

Friends of Lord Howe Island

Newsletter No.50

Summer 2019



In this issue:

- 2 Lonely Planet nominates Lord Howe Island in top 5 travel destinations for 2020
- 3,4,5 Report on August 2019 weed tour
- 6, 7 Friends LHI AGM
- 8 Update on Rodent Eradication Project
- 9 a look back at the first 10 Friends LHI newsletters
- 10 Helicopter weed work in mountains
- 10 2020 weed ecotour dates and details

Lord Howe Island named in top 5 travel destinations for 2020



Merry Christmas

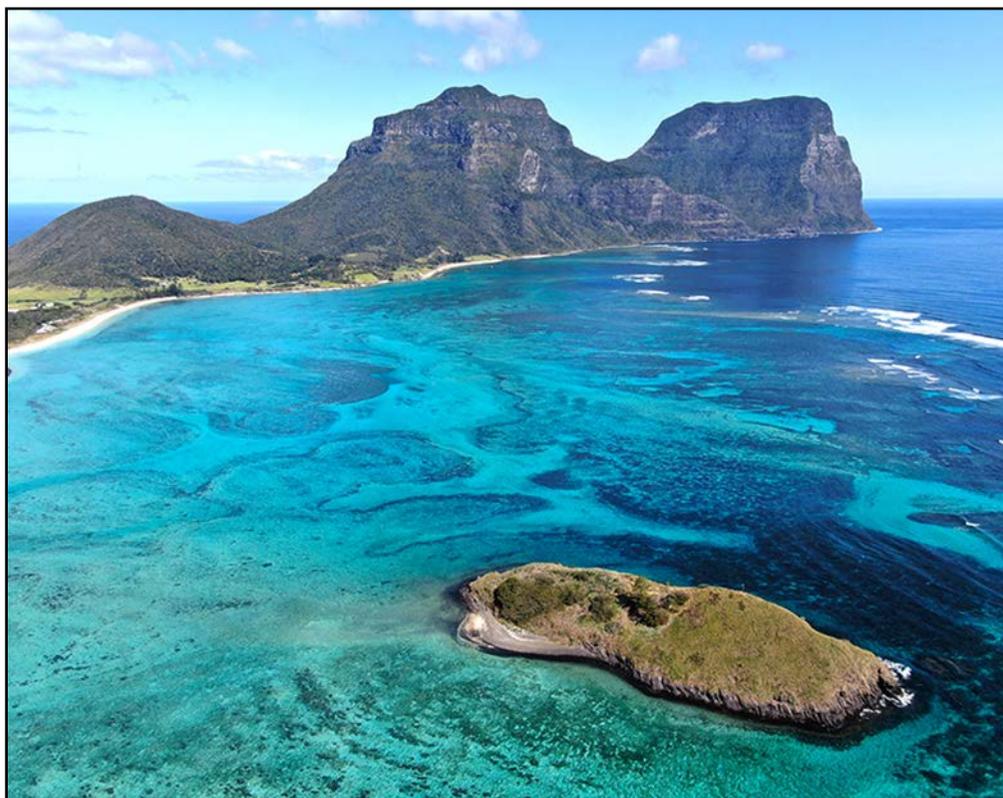


Lonely Planet releases top 5 must-visit destinations for 2020

Hidden off the coast of NSW, an island sanctuary awaits. A place so scenic, it has been lauded as one of the world's top travel destinations for 2020.

As the only Australian location featured in the Lonely Planet's Best in Travel 2020, Lord Howe Island wowed writers and editors who composed the list, citing the island as a must-visit destination for the upcoming year.

Sitting just 600km off the NSW coast, the island ranked fifth in the world's top 10 regions list in Lonely Planet's Best In Travel 2020 book. For the 15th year in a row, Lonely Planet narrowed down the list after speaking with writers, editors, authors and even online communities about their favourite destinations. Sitting east of Port Macquarie in the Tasman Sea, the tiny island placed fifth in the global travel gurus' top 10 regions. The exclusive island allows just 400 people to visit at any one time.



Parked in the middle of nowhere 600 kilometres off the Australian coast, this visually stunning island makes an instant impact on the senses with its jaw-dropping World Heritage-listed beauty," Lonely Planet wrote. "Two soaring green mountains overlook a perfect lagoon and the world's southernmost coral reef; perfect crescents of beach and splendid hiking trails through the lush forest add to brilliant outdoors possibilities."

Minister for Tourism Stuart Ayres said the recognition was a massive win for NSW and would boost the island's profile among international travellers in particular. There's something special about Lord Howe Island and it's fantastic that Lonely Planet's spotlight will encourage the rest of the world to discover this beautiful place too," Mr Ayres said.

