

# WILDLIFE LANDS AUSTRALIA

THE NEWSLETTER OF HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL'S WILDLIFE LAND TRUST

ISSUE ONE 2007

## Our Mission

Wildlife Land Trust Australia exists in order to protect wild animals by preserving their habitats and by providing them sanctuary within those habitats.

In the few minutes that it will take to read this article thousands of acres of critical wildlife habitats across Australia will have been lost. Protecting and preserving our country's streams, grasslands, forests and wetlands is essential to the survival of all wildlife. Every acre left unexploited safeguards wildlife that desperately need our help to survive.

The Wildlife Land Trust (WLT) was established in the United States in 1993 by The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and in Australia by Humane Society International (HSI) in 2007.

Land owners who have property that provides valuable wildlife habitat know that such lands are rapidly disappearing to development, and other exploitative uses. Refusing to sell to those who would destroy the land is an admirable, but temporary, defense against unwanted changes to the land and disruption or destruction to the wildlife it harbours. Permanent protection of both land and wildlife is possible however, and that is what the Wildlife Land Trust would ultimately like to help responsible landowners to achieve. At the outset, the WLT offers membership of a global wildlife sanctuary network, and a further offer to help those who would like to move towards permanent legal protection.

The Wildlife Land Trust protects not only vast and impressive landscapes, but also the smaller, humbler places – remnant native grasslands, wetlands and woodlands etc – that provide for the needs of wildlife.

## Our Goal

To see the protection of one million acres of wildlife habitat across Australia in the Wildlife Land Trust sanctuary network.

These places are no less at risk, and they are essential to the animals they protect. For landowners who wish to ensure that animals on their lands are protected from development, illegal hunting and other threats, regardless of whether they are threatened or endangered, the Wildlife Land Trust is a perfect fit. Humane stewardship is the hallmark of our Trust. As the guiding principle behind every land conservation agreement, humane stewardship is practiced on all sanctuaries.

### Forging ahead in a world of change

A wild animal that is on the move is at once focused and keenly attuned to its surroundings. Whether looking for food, a mate, or a place to rest, it knows instinctively that the key to survival is the ability to remain steady on the path ahead while reacting quickly to potential roadblocks.

This is a lesson that the Wildlife Land Trust knows well. Since 1993, we've been dedicated to protecting wildlife through the creation of natural habitat sanctuaries where they can live safe from harm. But as the world around us changes, we have had to consider new circumstances related to our work.

**Perhaps the greatest challenge that the Trust and other conservation organisations must now face is climate change.**

All reliable scientific evidence confirms that the Earth's temperature is increasing

and that patterns such as rainfall and drought have become less predictable and more extreme. Wildlife are foremost among the Earth's inhabitants negatively affected by these changes. Many species must adjust to alterations of the only homes they've ever known, and some are forced to migrate to new places to survive. One thing above all will make these shifts possible: habitat. Yet this strategy has itself become an increasing challenge as landscapes far and wide are developed and fragmented to accommodate the demands of a growing human population.

**Rather than yielding to this pressure, the Trust has succeeded in protecting even more of the places on which wildlife rely, expanding the size and geographic range of our work – as of the end of 2007, we were involved in the protection of 133 properties in eight countries, amounting to more than 1.8 million acres.**

Climate change, land development, and ever-shifting political trends are key challenges. New ones will certainly arise over time. We will never stray from the path ahead – and with the continued commitment of our supporters and staff, will always move steadily forward.

If you are not already a member of the WLT, but if you share our philosophy of respect for both land and wildlife, please read on and consider becoming a part of this growing international sanctuary system (see page 8). We would love to help you make your land a safe haven for the animals making their home upon it.

# The Trust in Australia

## STARTS TO SLOWLY EXPAND

The number of sanctuaries now joined in the fledgling Australian Wildlife Land Trust is steadily growing. Below are the sanctuary owners that have entered into a “letter of agreement” with the WLT to dedicate their properties to wildlife conservation. We warmly welcome all these inaugural members of the Wildlife Land Trust.

