

Friends of Lord Howe Island

Newsletter No.34

Summer 2012



New format for weeding ecotours in 2013

For 2013 there is a new format for the bush regeneration ecotours. There will be five tours, with each group staying at one of five different accommodation places on the Island. This will give members a choice of a variety of places to stay, and also a choice of the meals included. All trips have the evening meals to enable the group members to sample a variety of food at various restaurants. With groups staying at five different places it is hoped to also spread the goodwill towards the Friends of LHI and conservation on the island.

On the seventy ecotours over 15 years, there has been a great impact on the eradication of Ground and Climbing asparagus on Transit Hill, with over 23,000 volunteer hours contributed. For 2013 it is intended to spend maybe 3 or 4 mornings at our Transit Hill site doing follow-up; and other mornings at different areas doing weeding, replanting, assisting leaseholders; in consultation with LHI Board Environmental team.

FLHI Weeding trips for 2013

Dates have now been set for the 2013 weeding ecotours; see page 9 for full details.

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Merry Christmas

Rodent Eradication update.

In July 2012 the Federal Government announced funds of \$4.5 million to match that put forward by the NSW government to carry out the rodent eradication project on Lord Howe Island. The target date for the project is August 2015

A Steering Committee comprising the CEO of the LHI Board, a local LHI Board member, representatives of the Commonwealth and NSW governments and an external eradication expert has been set up. Dr Ian Wilkinson, the project manager for most of the research and planning to date has resigned to take up a position in Western Australia. Advertising has gone out for the position of Project Manager and Hank Bower is acting in that position until a person is selected.

A Community Liaison Group is to be formed in early 2013, consisting of a cross section of LHI community members. This group will play an important role in representing the community views and concerns and providing input into project planning. A Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee will provide expert advice to the Steering Committee and the Community Liaison Group.

In the next newsletter there will be a detailed summary of how the project has proceeded to date, and where it is going.

2012 AGM Friends of Lord Howe Island

Held at the LHI Museum on 13 July 5.30pm
15 Friends members were in attendance.

The following reports were read to the meeting:

Minutes from 2011 AGM
Treasurer's Report
Secretary's Report

The committee stood down and nominations for a new committee were received.

The new committee elected for 2012/2013 is:

President: Chris Murray
Vice President: Ian Hutton
Secretary: John Flint
Treasurer: Steve Gale
Committee: Robert Coenraads
Committee: Jane Gye
Committee: Hank Bower



New Friends LHI President Chris Murray on the Transit Hill site. Chris is an island resident with a long interest in the environment, history and conservation.

FRIENDS OF LORD HOWE ISLAND - PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2011/12

The year ending 2011/2012 marks some further wonderful achievements by the Friends of Lord Howe Island. Since the starting of the group in 1995, there have been 69 trips to Lord Howe, the most recent being the May and July trips this year. Figures at the end of May, show that a total of 1272 weeders have participated and 22,248 hours of work have been contributed.

The July 7 to 14 trip, with 24 participants will make a further significant contribution to an impressive volunteer conservation effort on behalf of Lord Howe Island's native flora, and the integrity of its natural ecosystems.

For the past 12 months, the focus has been on clearing Climbing asparagus fern on Transit Hill adjacent to and behind Edie's Glen. The August 2011 group finally reached the end of this infestation after 18 volunteer week's effort. The 2012 groups will sweep over this entire area doing the important follow-up work removing any new seedlings that have germinated since treatment. The clearing of the worst of the asparagus on the western side of Transit Hill by the Friends of Lord Howe Island complements weed control being undertaken by the Lord Howe Island Board Weed Team on the "Little Muttonbird Ground" on the eastern side of Transit Hill. As recently as 2005, Transit Hill was included in the Island's Permanent Park Preserve. However, only the sustained attack on weeds by the Friends of Lord Howe Island and the Board has significantly restored the area to its natural state, after being one of the most severely weed-compromised and threatened areas on the entire Island. We might well contemplate the symbolic significance of the "Transit of Venus" this year, which led to the naming of Transit Hill back in 1882, as being a truly pivotal year in the "transit" or "exit" of noxious weeds from this lovely area, restoring it as one of the jewels in the Island's "Permanent Park Preserve".

