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HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – November 2005

Welcome

Welcome to everyone. This last month has been busy as we have finalised everything from last month's wonderful John Denver gathering in Mogo, near Bateman's Bay, NSW. When you get a chance, please stop by the website as Lynn has updated it to include the information and photos from Batemans Bay. Thanks to everyone who contributed photos to include on the website.

New Members

A number of new members have joined us over the past month. We welcome each and every one of you, especially the ones who live in Denver Cottage. Our membership base has grown substantially over the past year and we know that there are a lot of John Denver fans out there. Thanks to everyone who has contacted me recently and welcome to all of the new members who will receive this newsletter for the very first time.

Happy Birthday to....

Lynn. On behalf of us all here at Higher Ground Australia, I would like to extend many happy returns to you on the 22nd November. Lynn is our very wonderful webmaster. HAPPY BIRTHDAY LYNN!



Birdland

After all the money was counted, we were able to send to Birdland a total of \$1,730.00. To everyone who contributed to this wonderful amount of money we thank you. If any one you are in the Bateman's Bay vicinity in the future, please pop into Birdland and say hello to 'our' eagle.

Here is the link to Birdland – please visit their lovely web site.

<http://www.birdlandanimalpark.com.au/index.html>

Name the Eagle Ballot

As many of you know, we recently ran a ballot to name the eagle at Birdland. We received a large number of ideas, but here are the results.

1. Spirit = 11 votes
2. Anne/Annie = 8 votes
3. Jessie/Whispering Jessie = 7 votes

We have submitted these 'winning' names to Birdland.

Thanks to Lynn who has been handling the receipt and counting of these votes.

We have also received the following from David Burnett of Birdland:

***Dear Janette and HGA,
Thankyou very much for the most generous donation and please pass on our thanks to all your members involved.***

David also sent through a proof, showing the design of the sign Birdland are providing for the aviary, which houses the eagle. This has been sent as an additional file with this newsletter.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank David and his staff at Birdland for the wonderful facility they are providing to the animals they have in their care. I think that their enthusiasm for our desire to donate to the eagle and the way in which they have welcomed us has really endeared them to us. For us, it has been a positive experience as we feel that our fund raising efforts have been worthwhile.

The Eagle has been Named!

We have received confirmation from David Burnett of Birdland to say that the eagle will be named Spirit. A bird that has survived falling into powerlines definitely has plenty of spirit and we believe that it has been well-named.

I wish to thank everyone who has participated in this ballot to name Spirit. There were some very creative names included in the votes. We would also like to pass on our thanks to David and the staff of Birdland for giving us the opportunity to name this wonderful and spirited bird. It has been an incredible honour to be involved with Birdland.

Australian Native Animal Care

As you all know, the proceeds of the sale of the cookbook was earmarked for Australian Native Animal Care in Brisbane. Alf and Liz Bodem have become good friends of Higher Ground Australia over the past 18 months. After writing to Alf and Liz to let them know that we had \$510 still to donate after all the cookbooks were sold, Alf contacted me to thank me and to let me know that he had ordered some cages and boxes for the transportation of the birds. We are delighted to help pay for this equipment. The cages and boxes are vital for the comfort of the birds as they are moved either to safer areas or to be released back into the wild. After our wonderful experience of witnessing the release of a hawk and a wedge tail eagle in 2004, we can only appreciate how valuable this equipment is to Australian Native Animal Care. If you are ever in Brisbane, drop in to see Alf and Liz to see first hand the incredible work that they do for the well-being of birds and animals.

Take Me Home Country Roads

We have received a lovely letter from the Mittagong Public School, who won the beautiful picture story book, Take me Home, Country Roads as follows:

Dear Janette,

Please pass on the appreciation of our school to your organisation and to member Max Moore, for the recent thoughtful donation of a book to our library. I'm sure students will enjoy reading, (or maybe singing), Take me Home Country Roads.

Our school teacher-librarian, Mrs. Kathryn Cochrane, will ensure that the book is available to students including young Chloe Moore when she enrolls next year.

It was a lovely surprise to receive this package in the mail!

Regards, Brett Neil

Almost Heaven Review

All too often we read negative reviews of productions and the recently opened **Almost Heaven** production in New York was no exception. However, I did receive a lovely review of this production from a John Denver fan, which I have included here. Thanks to Peggy who has given us permission to include her review in our newsletter

My daughter and I travelled to NYC to see the play and the Christmas Spectacular at Radio City Music Hall. We were treated to hearing "Perhaps Love" on the observation deck of the Empire State Building.