**Lyn & Geoff Murray** from Tasmania own and manage a 10 acre sanctuary near Hobart; **Trish Cunningham** owns a 9 acre refuge near Tamworth in New South Wales; **Kathleen Isherwood** maintains a 78 acre sanctuary near Newcastle in New South Wales; **Marilyn Mills**, also in New South Wales, protects a 100 acre sanctuary just south of Canberra; **Heather Wood** protects a 200 acre refuge in the Sunshine Coast hinterland in Queensland; **Leonie Chester**, from Victoria, owns and protects a 12 acre sanctuary near Orbost, only a few kilometers from the Snowy River; **Shirley Cowling** is the owner of a 10 acre sanctuary near Melbourne; **Vi Austin** manages the 40 acre “Burru Wildlife Refuge” near Brisbane in Queensland; **Angus Hutton** protects the 50 acre “Mount Monty Rainforest Nature Reserve”, near Gympie in SE Queensland; **Anne-Marie Dineen and Joe Schick** own and manage a 270 acre sanctuary also near Gympie in SE Queensland; **Michael Kennedy**, family and friends manage the 600 acre “Curricabark Wildlife Refuge” near Gloucester in New South Wales; and the 300 acre “Warriwillah Wildlife Refuge” near Canberra, New South Wales, brought to its almost weed free perfection by the **Dixon family**.

Collectively, these properties already protect many Australian wildlife species, common and threatened, and the network will increasingly become an important part of national conservation efforts in Australia.

### Messages from WLT SANCTUARY OWNERS

The following are short messages from some of the Wildlife Land Trust’s inaugural sanctuary members, and we will continue to feature Wildlife Land Trust sanctuary owners’ thoughts in future issues.

### Heather Wood Queensland



*“I am proud to be registered as part of the HSI Wildlife Land Trust and what I hope to achieve from being a member is having other people with whom I can network and share ideas. Maybe a forum type of communication system can be set up? I feel at times that I am struggling to achieve what I want to achieve mainly due to a distinct lack of time (and sometimes energy). It will be good to have a group of people around that can support and encourage me!”*

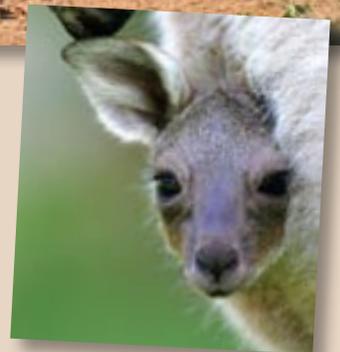
*My property is 200 acres and is situated in the Qld Sunshine Coast hinterland. I live in Brisbane, and only manage to visit my property 2 to 3 times a month over a weekend. Of course whenever I visit it, it is all systems go with either doing weed management, revegetation work, tending my orchard (about 1 acre) or slashing the driveway etc. You will all know there is never a dull moment when you own rural land!*

*Occasionally I get a chance to take a break and actually go for a walk and enjoy the beauty. It is such a beautiful property, purchased purely with a view of providing a sanctuary where animals can feel protected”.*

### Marilyn Mills New South Wales

*“I am honoured to join the Wildlife Land Trust and to add my property to the growing list of places where our native Australian wildlife can be safe.*

*My property of 100 acres is located in the southern highlands of NSW and is home to over sixty eastern grey kangaroos. Of those sixty, twenty-three I have raised from orphaned joeys and they in turn have had at least fourteen joeys of their own. Adding my property to the Wildlife Land Trust is an extension of my wildlife caring activities in which I have been actively engaged for the last six years”.*



**Lyn Murray**  
Tasmania

*“I feel very privileged to be part of a Trust that assists in welcoming back wildlife to their natural habitat, and protecting these animals in living comfortably in their own environment, feeling protected and safe.*

*My husband and I live on a small area (10 acres) of a beautiful island which has some of the most beautiful wilderness areas I have seen on this planet.*

*We live in Lachlan, Tasmania, which is 50 km North West of Hobart. Our bushland comprises of lightly wooded dry sclerophyll with common heath and eucalypts.*

*We feel very happy to share our home with echidnas, common wombats, wallabies, potoroos, possums, tawny frogmouths, robin redbreasts, superb fairy wrens, rosellas and many other species.*

*It is wonderful to be able to join the birds and wildlife while having a morning cuppa on our verandah or while enjoying the stars in the night sky.*

*Hopefully many more people will become aware of, and volunteer to assist in, this very rewarding program”.*



*Photo by Geoff Murray*

## RECONNECTING A LANDSCAPE

# Warriwillah' & 'K2C'



Alison Elvin\*, NaturalCapital Pty Ltd

**Driving south from Canberra to Warriwillah is memorable for its continuous vista of a landscape ravaged by prolonged drought, past land-clearing and present over-grazing.**

Remaining fragments of bushland are impoverished, with declining species diversity, invading armies of weeds and feral animals, and a notable absence of inviting and safe habitats for those native animals who have survived.