Our sincere thanks must go to current and previous committee members: Robert Coenraads and Jane Gye, and group leaders since the last AGM, Bill McDonald, Robert Coenraads and Gwenda Lister. Both John Flint, our Secretary, and Steve Gale, our Treasurer and Public Officer, must be also be sincerely thanked for their ongoing efforts. Last, but not least, the group could not continue with the profound success it has enjoyed without the huge input of its coordinator, scribe and inspiration, Ian Hutton.

I am only sorry that health issues, including a visit to Prince of Wales Hospital, have kept me from attending the 2012 AGM, but I would particularly wish to thank all those present and those who have participated this year for their valuable commitment and effort.

Chris Murray
(President)

Treasurers Report - Steve Gale

Friends of Lord Howe Island Inc.
and Friends of Lord Howe Island Gift fund
Aggregated financial report for year ended 30 April 2012

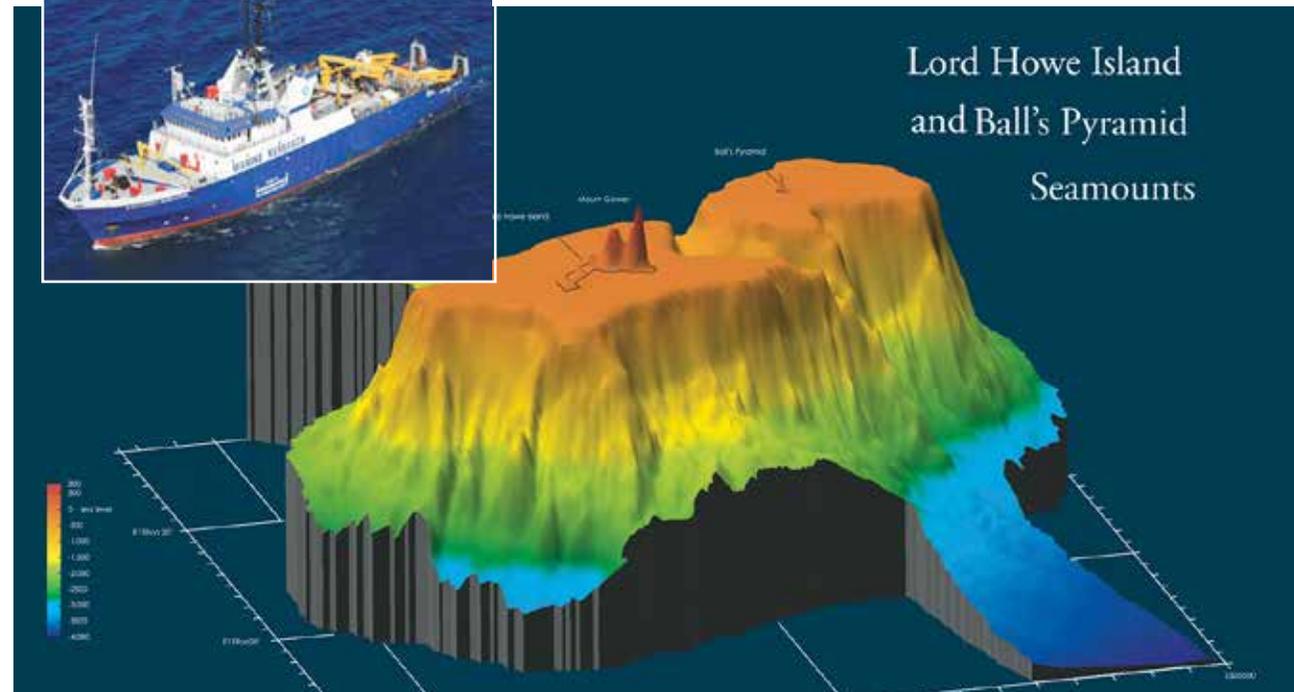
	2012 \$	2011 \$
Income		
Donations	225.00	1,295.00
Payments	1,400.00	1,340.00
Subscriptions	2,085.00	1,975.00
Interest / Sales / etc	147.36	140.78
Total	3,857.36	4,750.78
Expenditure		
Insurance	350.00	350.00
Tools	77.00	649.99
Statutory Fees	48.00	47.00
Grant / Project Expenses	394.80	500.00
Operating Expenses	0.00	105.00
Promotion	1,083.83	835.00
Total	1,953.63	2,486.99
Surplus / (Deficit)	1,903.73	2,263.79
Plus Retained Earnings at beginning of the year	41,941.88	39,678.09
Retained Earnings at the end of the year	43,845.61	41,941.88
Total Aggregated Equity	43,845.61	41,941.88
Represented by:		
Assets		
Cash at Bank	43,845.61	41,941.88
Total Assets	43,845.61	41,941.88
Total Liabilities	-	-
Net Assets	43,845.61	41,941.88

Last journey for RV *Southern Surveyor*.