We went to the play Friday Night. I've read the reviews that have been posted, and the paragraph that follows is the most negative I have to report from our experience. Believe me, these two performances were distracting. "Jennifer Allen starts out all right on "Take Me Home, Country Roads," but by the time she and Randal Myler, the director, are done, it has morphed into a braying torch song. Lee Morgan seems to have a nice take on "Rocky Mountain High" at first, but by the end he looks as if he's belting out a beer-drinking song on a pirate ship. "

Other than that, we enjoyed some of the different renditions of the songs. I think I even found an interpretation of "Sunshine on my Shoulder" that I liked - sort of a "Manhattan Transfer" background. The theater is very small, and we were in the third row, dead center. People in the front row, got up and moved farther back in the theater, they were too low. I almost feel I would have enjoyed being farther back too, to take in the video backgrounds and the performances. I seemed to have to focus on one or the other. For us, (my daughter is 25 and was raised on John Denver music, and attended many of his concerts) it was an enjoyable evening. We thoroughly enjoyed the lobby where there was an exhibition of pictures, album covers, guitars and guitar cases. I guess I didn't understand what the play was - I thought the first act was a look at the 60's and 70's using John's music. But really is a biography and the videos of the years supporting the music and life. I may not be clear, but for me there is a difference. I thought it was called "Almost Heaven, John Denver's America". I'm not sure where I got that in my head.

The DUI's were mentioned - "Everybody's High" was discussed - his exemption from the military was explained. Some lyrics were slightly changed - only psychotic/neurotic fans would notice that (I believe I qualify as both). I had NO idea there was video of John

at the end and it brought a tear to my eye. I read the Play Bill and wondered why John was listed as a performer and didn't understand why it was there, then they played the video. That was wonderful - and indeed as one reviewer commented, reminded us that his music was more simple than this play presented.

All that said, I'd do it again next week if I could afford another trip to NYC. The exhibition in the lobby (with 2 photos of John that had to be 3'X 4') along with the other memorabilia was exciting. To hear the music in different light was enjoyable - the combinations of some songs took me back - "Matthew" and "What are we Making Weapons For"- tugged at my heart. To sit with other fans and enjoy the music was wonderful. To view the stage at one point, and see Jim Newman (John Denver) facing the other performers, then turn around, and holding my breath wishing it were John was a theatrical experience. The finale was "Yellowstone" - They did a great job and those last seconds really seemed like a tribute to John.

I am not a critic, nor do I see many theatrical productions. I'm just a John Denver fan - I guess supporting his memory and his music by attending the play. I'm so glad I had this experience. Saturday afternoon we walked through Central Park and rested on John's bench. Forgive me if I've rambled - I'm still high (with happiness)

It was a wonderful weekend.

Next Year's Gathering

Next year we will be returning to the Sunshine State – Queensland for our annual John Denver Gathering. Although we have not yet decided on a venue, many plans are already being formulated to ensure that we have a wonderful weekend again.

For those people who are already planning for the weekend next year, the gathering will take place in south east Queensland. It will be a maximum of 2 hours drive from either Brisbane or Coolangatta airport and it will be easy to find and it will not be at the end of a long un-made road!

Once a decision has been made, you will be the first to know!

Locations of our Trees

2005 was the fifth gathering of Higher Ground Australia and we have planted trees in three states over the past five years.

2001 – Pioneer Cottages, Birdswing Road, Halls Gap VIC

Grampians Pioneer Cottages is 9 kms from the Halls Gap Post Office. Drive along the Halls Gap-Ararat Tourist Road for 6 kms and turn into Birdswing Road, drive along Birdswing Road for 1.5kms to the entrance of Grampians Pioneer Cottages. Look for signage showing Grampians Pioneer Cottages.