This landscape forms part of the catchment of the upper Murrumbidgee River, once a vibrant and vital artery to the mighty Murray. Previous clearing of forests, woodlands and grasslands, coupled with decades of set stocking has left little but dust, rocks, weeds, scattered Apple Box trees and indigestible grasses. It is a sad and visible reminder of how quickly and spectacularly we can alter a natural landscape to create a semi-desert. Adding insult to injury, Warriwillah is situated in a rain shadow between the rugged Tinderry mountains to the east and Clearview Range in the west. Why would anybody struggle to manage land in such an area and in such difficult circumstances?

Head west from the highway just south of Michelago to the end of a winding dirt road, and you have your answer. Within metres you enter another world – 'Warriwillah'.

Yes, it is dry. Yes, it is rocky. Yes, there are plentiful Apple Box trees. And yes, the wildfires of 2003 burnt most of this to ashes. There the similarities to the surrounding countryside end.

The rocks on the hills are almost hidden by acres of flowering daisies and wildflowers, regenerating Acacias, and billowing native grasses. Spotting the weed is more difficult than finding Wally – weeds and feral animals are rapidly removed. This is a property where indigenous plants and animals are given every chance to survive and flourish. Regeneration is actively encouraged, and re-planting of other endemic species is prolific. In fact, the regeneration is so thick, in places it is difficult to walk. Endangered grassy box woodlands, temperate grasslands and riparian corridors are protected and restored here.

Vulnerable woodland birds inhabit nesting boxes erected across the property and fill the air with song. Platypus, yabbies and insects are plentiful in the river. Macropods view human visitors calmly, without fear. Sunning reptiles stay put as you approach. This is a sanctuary in the true sense of the word. A place where the ravages created by past human actions have been reversed.

And then there is the water. The western boundary is the Murrumbidgee River, intersected by the northern boundary of Michelago Creek. Cross Michelago Creek upstream, on the Monaro Highway, and mourn yet another weed-ridden, stock-trampled dirty puddle. Walk the same creek a few kilometres towards its journey's end, through the rich bushland of Warriwillah, and witness a remnant of the past – vigorous riparian vegetation; pools, riffles and ponds bursting with aquatic life and clean water.

Warriwillah hums from years of passionate and meticulous care wrought by the Dixon family and their friends, including the Michelago Land Care Group. Warriwillah has for many years been gazetted as a Wildlife Refuge and is subject to a Voluntary Conservation Agreement with the Minister for the Environment and Climate Change in New South Wales. But it is only a small island of life in a damaged and ever-drying landscape.

Alone, its contribution to conserving bio-diversity and contributing to high-quality water, especially in the face of inevitable climate change, is limited.

However, a new conservation project in the region is designed to capitalise on just such visionary land management as Warriwillah, building a connected network of land managed for conservation from the Snowy Mountain peaks to the rolling waves of the eastern oceans. Aptly named 'Kosciusko to Coast', or K2C, this project springs from a partnership of local government and NGO organisations and groups who are committed to achieving the best possible conservation outcomes for the region – Canberra to Cooma in the south, Murrumbidgee to the coastal forests in the east. This co-operative community partnership aims to re-build a connected and functional landscape by restoring species and habitat diversity on both private and public land. Kick-started by generous private donations to Australian Bush Heritage, allowing them to purchase an anchor property, 'Scottsdale' in the K2C region just north of Bredbo, K2C is now focussing on providing landowners with a range of incentives and educational opportunities to manage their land for conservation in perpetuity.

**More information and contact details on this inclusive, can-do conservation project can be found on the website, [www.k2c.org.au](http://www.k2c.org.au)**

It is heartening to know that the sanctuary of Warriwillah will eventually be just one of many wildlife refuges connected across this region, sustaining biodiversity, clean water, healthy soils and cleaner air.

*\*Alison is a principle of NaturalCapital Pty Ltd, highly experienced and effective biodiversity land managers, who help protect Warriwillah on behalf of the Wildlife Land Trust.*

*A special note from a*

## CONSERVATION VETERAN *Angus Hutton*

Having been born in South India and raised in the wildest parts of the Jungles of the Western Ghats, where my father was one of the pioneer Tea Planters (a profession I was in for 35 years) and my playmates were the Jungle tribesmens' children and from them, I learnt an appreciation of nature and wildlife that no university education could provide.

I have been an Hon. Game warden in South India, Uganda and Kenya, a Gazetted Ranger in Papua New Guinea and an Hon. Protector with Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service for over 25 years. I am still a consultant for the UN/FAO and AusAID and serve on the board of numerous conservation organisations.