In February 2013 R.V. *Southern Surveyor* will make a last visit to Lord Howe Island in order to map the seabed habitat of the submerged shelves around Lord Howe Island and Ball's Pyramid. Preliminary mapping has been undertaken within the LHI Marine Park in 2009-2010, however gaps in data still exist. This visit will seek to more accurately portray seabed habitats, especially around the southeast of the Island and Ball's Pyramid.

These habitat maps of the shelf environment have been very important in assisting with zoning plans for the LHI Marine Park. The data gained on this voyage will also help researchers to understand how the reef around Lord Howe Island and Ball's Pyramid has developed in the past. Knowledge of the past responses of the coral reef to climate fluctuations can help to inform of potential future responses that a changing environment may present to the island coral communities.

The R.V. *Southern Surveyor* is a 66 metre vessel owned and operate by CSIRO. The vessel is on its final round of scientific expeditions before it returns to Hobart and is replaced by a larger vessel R.V. *Investigator*.



Report on Weeding trip 28 April - 5 May

This trip was number 68 since the weeding trips began in 1995, and fourteen people were in the group. We had a mix of experienced Lord Howe Island weeders – Annie Hawker, John Pemble, Ian Sinclair, and Ena Middleton (on her 14th trip), Lee Courtwood; plus some newcomers to the program.... Owen James, David and Thea King, Bernard and Deidre Slattery and Leonie Williams,



The bush regeneration supervisor for this trip was Gwenda Lister. Gwenda has a lot of experience with the weeding trips on Lord Howe Island – having taken part in twelve trips, beginning in the year 2000.

“The first morning rain was threatening, but the group collected tools and tramped up the hill to the site optimistically. The rain increased and though we were having a terrific time wallowing in the dripping scrub, we knocked off after an hour – but we had succeeded in demolishing those plants rash enough to stick their heads up after the previous year’s attacks. John (Pemble) produced a high-class morning tea on the site, unfortunately not accompanied by lamingtons, cream sponge

and hot scones, which had been fantasized by the more deluded participants. So, cold, saturated, smeared with sand and soil, we rolled down the hill and a disturbing number of participants hit the grog at lunch. The laundry drier worked overtime; and several crosswords, jigsaws and novels were finished in the afternoon.” (from the diary)



remnant Climbing asparagus to remove

After that initial wet start the sun was out most of the time, and good weeding was done....until Friday when very wild winds and rain lashed the island – and continued on to Saturday so that the flight was cancelled and all weeders had to stay an extra day and night, departing on Sunday.

The group carefully carried out clearing of castor oil plant, fleabane, *Solanum nigrum* and Scotch thistle from Edie’s Glen. Then all worked at the very top of the Climbing asparagus infestation removing last remnants of mature Climbing asparagus plants there.

Terry Wilson, former World Heritage Officer well known to many of our Friends, was on

the island doing some relief work for the LHI Board and he joined the crew one morning and was delighted with the progress that has been made against the weeds. Our Friends of Lord Howe Island President Chris Murray also joined the group one morning, and enjoyed not only removing the asparagus fern, but chatting to many members he has met over the years. Despite the wet weather days that limited the weeding activities somewhat, 161 hours were contributed through the week



Chris Murray on the Little Island walk showing the craft of palm basket weaving.

Gwenda led many interesting walks in the afternoons– Malabar Hill, always a favourite with stunning views across the island. Chris Murray led the group on the walk down to Little Island. And the highlight of the week was the picnic at North Bay. The tide was right for the scramble around to the Herring Pools, and the group also managed Mount Eliza. One afternoon on the Clear Place walk the group assisted with monitoring of plastic in the Flesh-footed shearwater colonies.



The North Bay day is always popular, and the bbq was a great experience.

Report on weed trip July 7 - 14

This was a big group with total of 25 weeders, and some of our most experienced weeders, including Rob and Nancy Pallin, Jane and Stephen Gye, John and Soie Zyla, Lesley Inglis and Carlolyn Murtagh. We welcomed first time weeders Coral Taylor, Margaret and Phillip Lane. For Eric Ingram, this was his fifth weeding trip, and he was presented with a five years certificate.