"The natural beauty and charming remoteness of the island make Lord Howe a 'must-visit' destination for all kinds of travellers including luxury seekers and nature lovers.

"These visitors often extend their journey in Sydney before or after their island escape, and many are high-yield travellers who contribute significantly to the state's economy."

Topping the list for Lonely Planet's top 10 regions 2020 was the Central Asian Silk Road, followed by Le Marche in Italy, Tōhoku in Japan, and Maine in the United States.

August 2019 Weed ecotour report

In all, twenty Friends were on this trip; Bill McDonald, Ian Sinclair, John Pemble, Gwenda Lister, Clare Bewsher, Jane Blundell, Kevin Bryan, Jennifer Bryan, Linda Nord, Faye Cooke, Marjori Colman, Elizabeth Scahill, David Jinks, Natalie Hoskins, Soie Policarpio, John Zyla, Michael Rouse, Shirley Booth, Karen Morrison, Ian Hutton. It was a great mix of some of our regular Friends weeders plus good to see a number of people who have heard about these weeks, and decided to come along and try it out.

Somerset was the chosen accommodation for this group, and we were welcomed as usual. The group was very keen to get started, so tools were allocated on the day of arrival, for an early start next day.

Day 1 we chose a good site for the introduction - As this entry from the diary shows: *Could this be the most picturesque weeding spot on the globe? Beautiful sunshine, no wind, the sound of the rolling waves on Blinky Beach just behind us. This patch had been weeded in 2018, but the June 2019 team found it covered in sweet pea again. It was a timely follow up as there were a few new germinations that were weeded. After working on the first patch we moved further up Transit Hill where there were large patches of sweet pea along the track. It all looked very daunting – but we are weeders after all.* “



On this morning, our Friends weeder Ian Sinclair met with another Ian Sinclair (ex leader of the National Party) – who gave great praise for the Friends, as he has followed the whole weeding story on Lord Howe Island for the past twenty years. (He is married to Lord Howe Islander Rosemary Fenton).



Day 2 was to have the group on a lease adjacent to Arajilla to tackle an invasive vine that had been there for many decades. While it doesn't set seed and spread away from the site, it has climbed up and around the large banyan trees to cover an acre or so. The group members tried various methods to treat it – rolling up stems and piling up in sun; scrape and poison stem while leaving stem in situ; cut and pasted stem. Evaluation of the various treatments will provide the best method to finish this off on another Friends visit. An afternoon walk to Malabar finished the day.



Day 3 was all day at North Bay.

We were ferried over on the Environmental Tours glass bottom boat. And the group split into two - one did a sweep along the beaches looking for any Sea spurge plants. The others headed up onto North Head. On arriving at the site "we were surprised to see a Masked booby sitting on a pair of eggs. It was good to see this nest, as the chicks would not survive if rats were around." (note this is the first reported occurrence of Masked boobies nesting in this area – a good sign of what is to come with rats gone). The group did a great job in tackling the Coastal morning glory vine here. A technique we developed is to roll up stems until you find the very old stem entering the soil, cut, scrape and poison that and leave stem rolled in a heap. It is proving effective and we certainly enjoyed the view from this site. A small number left North Bay early to do a Ball's Pyramid boat trip with Jack Shick. The remainder enjoyed the Old Gulch and removing some Formosa lily there.



Lunch was a group effort "The salads at lunch were amazing – Faye and Marjorie were the architects behind the green salad with pomegranate seeds. Soie and John masterminded the green papaya salad. And Michael – well he seemed to be amongst all of it! "Kevin and Bill manned the BBQ's and both had hotplates overflowing with sausages, wafting their odours to tempt all to the table. "If we were left hungry at the end, we could only blame ourselves. Plus let's not forget the orange rice cake (Thumbs up to Ian H.) "



Day 4 was back to the Blinky Beach sweet pea site – and this morning really broke the back of the infestation and we look forward to visiting again and seeing how the area responds to removal of sweet pea. A small team also visited Thornleigh Farm and worked on some invasive vines and ferns there with Chris Murray. The afternoon walk was to Boat Harbour, enjoyed by all that went along.



Day 5 was an all-day excursion out to Blackburn Island to assist with a revegetation project being run by the LHI Board and Melbourne Zoo. The plan is to grow some native trees and a trial release of the

phasmid to take place in a few years time. The group was ferried out from the jetty to Blackburn Island by the Board Ranger Christo Haselden; and were greeted by staff from Melbourne Zoo for a briefing on what the day would entail.



