

Newsletter 10

March 2009

Well, what a ten months since the last formal newsletter but it's wonderful to get the opportunity to update everyone. I'm so grateful to team members who have posted fundraising event reports during this time to keep the information flowing.

Visitors to the website continue to be extremely generous with their donations and show such a caring and understanding attitude to the Devils plight that they can be truly classed as animal lovers. In an age when stopping things has become a lifestyle for some it's those who are prepared to commit their time and money to positive actions that get my congratulations and thanks.

When the Devil Islanders set out on the quest to provide sanctuaries where Devils can live free of the terrible cancer that has killed 70% in the wild, free to roam and run in a natural environment and free to learn and pass on natural behaviours we had no idea that this would become a favoured method to help save this endangered Australian Icon. Devil Islands (DI) or Free-Range Enclosures (FRE's) were given top priority at an IUCN workshop report prepared for the Government. The DI project is working in partnership with the 'Save the Tasmanian Devil' programme through the Department of Primary Industries and Water (DPIW). It is the only independent facility housing disease free devils in Tasmania as part of the official insurance population.



The devils on the island are well and Dr David Sinn and his team of researchers are evaluating best practice for managing and breeding on FRE'S. He has arranged the building of Devil Dens and with the females now in estrus and males showing interest our fingers are crossed for a successful outcome.

As chairman of the project I cannot pay enough compliments to the wonderful group of volunteers who form the Devil Islanders. Patron and Vice chairman Shane Gould, Patron Kerry Finch MLC, Vice chairman Fiona Hoskin and the whole of the team are volunteers. They give not only their time but also a considerable financial commitment paying for all their own traveling expenses, telephone, stationery etc in the cause of the Devil.

The team going to London to run the London marathon and raise more funds are all paying for the trip themselves. That way people who contribute money to the cause can rest assured that their money is going directly to building facilities. We do not have an office, we don't pay family or friends to fundraise, we don't run around the state in sponsored vehicles, we don't fly people in on PR junkets. As the project develops the time will come when it may be necessary to engage a secretary/treasurer/project manager or at least pay some expenses. This will be published if it happens.



Everyone has been extremely busy with fundraising and the promise from the Premier David Bartlet of \$400,000 for future DI's has been a huge boost. He came to dig the first sod for DI 2 in February. This will be built on land that adjoins Natureworld and is some 60 acres. It has been donated by Mr. Peter Johnson a local philanthropist who is heavily committed to wildlife and conservation. Work will commence once the formal paperwork is completed. DI's 3, 4 and 5 are in negotiation for the North East, North West and South.



Thanks are also due to all the businesses that have helped by having our collection boxes on display for donations. We have plenty available for anyone who would like to join in with this part of the fundraising effort. Our large collection statues, lovingly nicknamed 'Darth Vaders' have proved very successful. Top spots and gratitude go to Launceston Airport, ZooDoo Richmond and the Spirits of Tasmania boats. Over \$10,000 raised by them, a magnificent effort. Sadly two Darth Vaders were burgled and over \$1000 stolen by some lowlife, just hope they meet a hungry devil on a bad night.

Several companies have helped by donating a portion of their profits to the DI project and if you get a chance buy some Pyengana Devil cheese, Devil lollies at Richmond or Linen Press soaps. We have received donations from around the world and a highlight was a young boy from Canada who donated \$300 from his fundraising efforts.

The next big events are the Devil of a Swim next Sunday April 5th, the London marathon on April 26th and the Devil Fun Run at Bicheno organized by Debbie Gardam on May 31st. More collection statues will soon be ready to go out to banks, stores or anyone who wants one. Recruiting for the Devils Army continues and there are many more exciting developments in the pipeline. Anyone with time and commitment who would like to join us in our quest will be welcome.