Supervisor for the week was Robert Coenraads, a great asset with his wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm for Lord Howe Island and his enjoyment of sharing this with our weed tour members. Robert also brought his daughters Francheska and Leonora, with their friend Sid, and the entire group enjoyed their company. We also had three other young weeders along - the Watts family from near Orbost Victoria included three daughters Jaklin, Talsy and Madeline aged 18 to 22. So it was quite a youthful group; and quite a lot of fun was had by all. On our Little Island walk, the six young members all had a go at palm tree climbing with instruction from Robert; and then enjoyed

a new Lord Howe Island sport - Banyan root swinging.



Banyan root swinging



Several of the group did the Mount Gower climb on Thursday with veteran mountain guide Jack Shick.

With the rain on Friday and Saturday the group spent a lot of time visiting the museum to peruse the displays and watch the many videos about Lord Howe Island.



tackling the palm tree climbing

The focus of the weeding was starting at the bottom near Edie's Glen and working up the hill, carrying out follow-up work over the areas worked in previous years. Some areas were moved through quite quickly, other areas where sunlight had penetrated, denser seedlings to remove slowed us down. But overall a very satisfying week with 375 hours



A new bridge over the creek

LHI Board weed team, and now some native trees gradually growing back, fighting the grasses. During the week, Pinetrees had a celebrity chef Peter Kuravita demonstrating in the kitchen and some of the group enjoyed cooking classes on several afternoons.



The July group enjoying Malabar

of Pinetrees not knowing what was to come; and left the mountain with more muscles and knowledge, and an urge to lie down in a soft bed. All in all I'm glad that I did the walk and I am proud to say that I did and that I wasn't forced to! I climbed Mount Gower and survived." Anon.

Friday was a washout with heavy rainsqualls all day; so most of the time was spent at the museum. Plenty to look at, and a few documentaries to watch. Then in the afternoon a few had a go at sorting and counting micro plastic samples off the beach, and others sorted the tiny green Olivine crystals from the beach gravel collected at Little Island, for the museum geology display.



Follow-up over Transit Hill

Ten of the group tackled Mount Gower with Jack Shick, and all enjoyed the day, despite the track being very slippery from overnight rain prior to the trip. This account by one of the crew tells the tale:

" The Mount Gower walk was challenging for me; by the end of the walk I was sweaty, tired and hungry and very glad to sit down. At the start of the walk I thought "yeh" this isn't too bad, but I soon came to realize that is was hard. As we journeyed further and further up the mountain the bush walk soon turned into a bush climb; we reached the 500m mark tired and wet. As we continued to climb it got steeper; so steep that we had to use ropes to pull us up; there was much to slip and trip on, including roots and rocks. We left the comfort



A lot of activity at the Museum; sorting microplastic and Olivine crystals.

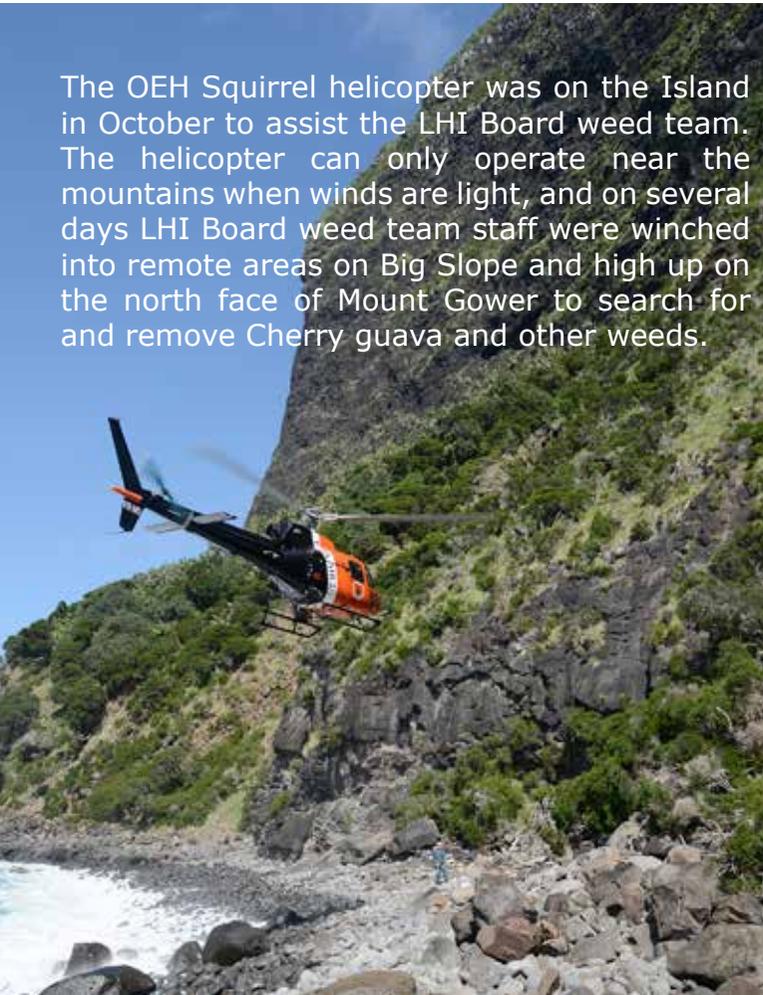
The afternoon at North Bay was again a highlight, and six even had a snorkel in the Old Gulch, despite the 19-degree ocean temperature. On our Boat Harbour walk we traversed Intermediate Hill, and cut through the forest into an old grazing lease, cleared in the 1950's, and became full of introduced grasses, but cleared of Cherry guava by the

