



**Welcome** to the National Trust of Australia's (WA) Conservation Covenant Program newsletter. 2009 marks our 10<sup>th</sup> year anniversary and is off to a great start, with 14,000 ha of privately owned native bushland now protected by Trust covenants. On behalf of the covenant team continued thanks to you all for your contribution to conservation of our precious native bush here in WA. **Best wishes, Louise Leigh, Conservation Covenant Program Coordinator.**

**People who reside** near remnant bushland may tend to think about only our iconic West Australian native mammals using that habitat; mammals such as the Western Grey Kangaroo, Western Ring-tail Possum, or the Southern Brown Bandicoot. What we tend not to think about are mammals which fly: microbats.

There are at least seven species of microbats that occupy the metropolitan night, keeping mosquitoes and other insects under control. One microbat can consume up to 1,000 mosquitoes per night (half its body weight). By consuming so many mosquitoes the microbats are helping to reduce the incidence of Ross River virus in our community. Microbat species endemic to the greater Perth region are the: Little Mastiff Bat, Greater Long-eared Bat, Gould's Long-eared Bat, Gould's Wattled Bat, Lesser Long-eared Bat and the Chocolate Wattled Bat.

Some microbats live up to 25-years and most species require a hollow in a large standing tree (living or dead) for their dwelling. It takes up to 250 years for a eucalyptus tree to develop a hollow suitable to accommodate microbats. Due to human activities such as land clearing and firewood collecting, finding suitable habitat trees in the metropolitan area is becoming difficult for microbats. The introduced Honey Bee further reduces available habitat by occupying tree hollows microbats might otherwise use.



Honey Bees in Marri tree hollow. P. Murphy

Fortunately, there are ways in which humans can help to protect our little known flying mammals, mammals that

play an important role in reducing mosquito numbers. Enter the Batman. Builder and Environmental Consultant, Joe Tonga, is passionate about conserving our native bat species. Joe has (after years of research) designed bat habitat boxes specifically to accommodate microbats. Examples of Joe's microbat boxes are currently fixed in a tree in the Shenton Park bushland, where they are a huge success.

If you are interested in assisting with the creation of habitat for microbats Joe may be able to assist you in acquiring one of his bat-boxes. If you host a box for a microbat you will not only be helping microbats by giving them a home; you will be also be gifting your neighborhood with a lower mosquito population. Joe's bat-boxes can be found on [www.nestboxes.com.au](http://www.nestboxes.com.au) or by contacting Joe on 0418 918 367 or [joe@nestboxes.com.au](mailto:joe@nestboxes.com.au) (By Peter Murphy, Covenant Officer)

**Fire safety** has been of paramount importance and has weighed heavily on the minds of many covenants following the recent wildfires in Victoria. There has been much debate since the fires about whether to stay and defend your property or whether to evacuate and go early. Evidence from the 1983 fires in Victoria showed that very few homes were lost were people stayed and defended their properties, but these recent fires were of a much, much greater magnitude.



The most important decision you need to make is **whether your property is defensible**.

- Is your home and any nearby outbuildings constructed of materials that will not ignite readily (i.e. brick, stone, cement and steel)?
- Do your buildings comply with Australian Standard AS 3959-1999 "Construction of buildings in bushfire-prone areas"?
- Have you maintained a 20 metre wide "Fuel Free Zone" around your home which is free of all flammable material (including any timber, flammable garden plants and flammable mulch)?
- Have you also maintained a "Fuel Reduction Zone", 80 metres wide outside the "Fuel Free Zone" surrounding your house which is clear of all understorey plants and other flammable material?

- Do you have the necessary “stand alone” fire fighting equipment and an adequate water supply required to fight a fire for perhaps 2-3 hours?

The next important consideration is **are you physically fit enough and have the mental determination to fight a fire?** You may need to fight off the fire for an hour or more without rest in extremely hot and hazardous condition, wearing heavy protective clothing. Are you still capable of hard physical work for perhaps 2-3 hours without taking a break? I am not so sure I am anymore.

What if “Plan A” fails and is too late to leave the property in safety or fire gets a hold in your ceiling cavity and have to evacuate your home while the fire is still burning all around you? Do you have a safe well thought out “Plan B” and failing that a “Plan C”?

Most modern vehicles are constructed of alloys and plastics. Many plastics melt readily in a fire making most cars potential death traps. Subsequently modern vehicles can no longer be relied upon to escape from a fire.

We all love to live in, or near, the bushland we appreciate so much, but we must consider our own safety and the safety of others who may try to rescue us and make sound, rational decisions based on facts and not emotions. The bushland will regrow in time we unfortunately are not so resilient.

*(Steve Newbey, Covenant Officer and Trust Covenantor)*

**“Alvaro’s”** I recently had the pleasure of visiting one of our more recent covenanted properties in Merredin and meeting up with 3 generations of a farming family, whose impressive enthusiasm for conserving their bushland was matched only by the fantastic hospitality bestowed during morning tea celebrations in the bush!

The property named “Alvaro’s” in the Shire of Merredin falls within the Avon wheatbelt IBRA region of Western Australia, an area of considerable floristic diversity. Privately owned bushland in this area, found to be good condition, especially when connected to nearby or adjoining areas of protected remnant vegetation or reserves, is of great conservation value.

Together with the WWF-Australia Woodland Watch team, staff members of the Avon Catchment Council and several regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) representatives, I joined the Alvaro family over morning tea to celebrate the registration of their National Trust conservation covenant, which protects 171 hectares of remnant native bushland of high conservation value in the wheatbelt.

Congratulations go to Pep & Jules Alvaro who, with the support of their parents, Tony and Grace, have made a

lasting contribution to conservation of our precious native bushland in Western Australia; something future generations of the Alvaro family will appreciate for years to come. The National Trust has entered into 130 conservation covenants, protecting more than 14,000 hectares of native bushland in Western Australia. Recognition of the value in protecting native bushland in areas of Western Australia, where biodiversity has been fragmented for one reason or another, is something truly worth celebrating; cheers guys!

*(Louise Leigh, Covenant Coordinator)*

Natural Heritage Manager Alan Briggs presented Pep & Jules with a framed certificate of recognition something the Trust looks forward to awarding future covenantors.



Louise Leigh & Steve Newbey with Pep & Jules Alvaro

Photo by Alan Briggs



**Wagin Woolorama** Louise Leigh and Steve Newbey will have a stall promoting bushland conservation on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2009. hope to see some of you there!

For further information please contact the Natural Heritage staff at the National Trust.

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