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Higher Ground Australia



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HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – November 2004

Welcome

Hello everyone and welcome to our November newsletter. This has been a very busy month as we work to tie up our loose ends from our Boonah weekend.

Members

Welcome to our new members for this month. Again, we have attracted a number of new people to our mailing list and I want to welcome you all. Don't forget that if you want to include your profile to be included in next month's newsletter, please email me.

Website

Our web address is: www.highergroundaustralia.com The website is being updated regularly and if you want to leave any feedback, please do not hesitate to contact us.

2005 Gathering Bateman's Bay, NSW

Our gathering in 2005 will be in Bateman's Bay NSW. We are currently looking for a suitable site and will give you the details when we have organised the accommodation. Thanks to Alistair and Carmel for taking this task on. Thanks also to Michelle Moore who lives in Bateman's Bay and is going to give a hand.

Australian Native Animal Care

The scales were purchased last month and already have been put to good use. We are having them engraved with the following dedication. Thanks to everyone who responded to our quick poll! The cost of the scales was \$341.00, which was raised at the silent auction.

Donated by Higher Ground Australia in loving memory of John Denver (1943 - 1997)

'And all those who see me, and all who believe in me share in the freedom I feel when I fly'

Silent Auction/Fundraising

The Silent Auction has been a wonderful success. Our total amount raised at the silent auction was \$1072.65. Together with the sales of the cookbook to the end of October, cash donations,

surplus funds from the raffle and food kitty, we now have \$1360.79 to donate to the Steve Irwin Conservation Foundation. To date, I have written to the people administering this fund, and have requested a plaque/recognition in John's name, but I have not yet received a response. A follow up has gone out this week. As you can imagine, I would like this donation to be finalised as soon as possible. Here is the link to the SIWF website.

<http://www.siwf.com.au/>

Steve Irwin

On Thursday, 21st October, This is Your Life (Australia) featured Steve Irwin. This show was really good and Steve was at his very best.

Cook Book

Hurry – Last few copies of the cookbook are available. After the last 13 copies are sold, there will be no more. This has been a terrific fundraiser, and I would like to take the opportunity to publicly thank Genie for donating the costs of printing the 100 cookbooks. This means that all proceeds from this cookbook are donated back to HGA. All money collected for cookbook sales from 1st November will be added to the 2005-2006 balance sheet.

Thanks to everyone who has purchased a copy as 100% of your money will be donated to raptor rehabilitation in Australia. For any further sales, please contact Genie either through the website or on gbp@almostheavendesigns.com

Book Giveaway

As you know, the two picture books were donated to schools in regional areas of NSW and Victoria. It is nice to get some feedback and the following email was received by me recently.

This is just a short note to thank you for the beautiful picture story book "Ancient Rhymes" we received. We are hoping to present it to the staff at our next meeting and will be sending a thankyou note to Maureen Green for nominating our school to receive such a beautiful book. many thanks.

The pleasure was all ours.

Latest John Denver News

A *Song's Best Friend* CD has been released in Australia. Many of you would have seen the advertising on TV. It is \$29.99 from most record stores. The bonus disc is excellent and it is nice to see some previously unreleased material released in this way.

Newsflash: JB Hi Fi has this wonderful CD on sale for \$21.47, so if you do not already have it....

Even Better Newsflash: *A Song's Best Friend* has moved to number 27 on the Australian Top 40 Albums. Can we get it to number 1?

BearForest, The Netherlands

Congratulations to Netty and Michiel of the Dutch group who have written to inform us that they finally reached their goal. Here is what they wrote:

John Denver is now the "owner" of 10 square metres of the Bearforest. Yesterday I received the certificate of ownership. Of course it is in the Dutch language but perhaps you can understand what it says. Soon the line "Together we can make a difference - John Denver" will be written on the billboard at the entrance of the forest :-). We chose for parcel number 1231 because that is the date of John's birthday. It makes me happy to know that our project has succeeded. On the 27th of November, a group of people from our Dutch WOJD is going to the Bearforest to celebrate it :-). Janette, a big Thank You to you for the support you gave us! It meant a lot to Michiel and me.



Netty – this is a wonderful achievement and please pass on our congratulations to your group in the Netherlands.

Windstar Australia Connection News

The first Windstar Australian Connection meeting will take place in Werribee, Victoria on Saturday, 20th November. Good luck, girls, as you work towards making decisions for the Windstar activities during the coming year.

Help Required

We are looking for the whereabouts (just an email address will do) of Alan Cherry, who wrote and sang the beautiful tribute song 'Kindred Spirit'. If you have not heard it, I believe it is included on one of those tribute CDs from the Wheeler. The only reference to Alan Cherry on the internet is the article from the Rocky Mountain High group.