LHI Board successful in obtaining environmental grants

In the latter half of 2012 the LHI Board received notification of success in grant applications for:

Eradication is the key. Facilitating the exodus of weeds from LHI. \$400,000 from Caring for Country. The project is generally focused on weeds within the settlement area and specific projects such as the removal of Ground asparagus on Transit Hill, and abseil and helicopter control of weeds in cliff and inaccessible areas.

The OEH Squirrel helicopter was on the Island in October to assist the LHI Board weed team. The helicopter can only operate near the mountains when winds are light, and on several days LHI Board weed team staff were winched into remote areas on Big Slope and high up on the north face of Mount Gower to search for and remove Cherry guava and other weeds.



So far seven new casual staff were employed and approximately 85 hectares were treated on Transit Hill. Around 25 leases have now participated in the removal of weeds through this program. Professional bush regeneration contractors with specialist skills in rope access have completed the removal of Box Thorn and Lantana from Middle Beach and Clear Place Point, and control of Cherry guava has commenced at the Nobbin on Mt Lidgbird. Some LHI Board staff have enrolled in Certificate III in Conservation and Land Management through TAFE.

Managing World Heritage values on Lord Howe Island. \$414,263 from Caring for Country. This grant involves a number of discrete projects including:

Employment of the Manager Environment/World Heritage (MEWH) to develop and implement programs to protect the World Heritage values of LHI for one year. A key focus of the MEWH has been planning parts of the rodent eradication and compliance of unauthorized vegetation clearing and damage to threatened species.

The eradication of the African Big headed ant (ABHA) over two years. Surveys and treatments for this project will be carried out in the warmer weather.

Design and construct a helicopter-mounted directional spray unit to control weeds on the steep cliffs and inaccessible terrain. This is well progressed and at the testing stage. It is anticipated the unit will be available by winter 2013 in time to target Bitou bush.



Boot scrubbing station for Phytophthora

Preventing the establishment of the fungi *Phytophthora cinnamoni* and Myrtle rust on the Island and improving biosecurity/quarantine awareness at LHI entry points (airport and jetty).

Progressing the Eradication of weeds from the World Heritage Lord Howe Island to protect Island ecology. \$1,432,705 from NSW Environmental Trust.

This funding is for the period June 2012 to August 2015 and its aim is to deliver eradication targets for at least 15 priority invasive weed species from the LHI Permanent Park Preserve, including four Weeds of National Significance – Bitou bush, Bridal creeper, Ground asparagus and Lantana. It requires 450 hectares of land to be systematically searched and priority weeds controlled each year for three years, covering 1450 hectares in total.

Prepare a Coastal Hazard and Coastal Management study for the Island. \$60,000 from the NSW Government's Coastal Management Program. This follows concern about erosion of the beachfront along the Lagoon Beach just north of the seawall installed in 1999 to prevent the beach erosion adjacent to the airstrip.

New Powerhouse commissioned.

Following a fire in the Island's Powerhouse in December 2009 it was decided to move the powerhouse from its existing site near the town centre to a more out-of-the way place.