When we "retired" after 16 years in New Guinea (where I was OIC of the Government Tea Research Plantation and Factory at Garaina) I was also National Co-ordinator with the PNG Division of Wildlife Management, and I established the World's first Butterfly Farming Industry in PNG in 1974.

I was looking for another little bit of Paradise to retire to, and we found it right here in the headwaters of Scrubby Creek, 18km from Gympie in S.E. Queensland. When I first

inspected the property in 1975, I was immediately struck with the skyline of the unnamed "mountain", which we later named Mt. Monty – after a close nursing friend of my wife, Gem. Its similarity to the view we had looked at from our home in New Guinea was quite astounding and being undisturbed primary rain forest it warranted a closer look and after an hour we decided we would purchase the property regardless and explore it further as time permitted.

I spent many days walking and crawling on hands and knees (it's pretty steep in places) and found so many plants and trees familiar to me – particularly the magnificent *Hoop Pines*, *Figs Flindersis* and *Giant Ironwood* and also found dozens of familiar butterfly food plants and a nice population of *Butterflies* and *Frogs*, *Snakes* and *Birds*.

The magnificent bird life – ten *Scrub Turkeys* and four mounds in one area, and the icing on the cake was sighting a pair of *Regent Bower Birds* (*Sericulus Chrysocephalus*) and a *Malke Satin Bowerbird* (*Ptilonorhynchus Violaceus*) and I also heard the unforgettable call of a *Green Cat Bird* (*Ailuroedus Crassirostris*).

We spotted a pair of very large *Goannas* –



© Adam Oswell

one was busy digging up a Scrub Turkey's nest and right on the top of the "mountain" in the tallest Hoop Pine Tree was a pair of nesting *Wedge Tailed Eagles* (*Aquila Morphnoides*) and on day three we had a fleeting glimpse of what was almost certainly the elusive and rare *Paradise Rifle Bird* (*Ptiloris Paradiseus*) whose presence was confirmed a couple of years later by an internationally renowned ornithologist.

Over the past 30 years we have listed an amazing list of fauna and flora including some 60 rare and endangered species of trees and shrubs (and counting) and 20 species of frogs, 2 turtles, 27 lizards, 19 snakes, 5 fishes, 16 mammals, 117 birds (and counting), 86 species of butterflies, 19 of moths (and counting), 12 spiders (and counting).

When the opportunity came to join the "Land for Wildlife Scheme" we achieved the highest score in the district and then we were the first to have the whole 13.5 Ha area Covenanted permanently as "The Mount Monty Rainforest Nature Refuge". We are now very proud and honoured to be an Australian Wildlife Land Trust Sanctuary.

*Angus F. Hutton,*  
*FZS, FRES,*  
*Queensland*



© Adam Oswell

# *Protecting threatened habitats* NATIONALLY



*Bull Mallee – White Mallee tall mallee woodland on red sand loam soils in the central western slopes of NSW*

The Wildlife Land Trust is an important component of HSI's overall habitat protection activities, and we will bring you news in future WLT newsletters of our overall campaign efforts. As an example of our work, HSI submitted a scientific nomination to see the protection in New South Wales of a highly threatened mallee woodland community.

HSI nominated '*Bull Mallee – White Mallee tall mallee woodland on red sand loam soils in the central western slopes of NSW*' for listing as a Critically Endangered ecological community under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act*.

Found mainly in the NSW South-western Slopes Bioregion around West Wyalong, the community has become highly fragmented, primarily due to the effects of grazing and landclearing.

With only 100 hectares of this community estimated to be remaining, these pressures have led to a reduction of 95% of the community's original extent.

Due to its severe scarcity, it is essential that all remaining remnants of the community are protected and subject to conservation agreements where appropriate.

We will be attempting to bring together on one national map, the location of all our WLT partners' sanctuaries, along with the location of threatened ecological communities for which we have gained protection under state and national law.

You will then be able to see quite clearly, the important role that WLT sanctuary owners are playing in the protection of Australia's irreplaceable biological diversity.

*Image by Jaime Plaza*

# News

## FROM INDONESIA

The Nusa Penida Bird Sanctuary, managed by the Friends of the National Parks Foundation (FNPF), is one of HSI's partner organisations in Indonesia. HSI is helping FNPF purchase a small block of rainforest on Nusa Penida, where released Bali Starlings are breeding in the wild. The sanctuary will then become a part of HSI's Wildlife Land Trust global sanctuary system.

Pictured with the Forests Minister below is FNPF's Director, Drh I Gede Nyoman Bayu Wirayudha, a vet who established FNPF in 1997, and runs two highly successful programs, including the Nusa Penida Bird Sanctuary and an "Integrated Conservation and Development Program" at Tanjung Puting National Park in Kalimantan – centred on Orangutan protection.

