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Higher Ground Australia



[www.highergroundaustralia.com/](http://www.highergroundaustralia.com/)

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## HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – October 2004

### Welcome

Hello everyone and welcome to our October newsletter. This has been such an incredible month, culminating with the weekend at Boonah. You will be reading more about that during the course of this newsletter. All I will say here is that the weekend was a huge success and enjoyed by everyone who attended.

### Members

This month has resulted in a large boost in our members. We now have 71 members of Higher Ground Australia. I would like to extend a warm welcome to all the new people who have joined us over the past month and I hope it is the beginning of a wonderful kinship that can only occur when people have a common thread.

### Website

Our web address is:

[www.highergroundaustralia.com](http://www.highergroundaustralia.com) The website has been updated since the weekend. You will be able to see the new photos and also read about our weekend in Boonah.

### 2004 Gathering Boonah, Queensland

The lead-up to the Higher Ground Australia annual gathering to celebrate the life and music of John Denver began months ago with the usual preparations. Last week was particularly exciting with the radio interview about our annual JD weekend on the ABC radio, broadcast to south east Queensland. This was a great introduction to the weekend and we had a great response to the interview with many people either commenting on it or calling for more information.

Friday, 8<sup>th</sup> October heralded the beginning of gathering as we started to move toward Boonah Queensland. We had our core group of people from Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland attending as well as many others who made the effort to travel great distances to be with us. One of those people was Max Moore, who travelled up to Boonah from Bowral NSW to be with us. Max was John's Australian tour manager and over the years they became very good friends with one another. Max's book, *Some Days are Diamonds*, was published last year and as well as writing

about many of his experiences in the Australian entertainment industry, he has dedicated a couple of chapters to John. Of course, we were all most excited to meet him and to talk to him and to ask him to sign our copies of his book.

Friday evening started with a shared meal of casseroles, made by Margaret. We decided to get the business part of the weekend out of the way making some important decisions about the donation of the proceeds of the silent auction.

Two small green visitors, were found on the chairs on the balcony. A visit from Kermit and his relative! The weekend was starting on the right foot.

Saturday brought a sunny, but hazy day due to the bushfires burning in the distance. Some people still had to vote in the federal election if they had not already done so. After a visit to the local town market and the small township of Boonah, we returned for lunch. We set up the Peace Cloth panel that we were going to create to later send to the John Denver Memorial Peace Cloth. Some of us decided to drive around the local area, stopping first at a lavender farm then driving on until we came to a sign pointing to Maroon Dam. Suddenly we felt very close to Aspen! A short drive down to the dam for a photo stop was in store. Photos were taken. Due to the smoke from the bushfires in the surrounding area it was difficult to see the mountains in the background.

Saturday night and we started our silent auction, drew the raffle and started our sing-a-long. We also saw Max's home video the trip he and his wife took to Aspen to stay with John. Such incredible images of the beautiful Rocky Mountains were shown to us.

Visitors from the local township of Boonah and Brisbane joined us as we sang and played John's songs until the early hours of the morning. Alistair recited *The Box*, *The Ambulance in the Valley* and the *Peace Poem* as the singers took a break.

On Sunday, we quickly prepared for our annual tree planting and reading of letters from our global friends. This year we planted five plants. Four shrubs – one for Higher Ground Australia, one for our global family, one for peace and for the

reduction of hunger and poverty across the world, and one for Meryl, Max's wife who had passed away earlier this year. John's tree was planted then we each poured water that we had brought from our homes into a bucket. This symbolic mixing of the water from our homes was used to water John's tree. The plaque was placed in front and we stood in silence for one minute. We then read the letters and greetings that were sent from our friends across the world. We all felt very close to John during those special moments.

### **Eagle Demonstration**

At 12 noon, Alf Bodem of Australian Native Animal Care arrived with a Goss hawk and a wedge-tail eagle to be released back into the wild after being rehabilitated. Alf is a wealth of knowledge about birds and has worked with them for many years. The hawk was released first. Alf removed the top off the box and away it went, much to the curiosity of the magpies and other birds. Next it was the turn of the eagle. Alf opened the top of the box and .... nothing. The eagle did not move. Very gently, Alf lifted the head of the eagle and it majestically opened its wings to their full span and it was gone. It flew to a nearby tree and perched briefly before it flew to the next. Of course, we were all so awestruck that I am sure none of us got a photo! Although we had intended playing The Eagle and the Hawk while the release was happening, the song that was actually playing was Fly Away! Appropriate? Absolutely, but you had to be there. This incredible weekend was almost at an end, so we sat to eat our last meal together until next year. We also listened to Alf present a talk about rehabilitation of birds. We also announced that we would be donating a set of scales needed for accurately weighing the birds to Australian Native Animal Care.

### **Silent Auction**

The Silent Auction was a great success and we have raised over \$1,100 so far. We are just waiting for a couple of amounts to come in and then I will be able to announce the final total proceeds for this popular activity.

I would also like to take the opportunity at this point to thank each and every one of you who have contributed in some way. Without your donations, people have nothing to buy. This year we had a total of 69 lots and with the exception of a few LPs, we sold everything. Thanks to everyone.