<http://www.shellworld.net/~emily/articles/Alan%20Cherry-Eqli-Jan03.txt>

Kindred Spirit Alan J Cherry

You filled up our hearts
Like the mountains in springtime
You gave us the songs
Of a sweet country boy
So this is my tribute
It's my sweet surrender
To one who has given
The world so much joy

Along country roads
That are travelled by many
You lived life without care
And followed your dreams
You dreamt of a world
That could live life in harmony
Like the birds in the air
Like the fish in the streams

So fly like an eagle
Through high craggy mountain tops
To rocky cathedrals
That reach to the sky
Oh drift on the west wind
The journey is endless
Your music and songs
Are your lasting goodbye.

You sang with a passion
Of life in the mountains
Of people you loved
And the ones left behind
But the song I loved most
Is the song of the eagle
It reminds me of you
And I know you don't mind.

Poem

Thanks to Gloria who has written this beautiful poem.

The Late John Denver – Singer, Environmentalist & Humanitarian

**A Man For the People, A Man For the Earth
When John died on the 12th October 1997
He was happily flying, & in “Seventh Heaven”
His spirit was uplifted on high by family &
friends**

**Who celebrated his life, as a man, singer, &
Earth Friend**

**Followed later by the Medicine Wheel Indian
ceremony**

**Held in Aspen on 12th October '98 with love &
harmony,**

**In memory of John's love for the Earth, &
vision for peace**

**& for people to move forward; & their pain to
release.**

**Seven long years have now passed on by
Since John's Spirit was freed to fly**

**Soaring, gliding, way past the speed of mach
Amongst the stars & planets, and back**

**To hover above the Earth & all who dwell
thereon**

**His Spirit uplifted by those carrying on
Helping the sick & hungry and the
environment**

**Things he himself did before his untimely
ascent.**

**If a streak of light flashes brightly on high
That's probably John's Spirit flashing on by
Zooming amidst the stars in a wondrous place
Joyously flying in the magical grandeur of
space**

**Perhaps rejoining other Spirits, all rolled into
one**

**Watching over the Earth bathed in golden sun
His Spirit warming all who live & strive below
As peace & encouragement from his Essence
flows.**

**He showed us all, what one man can do
We each, in turn, can contribute our bit too
Even if one is perennially & boringly broke
It doesn't cost to pick up rubbish or to help
other folk**

**Or to click on the Hunger, & Environmental
sites**

**And to, in small ways to try to make things
right**

**To pray for peace, & to protect Mother Earth,
& to care for mankind & all creatures on Earth.**

As the wheel of life spins and turns

Will he climb aboard and one day return?

If so, no matter what guise he wears,

There'll be love & hope for all; in the air.

Gloria Donnelly

Pacific Grove

The following is a letter from Debra Sanderson who attended the October JD tribute days.

Although not as well known as the Aspen events, it is nice to know that people all over the place are celebrating the life of John Denver.

Thanks to Debra for putting this together and thanks to Linda for passing it on.

Friends:

The saying about roads and good intentions comes to mind tonight. I was full of good intentions of sending out an email report on events when I got back from Pacific Grove. Life interfered, and so here I am, a week later.

Better late than never, here is the news!

Once again, the weather was gorgeous for the Sunday event. We had a fog bank move through, but the morning was clear and mild, perfect for a beach cleanup. The cleanup group collected 60 gallons of trash overall - we filled 2 30-gallon bags with debris of all kinds. As in past years, the majority of the garbage picked up was cigarette butts. Is it any wonder California is in the midst of declaring a series of beaches "no smoking" areas? The really astounding thing is that the California Coastal Cleanup Day was the month before, on September 17th. They cleaned up 860,000 pounds of trash from all over the state.... and still, there's more.

There's obviously still a long way to go in educating people about pollution, litter, and the effect all this garbage has on Spaceship Earth and all those who travel on her.

Our enthusiastic group of raffle participants raised \$160.00 that we split between Friends of the Monarchs and Plant-It 2020. Not bad for an afternoon's work in Lovers Point Park!

During the tribute that afternoon, we listened to John Denver CDs on the boombox, and Marie Falcone read the letter she wrote to share with the Aspen group at the campfire. Weather in Los Angeles grounded our Long EZ pilot, but we got our flyby after all - from a pelican squadron, flying in formation over John Denver Beach and out toward the water!

We sang along with John Denver, we cried, we shared stories, we laughed and chatted with people who've become friends over the last 7 years, and met more people for the first time. More than once, I've chatted or emailed with people who say the same thing - there are people in our lives that have become our best friends, people we are so glad we met and whose absence would be keenly felt.

And then we share the wish that I believe each of us makes, maybe only once a year and maybe only very early in the morning when the world is dark and silent and we can't sleep, that we wish we'd never *had* to meet all these new people, never had to learn where Pacific Grove CA was on the map, never had to know what a Long EZ plane was, never had to rearrange our lives each October and never had to make room in our lives for all these new friends and all this new grief.