### Bali, Climate Change and Tropical Forests

HSI/WLT sent a team of lobbyists to

Bali in December, to attend the Kyoto climate change negotiations, where they were fighting to ensure that resources are provided to developing countries to help them protect vast tracts of remaining tropical forests through carbon trading deals. We are also concerned that such arrangements take into account the need to protect valuable and carbon rich peatlands.

Current emissions from the decomposition of drained peatlands alone (including emissions from peatland fires resulting from such drainage and

subsequent degradation), are estimated at 2 billion tonnes every year, equal to almost 8% of global emissions from the burning of fossil fuels.

Furthermore, current estimates are that degradation of natural ecosystems accounts for 18-25 of total anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions – a source of pollution now clearly seen to be too big to ignore or delay remedial action.

Nations appear generally in favour of including "avoided deforestation" in any post-Kyoto agreement.



*The Indonesian Minister for Forests, M.S. Kaban (pictured left) handles a highly threatened Bali Starling chick on Nusa Penida, an island off Bali.*

# AN INVITATION *to join us*

If you are not yet involved in any form of voluntary or formal scheme to protect your land, but would like to be, or if you do currently have a “conservation agreement”, or are a part of any other land protection scheme, but seek further protection, then we would very much like to hear from you all – no matter how small or large your property might be.

Joining the Wildlife Land Trust imparts no legal obligations upon landholders, and we would simply seek a non-binding letter of agreement in relation to your commitment to protect wildlife and habitats. Joining the WLT would not conflict with any of your current arrangements, legal or otherwise, and aims to entirely complement existing protection measures in cooperation with other government authorities or agencies. **However, if you would like to seek some form of permanent and legally binding protection for your property as a wildlife haven, then we would be very keen to help you.**

## **The benefits of registering with the Trust**

The Trust provides an opportunity to become a part of a continually growing international network of sanctuaries, promoting best conservation practice, and protecting wildlife and habitats around the world.

Your property will be highlighted on the Wildlife Land Trust section of HSI's Australian website and you will receive a regular copy of the “Wildlife Lands Australia” newsletter and HSI's Technical Bulletins. Through these mediums, including the United States

WLT website, you will be able to view the sanctuaries and activities of your new international network colleagues, which we also hope to facilitate through a special WLT list server.

You will also be provided with Wildlife Land Trust signs to erect on your property if you wish, and will receive a copy of “*Managing the Matrix – a plain language manual to help you manage your bush*”, by HSI consultant Greg Blake.

In the future, we are also looking at how we can best advise you on managing for climate change; assessing the potential for establishing a small grants scheme to help with small management tasks; determining the longer-term potential for a loyalty discount card through a national sponsor; and critically, offering to help those property owners who would like to “step up” their current non-binding arrangements and seek stronger legal protection. We are looking to be able to do this with a private and legally binding “covenant” between HSI and a sanctuary owner. Legal advice is still being sought.

**We would very much like to hear your views on these and any other ideas, which can be sent to the contact details below.**

## **What can I do now?**

You can immediately go to [www.wlt.org](http://www.wlt.org) and have a look at what many like-minded people have been doing around the world to protect wildlife and habitats. From this site, if you have an interest in registering your property with the WLT, you can download a PDF application form that you can send directly to us. The direct link for the application form is [www.wlt.org/australia](http://www.wlt.org/australia) (we are still working on an on-line registration process).

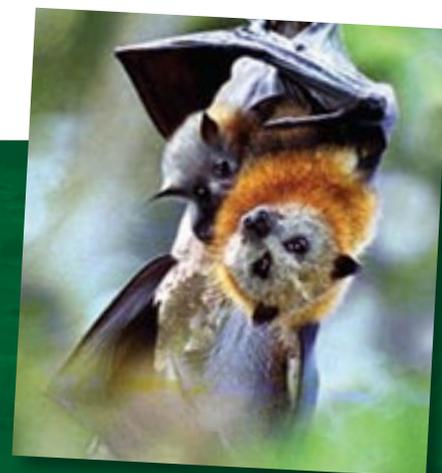
If you would like to talk about this invitation directly, you can call WLT and HSI Director Michael Kennedy on 1800 333 737, or email: [michaalk@hsi.org.au](mailto:michaalk@hsi.org.au)

We very much hope that this new initiative will be attractive to you, enabling you to let the wider-world know what good conservation work you are undertaking for wildlife and habitats in Australia. We look forward to hearing from you.

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*Image courtesy of Vivien Jones*