### **Fundraising**

The proceeds of the silent auction will be going in two directions this year. First, we are purchasing a set of scales for the Australian Native Animal Care. The scales are necessary to accurately weigh the birds. We are also putting a brass plaque on the scales in John Denver's name. The

rest of the money will be donated to the Steve Irwin Conservation Foundation, which is a non-profit organisation dedicated to raising the awareness of protecting and enhancing the natural environment. This is **not** connected to the Australia Zoo.

### **Recipe Book**

The recipe book is available for sale and can be purchased, either through the website or through contacting Genie directly on [gbp@almostheavendesigns.com](mailto:gbp@almostheavendesigns.com)

### **2004 Raffle**

The first prize of an original oil painting of John was won by Carmel.

The second prize of three bottles of wine was won by Helene. Congratulations to both of you. I know you are both going to enjoy your prizes.

### **Book Giveaway**

We have donated two picture books to two schools. Sunshine on My Shoulders was nominated by Pat Evans and has been donated to the Eleebana Public School NSW and Ancient Rhymes was donated to the Warragul Primary School VIC and was nominated by Marina Green.

Thank you for participating in this worthwhile giveaway. We should try to make this an annual event.

### **Peace Cloth**

We have created a panel for the peace cloth. Just a few more touches to be made and it will be posted to the John Denver Memorial Peace Cloth people. Thanks to everyone who participated in this worthy activity.

### **Australian native Animal Care**

The scales were paid for last Friday evening, so Alf and Liz should have been notified that the scales can be picked up. We will make contact with Alf and Liz when the plaque has been engraved.

### **Australian native Animal Care**

Some photos from the weekend have been posted top the website. [www.highergroundaustralia.com](http://www.highergroundaustralia.com). If you have any photos to share, please let us know.

### **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.

## Windstar Australial Connection News

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, John Denver's Windstar Foundation Symposium 2004 in Snowmass, Colorado was a huge success! The theme was "NEW Choices for Your Future" and was an on-line and on-site Environmental Education Symposium for students, teachers and the public. A few of us viewed the symposium via the web-cast, but if you missed it, you can see most of it at the following address.  
<http://www.kidzonline.org/windstar/>

The Australia Connection of Windstar will be having their first meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November, time and place to be determined as we get closer. We have many exciting projects and ideas to get us off to a great start. Won't you join us? If you are not already a member of Windstar, there is still time to join before our first meeting! Just check our temporary site at:  
[www.almostheavendesigns.com/Windstar-Australia-Connection.html](http://www.almostheavendesigns.com/Windstar-Australia-Connection.html) for more details. After our first meeting, you can keep up with our projects and news at our permanent home on the internet at:  
[www.windstaraustraliaconnection.com](http://www.windstaraustraliaconnection.com).

Windstar's Mission: "To inspire individuals to make responsible choices and take direct actions to achieve a peaceful and environmentally sustainable future. "We as the Australia Connection want to bring that mission to Australia and we need strong members to help carry on John's legacy. For more information, please email Genie at [windstar\\_oz@yahoo.com.au](mailto:windstar_oz@yahoo.com.au).

"For the children and the flowers are my sisters and my brothers, come and stand beside me, we can find a better way." - John Denver, Windstar Co-Founder

## John Denver Tribute Show

### **Colin Mockett / Geoff Sinnbeck**

A group of us attended this tribute show on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October in Barwon Heads. This was a good show and if anyone has the opportunity to see it, please make the effort.

Geoff has written a tribute song, which is really lovely. He has promised that it will be released one day on a CD – I hope it is released soon.

## Next Year's Gathering

At this stage, we are investigating Bateman's Bay, NSW south coast for next year's gathering. This is renowned for its beautiful coastline, rugged mountains in the backdrop and whales and dolphins should be making their way south for the summer by this stage, so we may be lucky enough to see some sea life. For the people flying in for the weekend, I have done a little

research and it looks as though Canberra is the best place to fly to, as it is only 147kms from Bateman's Bay.

We will let you know when we have found a venue.



## Quote

I thought this following quote is appropriate, as we think about our experiences last week and look forward to others in the future:

***"When I write a song, I want to take the personal experience or observation I have and express it in as universal a way as possible. I absolutely believe there is something in all of us that binds us together."* (John Denver)**

## Books

I have not had a great deal of time lately to look for any good books to read. However a real classic novel that is worth reading again is Nevil Shute's 'On the Beach'. This novel has been made into a movie twice. It is an interesting concept, and in Nevil Shute's fashion, extremely well-written. Also, check out the second-hand book stores for good autobiographies. You never know what you will find.

## Thanks

There are a huge number of people who deserve thanks for their contributions to Higher Ground Australia over the past six months. I am not going to name those people as I would be unlucky enough to miss out on someone, thus inadvertently offending them. I would like to thank every person who has donated goods to our auction and raffle, who have donated cash to cover expenses, who have cut and stapled memory booklets, who have given up their time for the website, for the recipe book, for cooking and washing up over the weekend, for extending their hands in love and kindness. We appreciate every gesture – big and small. Love and {{{HUGS}}} to you all.

## Rest in Peace

On October 11<sup>th</sup>, Christopher Reeve passed away, aged 52 years. We wish his family our deepest condolences.