The group split into several teams and shared duties of placing fertiliser and water crystals in each hole, planting trees, driving in stakes, constructing tree guards and stapling the tree guards to the stakes. It was a large workforce, and we surprised the supervisors when we finished all of the plantings in the holes prepared. So, we had lunch break while the staff prepared some more holes and after lunch



we continued planting – with a total of 750 plants in the ground. – a great day enjoyed by all.

Day 6 was another great revegetation day at Clear Place. Previously in past years the Friends groups had removed large Tree tobacco plants with chainsaws. Earlier in 2019 the Board staff had gone through again and removed any regrowth. The task this morning was a very pleasant one – replanting a range of native trees in the site. The first task was to do a complete comb through and hand pull hundreds of tiny seedlings less than 10cm tall. Then the digging of holes was easy in the sandy soil. Fertiliser was placed in holes and about 120 plants put in the ground. Always very satisfying to do this part of the restoration in any area.



The afternoon was one of the highlight activities of any weeding week – the low tide walks at Ned’s Beach. Everyone was dazzled by the colourful variety of marine creatures living in the rock pools; and to learn about their lifestyle stories.

On the last night there were farewell drinks and thanks by the LHI Board CEO Peter Adams and his wife Jeanine at the Museum

Friends of LHI AGM held at 3pm 12th October 2019, at the home of Ian Sinclair and John Pemble, 28 George Street, Yowie Bay, NSW

21 Friends attended, and there were apologies from 13 members.

Ian Hutton opened the meeting with a vote of thanks to Ian Sinclair and John Pemble for generously hosting the meeting and barbecue once again. This was, of course, unanimously supported!

Minutes from the 2018 AGM were read and accepted

The committee resigned and a new committee was elected as follows:
President: Chris Murray; Vice President: Ian Hutton Secretary: Annie Hawker
Treasurer: Gwenda Lister; Committee Members: Hank Bower, John Pemble, Robert Coenraads, Ian Sinclair.

Treasurers Report was tabled (see next page)

General Business

Nancy Pallin thanked Ian Hutton for his latest informative newsletter.

Rob Pallin mentioned what a tough time Jaclyn (of the rodent eradication team) had had on the island, culminating in her having to leave. He proposed a motion that we should express our support for her, which was seconded by Annie Hawker and unanimously passed.

Many questions were raised from the floor about the rodent eradication, the answers to most of which can be found in the team's information for residents sheet and in Ian's latest newsletter. There will be more information in the next newsletter, but it is all going well and changes are already happening on the island as a result.

Ian Hutton reported the need for a new back-pack sprayer, as the previous one had disappeared from outside the museum. Annie Hawker proposed that a new one be bought and Gwenda Lister seconded this. Jane Gye agreed to look into what would be the best one to buy.

Outdoor signs for the top of Pinetrees paddock and in the foreshore area, Ian Hutton passed round mock-up designs and there was general agree-

ment about which of these were best. Ian thought the signs might cost about \$2,500 each. Glenda Wardle suggested that the signs include a QR code for use on mobile phones. Several sponsors had indicated they would be willing to sponsor a sign. After some discussion it was decided that this would be a good thing on which to spend some of our own money; so a motion was put that sponsors be asked, if not successful then Friends pay for sign(s). Nancy Pallin proposed that we do this, seconded by Annie Hawker. Signs text and design will have to be put to the LHI Board for approval. Ian Hutton will continue with this project.

Ian Hutton proposed that we contribute \$10,000 to the project "Bringing the Lord Howe Island Weed Program Data Capture and Management into the Future". The project, suggested by Sue Bower, includes the development of an App for all the weeders on the island and would cost about \$61,000 in total. This was seconded by Gwenda Lister and unanimously approved.

Ian Sinclair proposed that funds be provided for an update and reprint of the Walking Track Weeds brochure which was originally produced about 10 years ago. John Pemble seconded this and it was unanimously approved. Ian Hutton will circulate a new version for our approval.

Ian Hutton told the meeting that Sue Bower had suggested that there be a display at the Museum about the weeding. He said that there was no costing on this yet but he thought it would cost about \$4,000 - \$5,000. He proposed that he get a quote and briefing on this project. This was seconded by Annie Hawker and unanimously approved.

Sue Bower and Ian Hutton successfully bid for a community Landcare grant of \$17,950 through the Local Land Services Stakeholder Partnerships - for the delivery of the North Coast Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan 2017-2022 including the LHI Weed Management Strategy. Some of this could be used for a "Weed Awareness Day", to be held in May 2020. This could coincide with the Friends trip in May and Friends be involved in the event.

Gwenda Lister proposed that Stephen Gale be made a Life Member of the Friends of Lord Howe Island in recognition of all his hard work as Treasurer over many years. This was seconded by Ian Hutton and unanimously approved.

