteen; those glinting, crystalline chambers, the enormous pillars, the billowing layers of white rock, the frail, chalky straws, were an enchantment. It was the beckoning of another world that had no need of us; it was just there, deep under the earth, a grotto, a pleasure dome made from the dispassionate dissolving of rock by water. And still you searched, combing forests for entrances, sink holes, depressions, anything where the trickle of water would permeate rock, forcing its way through with a constant trickle that is almost beyond time, outside of time. You came back with narratives of tunnels, squeezes, rockfall, mud, sharp-cutting stones, waterfalls, flooded passages, sumps. You were voyaging into the unknown, the unknowable, delving deep into the earth, into darkness, blackness, hollowness, wetness, learning about inviolability, about the secrets and silence at the heart of things. About beginnings.

How many years does it take for a cave to form? Thousands and millions of years. That slow drip, drip of water eating away at the rock. Limestone dissolving into hollows and runnels, water funnelling underground: channel, gorge, streamsink. And in the



silent dark, the spinning of stories, the growing of treasure: crystals, calcite, helictites, the delicacy of straws, thin and long as spun silk, gour dams, their rims shimmering with diamonds, roofs strung with a galaxy of glow worms, blue and bright as stars.

Limestone country, or dolerite. Everywhere the gentle splash or roar of water. Creeks, streams, rivers, trickling, tumbling, plunging. Water wearing away the thin mantle of the world.

Many years after Wargata Mina, we travelled across the Nullarbor, a tiny convoy of grey corolla and yellow land cruiser, the initial part of the journey a blur of sand-coloured fields, heat haze and the gentle beckoning of sea far off. Once we left the highway, the country changed, sweeping away in vast arcs of sparsely grassed plains, punctuated by the occasional stunted gum. We had come for caves.

Weebubbie was a huge, gaping hole in the middle of otherwise flat, far-reaching country. Our descent on rocky paths disturbed hundreds of swallows which had been settling down for the evening. Suddenly the warm, lilac air was alive with hurtling bodies, their wild chirruping echoing off the rock. Deeper in the cave, we could just make out the black hunch of bats high up on the domed ceiling, like spreading water stains.

At the end of the cave, the floor sloped sharply down to water. Flat, crystal-clear, spreading silently away from us.

When you and your brother dived those waters, I stood and watched you swim up the airy chamber, your torches casting long beams of golden light, picking out white slabs of stone lying like fallen statues; sea-green pools; the trace of darker rock along the sides. Then the passage gave out and my eyes strained through the ink-black to watch you disappear deep beneath the surface. Later I swam in that icy water, seeing the strange, oddly-shaped angles of stone beneath my legs, and the wooden remnant of someone's attempt at a raft protruding like a ship's prow. Green depths, dark corners, swimming deep inside the earth in an ancient lake:

He reached the shallow well named Ain Dur. He removed all of his clothes and soaked them in the well, put his head and then his thin body into the

blue water... He climbed out of the desert... and went naked into the darkness of the cave.

He was among the familiar paintings he had found years earlier. Giraffes. Cattle. The man with his arms raised, in a plumed headdress. Several figures in the unmistakable posture of swimming... (The English Patient, p.169)

Afterwards we lay in the back of the land cruiser watching slow stars appear, the sky becoming softer and further away, the light more diffuse. The trees were dark figures, rocks and grass painted with moonlight, the ground awash with the shadows of feeding animals. One night, at Thampana, a perfect creamy-white moon rose into a deep-indigo sky, enormous, luminous, setting the low scrub alight, while bats shadowed our talk. It seemed that the desert was infinite, that rock and water had conspired, laying hands on us. The horizon encircled us, the whole world absorbed to this moon, this moment. Then we could almost hear the wash of water pooled in wells and chambers far beneath us. By day, when the earth shimmered and the sky swung in its hot hammock, fierce and unrelenting, water seemed an impossibility; a dream of bodies meeting.

It seems that caves are always to be found at the beginning of things, being shelter, tomb, cool store, gallery. The caves of Lascaux leap with the limbs and haunches of animals; memory, celebration, offering and worship in one. In the southwest, shelter caves abound, and in some, away from the light, hands blazon the walls in greeting, knowing, praise, salute.

A friend tells us she has read about an Aboriginal language, from northern Australia, whose words for parts of the body correspond to the rises and dips of their land. Knowing no details, we have to imagine them for ourselves: a breast for a hill; an arm for a ridge; that dip at the base of the belly for a valley; hair for the brush of grasses; a toe for the small, white pebbles that rub underfoot...

On our mantelpiece is a warm brown stone that fits in the palm of my hand. Its centre is hollowed to a nest in which a small oval pebble sits, like a white egg. I found this pair on the cobbled beach not far from our house, while you searched for fossils,

the white nestled in the brown; a perfect fit. Companions. The skin of one rubbing against the rock of the other, water washing between, making a depression, a cave.

There are fossils too. Small ones that stud our windowsills with their fluted markings and raised patterns, veins and bones hardened into rock. People once thought that fossils were creatures killed by the flood, or the devil trying to make living creatures out of rock, or formed by seeds carried by winds from the sea. Imagine them all, insects, animals, leaves, shells, inching out into freedom, leaving the mould of self behind.

Here at the far end of the world, the land is ancient, as is any human connection with it. People have lived here for 40,000 years, but there is no record of this history, and the stories that would have rekindled that osmotic relationship between land and people, disappeared long ago. But here and there are reminders: middens stretching the length of west-coast beaches, hut depressions where bodies rested on warm stone, hand stencils on cave walls.

To pick up a shell or a tool and hold it in your hand, or to see the stencils leaping from the rock as if made yesterday, is to have the centuries drop away like water. When we gather rocks and fossils, time loses its dimensions; everything (history, geology, culture) recedes to that contact of stone and skin, to the holding, the warm weightiness of it that is as comforting as holding another hand or breast. A palm-size stone, a water-worn pebble, become talismans, and there is the beginning of reciprocity: we leave something of us in the pebble, the pebble passes something to us.

Perhaps, like our story, that is all there is, the picking up, the holding, the tracing of a hand on rock, on skin, which is a beginning every time.

ADRIENNE EBERHARD'S first collection of poems, *Agamemnon's Poppies*, was equal second in the Anne Elder Award. 'Earth, Air, Water, Fire' was the highly commended entry in the 2003 Josephine Ulrick Poetry Prize. 🐾



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