A site above Middle Beach was chosen; one factor in the decision was a recommendation by the Island's Community Sustainable Energy Advisory Group to pursue the installation of renewable energy facilities in paddock areas adjacent to this site. The building was completed in October.

During November three temporary electric generators were hooked up outside the old powerhouse, and LHI Board staff worked in November and December to move the three permanent generators up to their new home. On 12/12/12 the new generators were connected to the island grid.

Fish food dispenser for Ned's Beach

In March 2102 the Marine Parks Authority installed a fish food dispenser within the shed at Ned's Beach to be utilized by tourists and locals for the popular past time of feeding the resident Silver drummer, Sea mullet and other fish species. The dispenser was installed to provide a healthier alternative than bread and other human food for fish feeding in the Ned's Beach Special Purpose Zone. The pellets are manufactured by the aquaculture industry and are specifically designed to be a nutritious food source for native fish species. The dispenser is currently coin operated and allows a set amount of pellets per use, with a daily limit to control the amount of food entering the water.

Blinky Beach Dune to be downsized.

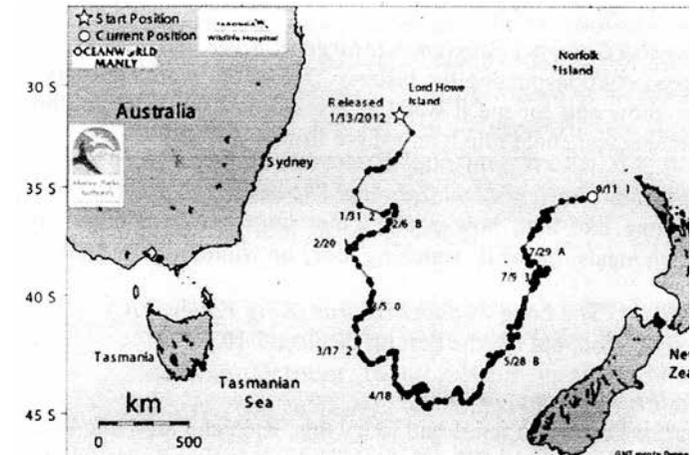
Consequent to the most recent annual inspection of the Lord Howe Island airport by an independent aerodrome auditor, the LHI Board has to reduce the height of the Blinky Dune to comply with CASA regulations for the safe operation of the airport.



Blinky Beach dune

The dune is subject to accretion of sand that gradually increases its height, requiring periodic reductions. The last such reduction was in 1990, since which time the dune height has increased to the point where it impacts on aircraft operations. Growing on this dune is a small plant *Chamaesyce psammogeton* which is listed as a threatened species in NSW, so the project has been subject to strict Development Application and Environmental Impact Statement procedures. The LHI Board intends to remove above 4 metres height off the dune top; the work will commence in autumn 2013 when cooler, wetter weather will allow a more rapid recovery of disturbed vegetation on the dune crest.

In January 2012 a juvenile Loggerhead turtle was released into the ocean from Blinky Beach Lord Howe Island. This turtle had been rehabilitated in Taronga Zoo Wildlife Hospital, where in March 2010 it was received as a tiny 61-gram hatchling, with a fractured flipper. Following its care to weigh 12.5 kg the turtle was fitted with a satellite tag atop its shell and flown to Lord Howe Island for release.



The travel route taken by this turtle, for 242 days after release. Historically little has been known about the migration habits of juvenile Loggerhead turtles. This data continues to provide important information into the mysterious world of this endangered species.

Bob Conroy - new LHI Board Chairperson

In September 2012 LHI Board Chairperson Alistair Henschmen announced his retirement as Director Metropolitan, Parks and Wildlife Group with the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage and so had to also resign from his position as LHI Board Chairperson. Alistair had been in the chair since April 2008 and the LHI Board thanked him for steering the Island through a number of difficult projects.



Oxley Travel at Port Macquarie will be doing bookings for 2013. Oxley Travel have been agents to Lord Howe Island since the 1970's.

Prices are per person, twin share; single supplement may apply, please inquire about price. Minimum numbers are required for each departure. Prices may vary according to final numbers. A \$200 deposit is required when booking. Travel insurance is strongly recommended.

The tour staying at Arajilla includes all meals; at Beachcomber breakfast and dinner. Other dates include evening melas at a variety of island restaurants; breakfast and lunches tour members do their own, or choose a cafe.