2002 – Riverwood Downs, Barrington Tops, NSW

Take the Sydney to Newcastle Expressway north and follow it right to its end. At the roundabout turn right and follow the "Pacific Highway 1" signs to Hexham and then left over the Hunter River bridge. (**"CAUTION"** When you come to the Raymond Terrace roundabout **IGNORE** the sign that says **Dungog Barrington Tops**.) Drive straight through the roundabout following the signs to Barrington Tops via Gloucester. **Editor's Note: Hmmm - I wish I had seen this before I attempted the trip from Sydney – needless to say we did a 'Cook's Tour' of Barrington Tops before reaching our destination!**

We have been told by one of our members that John's tree that we planted has since died. The plaque remains. Thom has kindly offered to replace the tree next time he visits Riverwood Downs. Thanks to Thom and his family. I will be in touch with them soon.

2003 – Arrabri Lodge, 450 Woods Point Road, Warburton, VIC

Arrabri Lodge is situated up near the head of the Yarra River in Warburton East amidst the beautiful Upper Yarra Valley only a short 80km drive east of Melbourne. Since its conception more than 80 years ago Arrabri Lodge has grown into a year-round venue ideal for schools, music groups, church groups, adult retreats, social clubs and special interest groups.

"Thanks everyone who has stayed with us over the last year. We have met some wonderful people and entertained some interesting groups. Most notably The Australian Friends of John Denver – I always knew there were more out there like me!" (November 2003 newsletter – Arrabri Lodge)

2004 – Christian Outreach Centre, Yeates Ave, Boonah QLD

Just one hour's drive from Brisbane and the Gold Coast, the Shire is home to the thriving country towns of Boonah, Kalbar and Aratula, and to two dams, Lakes Maroon and Moogerah

2005 – Old Mogo Town, Mogo, near Batemans Bay, NSW

Access to Old Mogo Town is easy for vehicles, coaches and pedestrians. Just follow the well defined signs! Enter from either the Princes

Highway via Annett Lane or the Tomakin Road via James Street.

Although our trees have been planted on private properties, please do not hesitate to ask at reception of any of these locations to see the trees dedicated to John. Each tree that has been planted for John has a plaque dedicated to his memory.



Slaughter of the Innocents

The following article appeared in the Sunday paper in September of this year. During our AGM at Old Mogo Town during our annual John Denver weekend, this article was discussed at length and we decided to write to the Healesville Sanctuary to express our utter dismay at this action. Thank you to Ruth who volunteered to write the letter, which was posted to the Healesville Sanctuary this week. Although there are two separate issues mentioned in this article, the theme of our letter was based on the killing of two wedge-tailed eagles. In 2003, HGA donated \$830.00 to the Healesville Sanctuary.

Please read the following article.

By ADRIAN TAME (Melbourne Herald Sun) 04 Sep 2005

WEDGE-TAILED eagles and joeys are being slaughtered as part of a project to save an endangered species of wallaby.

Animal welfare groups have criticised the State Government, Healesville Sanctuary and Melbourne University over the killings.

The wedge-tailed eagles were shot after they were suspected of killing wallabies on a research property at Wantirna.

A Department of Sustainability and Environment spokesman confirmed two eagles were shot on the property, operated by Prof Marilyn Renfree of Melbourne University's Zoological Department.

The Tammar wallaby joeys were killed at Healesville Sanctuary so their mothers' pouches could be used to nurture endangered brush-tailed rock wallaby babies.

A spokeswoman for the Sanctuary confirmed that 13 Tammar wallaby joeys had been killed since 2003 as part of the program.

"In each case the procedure is carried out by a vet in the early stages of the animal's development," the spokeswoman said.

"It is done in a way that is respectful of the animal and produces minimal possible stress for the mother."

The spokeswoman said there were believed to be only 10 brush-tailed rock wallabies left in the wilds in Victoria. And the species faced extinction without the cross-fostering program.

She said the program had been approved by Melbourne Zoo's animal ethics committee, which included several animal rights representatives.

Mark Winfield, manager of flora and fauna for the DSE, said staff at the Wantirna research property had witnessed three wedge-tailed eagles attacking and killing Tammar wallabies involved in the cross-fostering project.

"As a result we allowed the culling of one of the eagles to see if that would end the killings," Mr Winfield said.

"It didn't, so we authorised the second. Both were performed by an expert contractor employed by the department."

Mr Winfield said the one surviving eagle continued to be a threat, but the department decided not to allow a third shooting.

"We instructed Prof Renfree to provide better overhead protection for the wallabies and to begin a management program," he said.

Yesterday, the *Sunday Herald Sun* could not contact Prof Renfree for comment.

Scientists are in a desperate race against time to save the brush-tailed rock wallaby from extinction.

