

INSIGHT #4 - Kimberley Awaiting

April 2012

Good morning, afternoon and evening everyone! Wherever you may be reading this, I hope you are well.

Here is the photo pick for this edition of my newsletter, and by far one of the highlights of my year so far...



This is what it feels like to be about 18 metres above the ground, firmly attached to a rope in a Lemon-scented Gum at Ardress Primary School. And while many of you might be thinking "HA HA Simmo, are you sure this isn't just you looking at the ground from your lofty 6'8"??", I can assure you that 1) My legs are not made of eucalypt bark or climbing ropes, and 2) You can't see my feet!! I'm not THAT tall :)

My unique perspective on the front of the school grounds was gained while I prepared to install a large Black Cockatoo nest box, designed for the Red-tailed variety, and just visible at the bottom centre of the above picture. Here it sat on the ground, along with about 150 students and a handful of teachers, who were intrigued enough to assemble and watch how you might position a large

wooden box in a tree when you have no cherry picker, just a couple of 50m ropes and some climbing gear.

The twenty or so students who are directly below me in the picture were the second class to take part in the

SCHOOLS NEST BOX PROGRAM, which is a project being coordinated by my wonderful partner Gill and I, and kicked off in March this year. Many thanks to Tranby College for being the inaugural school to register, and to Ardross as the second school for having us along. The fabulous boys and girls at the latter school did a terrific job at assembling two smaller Parrot/Possum boxes, and the one Cockatoo box, in a workshop session which ran during a morning at the school. These boxes are made entirely from recycled material (form-ply) provided by one of our project sponsors Macmahon

Construction, and fitted together and painted with supplies kindly donated by Mundaring Hardware. While it's still early days yet, it's a pleasure to say that since the last Newsletter, the project is now UNDERWAY! More information about this can be viewed on the INSIGHT Ornithology website under the 'News' tab, or by clicking on these links:

'Recycling Wood' - the birth of the project, here:

http://www.simoncherriman.com/Simon_Cherriman/News/Entries/2011/12/19_Recycling_Wood.html

Tranby College - the inaugural workshop! Story here:

http://www.simoncherriman.com/Simon_Cherriman/News/Entries/2012/3/9_Nest_Boxes_off_the_Ground!.html

Ardross Primary School workshop and review:

http://www.simoncherriman.com/Simon_Cherriman/News/Entries/2012/3/20_Nest_Boxes_-_Ardross_Primary.html

While we are on the topic of **Nest Boxes**, I'd like to draw your attention to a new page on my website. I have now begun a production line of boxes at home, once again using recycled material, and these are available for anyone to purchase. If you're interested in having a wildlife-attracting home in your garden, please visit the

below link, which contains information about sizes, prices, species likely to use them, and much more! Also, here the latest tenant to use a box at our place in Mt Helena... just a word of warning: the 'blood' you can see is just sap from the Marri tree, even though it looks like this possum has dragged a small dog up for a feed ha ha ha! And if you're a Kiwi - please remember that possums BELONG in Australia so this animal is ok.

http://www.simoncherriman.com/Simon_Cherriman/Nest_Boxes.html



KIMBERLEY EXPEDITION

Well, as I'm writing this the 2012 Australian Geographic Scientific Expedition is pending... in fact, I get on a plane tomorrow morning! This year a bunch of fabulous, enthusiastic environmentally-minded scientists, AG staff, writers, volunteers, chefs, camp assistants and people of many other talents are heading to El Questro Wilderness Park for the second year in a row. Whereas last year, the word 'Cane Toad' was something only whispered about in the quiet, dark areas of the Pentecost River, the news on the grapevine this year is that these introduced pests have reached the area and perhaps begun spreading their toxicity west into the wilderness. One of the main aim for

researchers is to investigate the extent to which toads have colonised their study areas, and what impacts they may have had on native species. Last year I juggled the Ornithologist-Tour Guide role, but this year has me lugging a bit more camera gear around to help film a documentary on the trip. I'll be working with a team from Distracted Media, based in Sydney, to help take footage of frogs, fish, finches, crocodiles, goannas, rock wallabies... and most importantly, researchers! At the moment the plan is to have the docco sold with a future issue of the Aus Geo journal - but more on that later. We have to make it first! Keep you eyes on the Australian Geographic website for updates:

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

If you're keen to see what it looks like at El Questro, you can view some of my photos from last year's Expedition here:

http://www.simoncherriman.com/Simon_Cherriman/Photo_Gallery/Pages/El_Questro.html

OUTBACK EAGLE RESEARCH



This year I'm excited to announce that I've been doing some work on wedgies at Lorna Glen - a 'new' conservation reserve managed by the WA Dept. of

Environment and Conservation. The work that the Department, through a joint management project with the indigenous Martu people, has done here since purchasing the land over 10 years ago has been phenomenal: feral animal control, destocking, weed management, endangered mammal reintroductions... It really is amazing to know that a vast area of land is transforming from a pastoral property to conservation reserve. The mammal reintroductions sparked my interest and in October I visited Lorna Glen to see what 'my' beloved birds had been preying on... and whether the naughty beasts may have been eating mammals they're not supposed to! It's too early to be comprehensive at this stage but early signs show a varied diet - including native reptiles, some reintroduced threatened mammals, and ferals too (like cats and rabbits!). Science Division is also really interested in expanding knowledge on the wedgies in this region, so I will be conducting an aerial nest survey from a light aircraft (perhaps the first in WA!) to try and locate as many eagle territories as possible. This will then lead to a Satellite Telemetry project, where I plan to conduct Australia-first research which will involve mounting GPS collars on both newly-fledged and adult eagles and tracking their movements. Bring on August! Keep eyes on these newsletters and my 'News' section on the website for details.

BIRD WALKS

have been ticking along nicely, with three completed since they began in December. The plan is to build these up towards Spring when I can hopefully take them a bit more regularly than 1 per month, and by then it will be a time when avian activity reaches its peak! One of the highlights of this year's walk was seeing a nocturnal Tawny Frogmouth, perched very close to the walk trail, during our evening/dusk stroll in the Jarrah Forest. In May the inaugural bird walk at the [Australian Wildlife Conservancy's Paruna Sanctuary](#) will be held - this is on [Sunday 20th May](#), starting at 7am. If you're interested in coming on this then book fast - there are limited places available! For more information please visit my website and look under the 'What's On' tab - or click the link below.

http://www.simoncherriman.com/Simon_Cherriman/Whats_0

[n/Whats_On.html](#)

If you're interested in Wildlife then you may already be a member of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia. If not, then I thoroughly recommend you visit their website and join up to receive their quarterly magazine, which is full of fabulous information on the wonderful conservation projects happening around the country. WPSA has been fantastic at providing me with opportunities to showcase some of my photographs and share stories about wildlife - and if you grab a copy of the Autumn 2012 issue, you might notice a story in their about my adventures last year looking at nesting Peregrine Falcons! I'd like to thank WPSA for having me write the article for them - a pleasure to be involved with such a worthy and inspiring cause.

ON A PLANE...

A few last titbits before we get to the end of the waffle...
err... newsletter.

You are probably aware of the 'News' section on my website. Just a reminder that here you can find stories that I post every week or so about what I've been doing, my wildlife experiences, some ways you can help wildlife in your area, and much more. If you are a teacher or conduct education of any kind, I hope these posts (as they build up!) can be used as a source of information on a wide variety of topics. Here are a few highlights since the last INSIGHT News...

A valuable lesson in keeping lids on water tanks:

http://www.simoncherriman.com/Simon_Cherriman/News/Entries/2012/3/31_Outback_Death_Trap.html

Fascinating burrowing frogs:

http://www.simoncherriman.com/Simon_Cherriman/News/Entries/2012/3/16_Burrowing_Frogs.html

Foxes are always stalking - even cameras!

http://www.simoncherriman.com/Simon_Cherriman/News/Entries/2012/2/27_Waterbirds_in_the_Forest.html

Well folks, I better make this the close now, as it's getting late and I need some beauty sleep before heading north tomorrow! I hope you are all well and keeping busy and happy with whatever you are up to.

As a closing thought, I'd like to use the well-known Millennium Kids motto:

"Have Fun, Eat Chocolate and
CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT"!!

Take care and Best Wishes,

Simon

 **Save a tree, please don't print this e-mail unless necessary**

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Wedge-tailed Eagle Specialist

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