For further information contact Ian Hutton on 02 6563 2447 or ian@ianhuttontours.com

Or Oxley Travel on 1800 6711 546



LORD HOWE ISLAND

2013 BUSH REGENERATION PROGRAMS

with IAN HUTTON

This innovative tour program has been running since 1995, to date 70 groups have participated in assisting the LHI Board with conservation projects on the island.

Arajilla Retreat 11 - 18 May

Inclusions: Return QantasLink flights ex Sydney, Brisbane or Port Macquarie, 7 nights luxury accommodation in a Banyan or Kentia Suite, gourmet breakfast daily, light lunch, 3 course dinner daily, selected pre-dinner drinks, mountain bike hire, return island airport transfers & Ian Hutton's Bush Regeneration Program

from \$4449 ex Sydney / Brisbane & from \$4419 ex Port Macquarie



Somerset Apartments 18 - 25 May

Inclusions: Return QantasLink flights ex Sydney, Brisbane or Port Macquarie, 7 nights accommodation in a Standard 1 bedroom Apartment, return island airport transfers, dinner daily & Ian Hutton's Bush Regeneration Program

from \$2129 ex Sydney / from \$2269 ex Brisbane / from \$2089 ex Port Macquarie



Beachcomber Lodge 30 June - 07 July

Inclusions: Return QantasLink flights ex Sydney or Brisbane, 7 nights accommodation in a Studio or 1 bedroom Apartment, return island airport transfers, breakfast daily, dinner daily & Ian Hutton's Bush Regeneration Program

from \$1949 ex Sydney / Brisbane



Hideaway Apartments 07 - 14 July

Inclusions: Return QantasLink flights ex Sydney or Brisbane, 7 nights accommodation in a 1 bedroom Apartment, return island airport transfers, dinner daily & Ian Hutton's Bush Regeneration Program

from \$1899 ex Sydney / Brisbane



Leanda Lei 25 August - 01 September

Inclusions: Return QantasLink flights ex Sydney or Brisbane, 7 nights accommodation in a Studio Apartment, return island airport transfers, dinner daily & Ian Hutton's Bush Regeneration Program

from \$2049 ex Sydney / Brisbane



Unusual bird sightings Aug to Dec 2012

The wet conditions continued on through 2012, so the swamp at Moseley Park was full most of the year. This provided ideal conditions for vagrants passing through to stay a while.



A NZ South Island Pied Oystercatcher was present from July 22 to August 8.



Sharp-tailed and Pectoral sandpiper

One Pectoral sandpiper and three short-tailed sandpipers 15 October; the Pectoral and one Sharp-tailed stayed on to December. Two Red-necked stints and one Australasian Grebe in October. One Terek sandpiper from October 27 for a few days. One Female Australian woodcock 30 October to 24 December. One Lesser sandplover, a Red knot and a Great Knot briefly in November; and one Oriental plover 9 to 13 November; Eight Latham's snipe were in the Old Settlement area October to December.



Terek sandpiper



Cormorants - through most of 2011 and 2012 there were around 12 Little Black cormorants and one Little Pied Cormorant on the island; in September 2012 five Pied and five Great cormorants also turned up along with another ten Little Blacks. They roost on the shingle bank at North Bay, or at Mosely Park swamp and can be seen foraging from rocks in the Lagoon, along the east coast, and also at Ball's Pyramid. Two white-browed and three Masked woodswallows were seen in trees along the forest edge of the paddock on Malabar track in November.

See www.lhimuseum.com.au for full details

Friends of Lord Howe Island Newsletter compiled by Ian Hutton PO Box 155 Lord Howe Island NSW 2898. Email ian@ianhuttontours.com

2013 WEED TRIP BOOKING FORM

for booking post the form and deposit cheque to:
Lord Howe Island Nature Tours
PO Box 157
Lord Howe Island
NSW 2898

Price - see page 9 for details
Price subject to change without notice.
Deposit \$ 200 (cheque made to Oxley Travel)
Balance required 45 days prior to trip.

Please book me on the Lord Howe Island bush re-generation tour (included is my \$200 deposit pp)
Name(s) Mr/Mrs/Miss

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____
QANTAS Frequent Flyer number

My bush regeneration experience is _____ years

I prefer to go on dates :
May 11 to 18 Arajilla
May 18 to 25 Somerset
June 30 to July 7 Beachcomber
July 7 to 14 Hideaway
August 26 to Sept 2 Leanda Lei