A relocation strategy, launched earlier this year, hoped to repopulate the wallabies' original habitat in the Grampians by releasing at least 16 females over four years.

The first are due for release late next year.

The strategy is a partnership between DSE, other government agencies, zoos, universities and corporate sponsors.

Rheya Linden, of Animal Active, the Australian Animal Rights Network, is preparing a Freedom of Information application to inquire about the joey killings

Read Any Good Books Lately?

“We’d travelled a third of the way around the world on the back of three bikes; people’s faces had changed, their homes had changed, the way they led their lives and what they believed in were different. But with everything that was going on in the world at that time, if we hadn’t been so isolated we might very easily have travelled through these countries without becoming aware that ultimately we are all the same; we all love our kids, we all need somewhere to sleep and some food. We all want the same things; the world isn’t that big a place. I lay in my ger thinking that if the likes of President Bush, who might even struggle to find Mongolia on a map, had spent some time finding out what was happening outside their own countries, they would recognise what all people of all nationalities and religion have in common, instead of focusing on the differences, and maybe the world wouldn’t be in such a mess.”

Ewan McGregor & Charley Boorman “Long Way Round – Chasing Shadows Across the World”

I loved this true story of Ewan McGregor (Star Wars) and Charley Boorman’s trip from London England to New York USA through Europe, Russia, Mongolia, Siberia and Canada on motor bikes. This journey was truly an odyssey across the globe. I loved this book. It was easy to read, and although I do not think I would be game enough to follow in their tyre-prints, it was a magnificent effort.

Heard Any Good CDs Lately?

If you are looking for some Christmas Spirit, I can highly recommend a newly-released CD for your collection.

Christmas with Col Joye is a lovely collection of Christmas songs – both well known and not so well known, but all with the spirit of family and community. Personally, I love the Hawaiian song, Mele Kalilimaka, which brings back so many happy memories of Christmas’ spent in Hawaii in the past. I just love that ukulele! This CD is available from the ABC shop for AUD\$19.95. (Warner music)

And Now for Something Different...

If you are looking for some folk and popular songs from the 60’s and 70’s with a country flair, here is my recommendation. **Those Were the Days by Dolly Parton** certainly fits the bill. This CD includes some absolute gems, such as Those Were the Days (with Mary Hopkins), Blowin’ in the Wind, Both Sides Now with Judy Collins and Imagine with David Foster. Featured artists on this CD include Norah Jones, Allison Krauss, Yusuf Islam (formerly known as Cat Stevens),

Roger McGuinn, Keith Urban, Kris Kristofferson and more. Produced by Sugar Hill Records, I am sure it will be easily found in most record stores. I loved this CD and although Dolly has stamped each song with her own special style, the whole CD is lovely. This is a perfect birthday or Christmas gift for the Dolly fan!

Rosa Parks Dies at 92 on 24th Oct. 2005

“We all need to remember that we can all have Rosa Parks’ moments. Every time we stand up for someone who is being mistreated, every time we turn away from prejudice and bigotry, every time we support those who are on the front lines fighting for our rights, we are part of Rosa Parks and her legacy.” Hillary Clinton

Rosa Parks, who inspired a generation to fight for civil rights, died on Monday at age 92. Parks, a black woman, refused to give up her seat on a city bus to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama, nearly 50 years ago. She was arrested and fined for breaking the law.



In response to her arrest, black men and women in Montgomery boycotted, or refused to use, the city buses. They demanded an end to segregation, or laws that denied equal rights to black people. A young pastor at the local church named Martin Luther King Jr. led the boycott. Because of the protesters’ refusal to ride the buses, the bus system nearly went out of business.

Many believe that Parks bold decision triggered the civil rights movement, a struggle to grant Americans the same rights, regardless of their colour. “She sat down in order that we might stand up,” said civil rights leader Jesse Jackson yesterday. “Her imprisonment opened the doors for our long journey to freedom.”

Parks’ action showed how one person could make a big impact. She inspired others, including Martin Luther King Jr., to use non-violence and civil disobedience as a way to protest problems in society.

Like all major events in history, the Civil Rights movement influenced many of the songwriters of folk songs written in the 1960’s. Although we were on the other side of the world, many songs of that era did filter into Australia – probably more for their aesthetic qualities, rather than the content of the songs. It is not until we discover through reading and travelling the importance of these events on the history of a country.

