

Conservationist walks the talk

Marathon march raises awareness and funds for threatened species



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WALKING 1km for every threatened species in Australia, Adelaide resident Tristan O'Brien is on a mission to raise awareness and money for conservation across the country.

Travelling from Adelaide to Hobart, totalling 1900km, the determined hiker last week made his way through the Blue Lake city on his way to Heywood to complete the last leg of his journey.

Already completing the majority of the walk, Mr O'Brien began the last 250km stretch from Kingston to Heywood on Saturday after he had to unfortunately cut the section from his planned route last year due to shin splints.

Raising money for two charities, BioR and Wollangarra Outdoor Education Centre, Mr O'Brien's passion for conservation is clear.

"Because the majority of Australia's and the world's population now live in cities, we have lost the benefits to childhood development, health and community that exposure to nature provides," he said.

"This means we have also lost some of our understanding about why conserving and protecting nature is important, for our health as a society and for biodiversity conservation.

"1900 footprints is my way of highlighting why as a society recon-



CONSERVATION MISSION: Adelaide resident Tristan O'Brien made his way through Mount Gambier during his 1900 Footprints walk from Adelaide to Hobart to raise money and awareness for conservation in Australia.
Picture: JOCELYN NICKELS

necting with nature is needed now more than ever."

Experiencing many highs and lows along the way, Mr O'Brien said the generosity of complete strangers had offset the troubles faced.

"It has been incredible how supportive people have been along the way and how generous they have been," he said.

"That was something I was not really expecting, but it has helped immensely.

"I have met a lot of characters along the way and heard a lot of stories, it is something we often miss out on when we are consumed in our everyday lives.

"I even met some guys in Tasmania that worked at an airfield and they took me up in a plane."

Although initially a little nervous about what lay before him, Mr O'Brien said it had turned out to be an exciting and rewarding journey.

"After the first few weeks, I real-

ised I had everything I needed in terms of gear and knowledge and I would be okay for the rest of the trip," Mr O'Brien said.

"I have my custom-built trolley that I fill with gear and food and have been sleeping on the side of the road in a tent.

"Honestly I thought it would be more of a mental challenge, but because I am doing so much exercise I am producing a lot of endorphins and have been really

happy throughout the whole experience.

"Waking up in the morning and not knowing what to expect of the day has been really exciting."

To date Mr O'Brien has successfully raised over \$15,000 for threatened species in Australia with an aim to reach \$19,000 by the end of the trip.

Visit chuffed.org/project/1900-footprints-walk/ to donate to the cause.

Secret life of cats to be exposed

JUST as the children's nursery rhyme says, people have long wondered the whereabouts of their feline friends.

Now, the covert lives of Australia's cats are set to be exposed in the University of South Australia's new national Cat Tracker study, which is now live.

Led by Discovery Circle Research Leader Dr Phillip Roetman of University of South Australia, Cat Tracker will follow the day and night movements of up to 1400 cats to deliver valuable information for cat owners to care and manage their pet cats.

"Domestic cats are one of the most popular pets worldwide and they play an important and much cherished role in the lives of many Australians," he said.

"Cat Tracker will tell us where they have been - some missing information that will help cat owners make decisions about their cat's care."

The national research comes on the

tail of the successful South Australian Cat Tracker study, which involved more than 3000 members of the South Australian community, 61,250 location data points, survey data of 4314 cats and 428 monitored cat tracks.

As a citizen science initiative, Cat Tracker engages the community to study the movements of their pet cats, using small GPS units over a period of seven days with cat owners also completing a survey to volunteer their cats for selection.

"Cat Tracker relies on community involvement and right now we're looking for people who are keen to register their cats to participate in our national study," Dr Roetman said.

"We'll be aiming for a good balance of gender, breeds, ages and locations, as this will provide the most robust data for the study and extend the work we completed in South Australia."

Visit www.discoverycircle.org.au/projects/cat-tracker for more information and to volunteer cats.

IN BRIEF

Assault and property damage charges laid

POLICE have arrested and charged a man from the Limestone Coast with aggravated assault and property damage following a domestic disturbance on Sunday evening.

Officers were called to a house following reports of a disturbance and a 34-year-old

man was arrested.

As well as facing serious charges, the man was issued a police intervention order, which provides further protection for the victim.

He has been bailed to appear at a later date in the Mount Gambier Magistrates Court.

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