Meeting closed 4.30pm

Treasurers Report 2018/2019

BALANCE SHEET FINANCIAL YEAR END 2019
(30.4.19)

INCOME

Donations- Individual \$120.00
Payments \$1200.00

Subscriptions \$800.00
Grants \$0

Interest/Sales/etc \$178.39
TOTAL \$2,298.39

EXPENDITURE

Insurance \$430.00

Tools \$1361.38

Statutory Fees \$45

Volunteer Expenses \$0

Grant/Project Expenses \$0

Operating Expenses \$0

Miscellaneous \$0

Promotion \$742.50

Bank Fees \$0

TOTAL \$2578.88

EARNINGS/(LOSS) (\$280.49)

Retained Earnings at beginning of the year
\$46,707.98

Retained Earnings at end of the year \$46,427.49

Represented by:

Assets

Cash at Bank Main Account \$4,332.01

Cash at Bank Main Investment Account \$17,219.45

Unpresented Cheque 300276 -\$105.45

Subtotal Main Accounts \$21,446.01

Cash at Bank Gift Fund \$4,561.01

Cash at Bank Gift Investment Account \$20,209.57

Subtotal Gift Accounts \$24,770.58

TOTAL \$46,216.59

LIABILITIES

LHI Marine Park Gift Fund \$2,546.88

Total \$2,546.88

Net Assets \$43,669.71

Note: New tools are written off at purchase



Update on the Rodent Eradication Project.

The Rodent Eradication Project is winding up - after 15 years planning and seven months implementation. As detailed in the last newsletter, a combination of baiting by helicopter, handbroadcast and bait stations was used. The helicopters finished their role in July.

Baiting in the bait stations continued around the settlement areas and in houses until the end of October. Since then bait stations in the settlement area, including in buildings, have been removed in November 2019. The bait stations have been washed and sold for a New Zealand island eradication program.

A program using detection devices and sniffer dogs continued to mid-December, with no signs of live rodents detected since the end of September.

The Captive Currawongs were released in September and observers have been monitoring their breeding, and report numerous pairs with nests, eggs and chicks doing well.

Woodhens were ferried to the remote areas of the island by helicopter during the week 12 to 17 November. These were Woodhens being returned to the areas where they had been caught in April – Mount Gower, Mount Lidgbird and Big Slope, where no baits had been dropped since July and the pellets had broken down. Then in November ten sentinel Woodhens fitted with radio transmitters were released in the area adjacent to the waste facility, an area where they could be monitored and caught easily. After a period of two weeks the birds were to be caught and blood samples taken to test for any traces of residual brodifacoum that might indicate it could still be in the environment there.

The team leaders and dog handlers are confident that all of the rodents have been removed from the Island. However, the project will not be officially declared a success until after a period of two years with no rodents having been found. In two year's, time an Island wide search effort with dogs will determine if the project was successful. This is the international protocol with island rodent eradications, because if there were any rodents remaining, they would be in such low numbers that it would be too difficult to reliably detect if they were there or not.



Left: a wax pellet impregnated with peanut butter is one of the monitoring devices being used to detect the presence of rodents on the Island.

Below: the long task of bringing in 20,000 bait stations.



This is Number 50 newsletter

Here is a look at a few highlights from the first ten Friends of LHI newsletters.

Newsletter no 1 Spring 2000 Friends group at last formed

In October 2000 the Friends of Lord Howe Island was officially incorporated, after a few hiccups in getting under way. Treasurer Steve Gale signed the paperwork on October 8th for the incorporation of the Friends of Lord Howe Island.

The impetus for forming the Friends group came about as a result of the enthusiasm of the members of the 1998 and 1999 weeding groups and their concern for the danger that weeds pose to the integrity of the island environment.

The weeding trips came from a chance meeting in 1997 on the Island between Ian Hutton and Rymill Abell. Ian had been bringing nature tours to the island for many years, and including a half day voluntary weeding activity in the itinerary, under direction of the LHI Board. In 1995 he brought the first small weeding group, of bush regenerators from Canberra. Rymill was on his first visit to the Island in June 1997, and after seeing one of the group voluntary activities he got talking with Ian.

Rymill had been bush regenerating in Lane Cove for many years and is highly regarded in Sydney bush regeneration circles. He thought some of his colleagues might be interested in coming to the Island to do some weeding. After consulting with Island Ranger Dean Hiscox, a trip was planned. Response to his calling for help was overwhelming and in June 1998 30 Sydney bush regenerators came to the Island to help eradicate asparagus fern. News of the great time had by all spread and a return trip for June 1999 was quickly filled.