The Wollemi Pine

In a world where species are being lost through over development, disease and other means, it was nice to see that the only area that is the natural habitat for the Wollemi Pine has been kept a secret to ensure it's protection. We are so happy to announce that this incredible thought-to-be-extinct tree has not only been discovered safe and well, but that it has been successfully propagated and now available for sale.



The Wollemi Pine (pictured above) was thought to be extinct for millions of years until its chance discovery 11 years ago in a remote canyon in The Blue Mountains near Sydney. The discovery of this unique grove, which predates the dinosaurs and has survived the Ice Ages, has generated world wide interest from scientists, botanists and conservationists including Sir David Attenborough.

On October 23, 2005, the Botanic Gardens, Sydney, hosted the sale of the first generation of Wollemi Pine offspring cultivated from cuttings from the ancient grove. It is intended that these young trees and their offspring will ensure the survival of the species while providing a fascinating memento to this historic find. The Sotheby's auction raised over AUD1.0 million (more than double the expectation) to go toward the conservation of trees in the wild and other endangered species.]

"Over the ten years since its discovery the Wollemi pine has come to symbolise both the spirit of botanical discovery and the resilience of nature. It is an icon for conservation; giving us hope for the future, as well as a mighty challenge to make sure we care for this ancient relic." said Dr Tim Entwisle, director, Botanic Gardens Trust, Sydney.

Our War on Plastic

We rely so heavily on plastic bags, so it has been uplifting to see that so many people have embraced the green bag at the supermarket, bringing their own recyclable bags to the supermarkets and refusing plastic bags. According to the following article, plastic bags in stores will be phased out in three years in Victoria.

\$200,000 for war on plastic bags

By Jason Dowling November 20, 2005

The Victorian Government has committed another \$200,000 to the war on plastic bags.

With Christmas coming, towns and markets will be given money to provide information to shops and shoppers, pay for some re-usable bags, and to promote alternatives.

Plastic bags will be phased out in Victoria by 2008, with the Government confirming it would introduce a levy or a ban on bags.

Environment Minister John Thwaites called on retailers to speed up the phase-out of the environmental bandits.

"Victorians are doing a great job saying no to plastic bags at the counter, but it is clear more needs to be done, particularly by retailers who are not currently attempting to reduce their plastic bag use," he said.

Mr Thwaites said the bags could last for hundreds of years, and were responsible for the deaths of whales, turtles and other marine animals.

Sustainability Victoria, in partnership with Planet Ark, will also talk to industry representatives to try to speed things up.

Happy Thanksgiving to our American Friends

Please follow the link to Linda's beautiful page to hear John singing America the Beautiful.

From all of us at HGA, have a Happy Thanksgiving with your families and friends. Enjoy your turkey and pumpkin pie and enjoy listening to John.!

<http://www.freewebs.com/sweetdreamsplace/america.html>

Thanks to Linda for creating this lovely page. Keep up the good work! We love it!

JD Merchandise

There is plenty of merchandise available. For HGA merchandise, please refer to our website or contact Lynn on lmagann@iprimus.com.au We have calendars, tote bags, note books and key rings still available.

For the American merchandise, please contact Carol Blevins on blevins@epix.net Carol has some calendars, T-shirts, lapel pins and more. Please contact her for an order form.

Amazon

(Let This be a Voice)

Rosa Parks – this is for you.

*There is a river that runs from the mountains,
That one river is all rivers, all rivers are that one.*

*There is a tree that stands in the forest,
That one tree is all forests, all trees are that one.*

*There is a flower that blooms in the desert,
That one blossom is all flowers, all flowers are that one.*

*It is the song of life; it is the flower of faith,
It is the tree of temptation; it is the river of no regret.*

*There is a child that cries in the ghetto,
That one child is all children, all children are that one.*

*There is a vision that shines in the darkness,
That one vision is all of our dreams,*

All of our dreams are that one.

*It is a vision of heaven; it is a child of promise,
It is the song of life; it is the river of no regret.*

*Let this be a voice for the mountains, let this be a voice for the river,
Let this be a voice for the forest, let this be a voice for the flowers,
Let this be a voice for the ocean, let this be a voice for the desert,
Let this be a voice for the children, let this be a voice for the dreamers,
Let this be a voice of no regret, no regret.*

(John Denver)

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