The raw edges of the grief wear down slightly as time passes. It's a different process for everyone, and everyone works through it in their own way. But all of these new friends we have share this same grief, and so once a year we know we all have a place we can go for compassion, for people with whom we can share "All this joy, all this sorrow, all this promise, all this pain." Because we know that each of these new friends understands: "Such is life, such is being, such is spirit, such is love."

Peace, Love and Understanding:
John Denver: The Legacy Continues

Article

This article was included in our Sunday travel supplement recently and I thought I would share it with you. This is a beautifully written piece. I hope you enjoy it as well. Perhaps when we think of conservation, we should not be just thinking of the land, resources and animals, but PEOPLE as well. I think this article portrays it nicely...

Feast Time for Old Crow Folk

The Caribou migration is a natural wonder few people witness, writes Jenny Stevens (Escape Sunday Herald Sun, October 27, 2004 – www.escape.com.au)

They were coming. Somewhere beyond the river, beyond the stunted black spruce forest covering the low hills, the Porcupine caribou herd was flooding out of the north.

Icy winds had signalled it was time to leave their calving grounds in northeastern Alaska and head south to their winter range in the Yukon.

As many as half the calves perish in their first year: prey to bears, wolves, golden eagles and the elements; more drown trying to cross the rivers.

This year, fewer would drown. The great Porcupine River that winds lazily over the Canadian north was desperate for water, leaving steep, sandy banks that threatened to collapse with each wind gust.

Nothing stops the caribou, and the Vuntut Gwitchin people of Old Crow will give thanks and celebrate with much feasting.

The men will hunt and prepare the meat; the women will cook and sew the hides into garments and useful items. Isolation has been beneficial, as this tiny community of 280 has retained its language and First Nations culture while embracing the new.

On a Yukon map, Old Crow is in the middle of nowhere, 128km north of the Arctic Circle; it's at the centre of one of the great migrations. And it's here that the Vuntut Gwitchin wait for them, as they have always done – caribou horn tools have been dated back 1350 years.

Now eco-tourists are trickling in to learn about this unique community and its relationship with the caribou. There are two self-contained B&Bs, satellite TV, a general store and guides. There is no road access, but a daily air service.

The village, on a high bank overlooking the Porcupine, is a cluster of homes on adjustable piles to counter subsidence. In the blaze of a brief summer, it is difficult to remember that the ground under foot is permafrost and the heat from

buildings causes the frozen earth to melt unevenly.

Through an interpreter, village elder Lydia Thomas, 88, told how the Vuntut Gwitchin have always lived off the land, hunting, fishing and sewing hides as garments and tents.

"When I was growing up, we lived on the caribou." Mrs. Thomas said. "The men would bring the caribou back and the women would dry the skin and make snow shoes and parkas.

But now we eat fish and get store meat – it doesn't taste like real meat."

This winter, Old Crow will have to do without another staple: dog salmon. A feed of the watery salmon stew is the highlight of a sled dog's day. But only a trickle of salmon survived the fishing boats and nets on the journey through Alaska to spawn in the creeks of the Porcupine and Crow.

The village's Renewable Resource Council has imposed a ban on fishing so numbers can regenerate.

For generations, the Vuntut Gwitchin have taken what they needed from the land for food and shelter; now their fishing camps are empty and their old ways are under threat.

More galling is the politics of oil. The Alaskan Government – backed by powerful federal voices in Washington – wants to drill for oil and gas on the caribou calving grounds of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which the Vuntut Gwitchin see as a serious ecological threat. We sat around the campfire and ate moose stew and caribou steak while Stephen Frost, 72, talked about the old days, when the white man's diseases devastated the tribes, and how his family sought the isolation of the river camps.

But he mostly talked about the present, about the bears, wolves and moose who visit his camp, about the wonderful berries growing in the woods, and about his efforts to keep trophy hunters away from his moose lake, a little paradise a few minutes' walk away.

This man, whose food comes from hunting, disdains sport shooting, as does his son.

The paradox of hunter and conservator continued on the return trip, when Dennis Frost explained how he traps martins, wolves, lynx, fox and wolverines for their fur, which are made by Gwitchin women into superb clothing.

Despite its pressures, it's not too late for this land, its river and its traditional owners. Bears fish by the banks and moose and caribou tracks are everywhere. Wild berries cover the low bush.

It's a place where man and animals have learned to co-exist. The question remains: For how long?

Did you know? The Yukon has 180,000 caribou, 17,000 bears and 50,000 moose – but only 31,000 people

For further information about this incredible community please refer to their website

www.oldcrow.yk.net

They are in the process of moving the website to the following:

<http://www.oldcrow.ca/index2.htm>

Last Word

The December issue of the newsletter will be completed around the 10th – 15th December. If anyone has anything to contribute to this last newsletter for 2004, please let me know.

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