Newsletter no. 2 Autumn 2001 Phasmid “rediscovered”

In February, a team headed by Dr David Pridell from NSW NPWS visited Ball’s Pyramid and “rediscovered” the Lord Howe Island phasmid – a large, primitive, flightless, stick insect. The phasmid lived on the Island for millions of years until rats wiped them out in the 1920’s. In 1964 Sydney rock climber David Roots, while attempting the first ascent of Ball’s Pyramid, photographed a recently dead specimen and rekindled hopes that a small population may still be alive there.

Newsletter no. 2 Autumn 2001 IUCN Eradication of Island Invasives Conference Auckland Feb 19 to 23.

WWF sponsored both Ian Hutton and LHI Board Administrative Officer Greg Leaman to attend this conference. 180 participants from around the world attended, with lectures by speakers given on topics from eradication of rats and rabbits from Saint-Paul Island and crazy ants from Christmas Island to Red Mangrove eradication in Hawai’i and weed eradication on Raoul Island. The speakers were hands on researchers, and the message is that it is possible to eradicate island invasive species – both plants and animals.

Newsletter no 4 Spring 2001 Insidious environmental problem shows up on Lord Howe Island

A rather shocking environmental situation has become apparent on Lord Howe Island recently. In the breeding grounds of the Flesh-footed shearwater (Muttonbird) along the east coast of Lord Howe Island a number of bird skeletons, filled with fragments of plastic have been located.

Newsletter no. 4 Spring 2001 Restoration on Lord Howe Island

The next step in the restoration of Lord Howe Island ecosystems is eradication of rats. A feasibility study has been done, in part sponsored by WWF. The Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife are raising funds to initiate research into how this might successfully be achieved. Funding may go towards setting up a restoration plan for the Island, with the aim of drawing in all interested parties to discuss the issues and coordinate research and efforts. In time the Island may be free from major invasive species. With habitat restored, many impacted species will flourish and it may be possible to reintroduce closely related subspecies to those exterminated in the past as a result of human activity.

Newsletter no. 6 winter 2002 Presidents Report - Des Thompson

As a resident, I must express my appreciation for the efforts made by the visiting volunteers. It is heartening to know that persons other than residents enjoy the natural beauty of Lord Howe sufficiently to come here and help us with our weed problem. Possibly because of your visits, there is now on the Island a greater awareness of how weeds can degrade the indigenous vegetation, and that awareness has led to more effort by the Board and locals to overcome the problem.

Newsletter no 9 Winter 2003 Multispecies Recovery Plan for LHI

It has just been announced that funding has been made available to prepare a Multispecies recovery plan for all species on Lord Howe Island. This new proposal will be a challenging project but will have the benefit of integrating threats to all species, many of which may overlap, and some species interact with each other in the environment so this multispecies approach will have considerable benefits and efficiencies.

Helicopter returns to continue effort on weeds in the southern mountains to protect Lord Howe Island's cloud forest

A helicopter winch program was carried out in a ten day operation in November.

Cherry Guava and Ground Asparagus have been detected on the northern flanks of Mt Gower. Teams were inserted at priority sites by helicopter winch. This work will help to prevent weed spread across Erskine Valley and onto the summit of Mt Gower.

Also in November, a complete grid search for weeds was carried out for the first time by Lord Howe Island Board staff..

The Saving Our Species Program (SOS) and the Protecting the Little Mountain Palm and World Heritage Values (Regional Partnerships Grant administered by the North Coast Local Land Services (NCLLS) is funding continued weed effort in the Southern Mountains.



Friends 2020 Weeding Ecotour Dates

There will be two weeding ecotours for 2020:

May 23 to 30 and August 29 to September 5

The weeks will have the usual format of the past few years - sharing half the time in conservation projects and half the time exploring the Island to enjoy and learn about its fascinating flora and fauna.

The conservation projects will include removal of coastal morning glory from several coastal sites; removal of the garden Sweet pea from Blinkie Beach headland, and restoration of the site with seeds and seedling; continual removal of coastal Sea spurge. These are recent projects that the Friends initiated and are well underway to becoming successful.

Additionally, the group will assist with some other conservation projects. The revegetation program on Blackburn Island, to provide habitat for a trial release of phasmids. The Friends carried out replanting in August 2019 and we will revisit for more planting or maintenance. There are also opportunities to be involved in post rodent eradication monitoring projects.

The May 2019 Weeding ecotour will be a landmark week - the 90th Weeding week since the volunteer weeding program began on Lord Howe island.

You need to book this trip by January 2nd;

Phone Fiona at Oxley Travel 1800 671 546 for booking details.

