

nation in conservation



BACK THEN: Tony Frisby, his son Nathan and Steve Irwin in 2004.

He travels to regional locations to research issues or advocate on behalf of those who can't – animals that are vulnerable, endangered or plain misunderstood.

Bob has recently been in Cairns for cassowaries, Hervey Bay for dingoes and whales, and will be on the Gold Coast next week for wombats.

"My son's love for our native animals and this beautiful country inspired the people around him long before he was on TV," says Bob.

"To be a beautiful country

again, to stop losing species, we need more people showing their passion for wildlife.

"I'll stand up and be counted, and I won't stop."

Bob warns the loss of any species, from a tiny lizard to an iconic marsupial, will alter the whole biodiversity of an area.

"Once an animal becomes endangered, it takes a decade to try turning that around," he says.

"Sometimes we succeed, but only just; like with the crocodiles after hunting was stopped."

When Bob's exasperation



LONG-TIME MATES: Tony Frisby and Bob Irwin.

breaks through his quiet demeanour, it rams home the message.

Tony has previously described how he was awe-struck by the former plumber's hands-on expertise in herpetology – the study of reptiles and amphibians.

"I called him Doctor Bob because of his knowledge of animal care and I saw on countless occasions why Stevo was a chip off the old block," he said.

Tony's own passion for conservation, in a career that's ranged from catching saltwater crocs to now managing parks at Yeppoon,

was inspired by Steve and Bob's extraordinary closeness and dedication to the cause.

"Bob taught us to think like an animal in order to understand it, then you could deal with it fairly," he says.

"Stevo soaked it up."

Since September 4, 2006, when Steve was killed by a stingray barb while filming underwater off the north Queensland coastline, thousands of people around the globe have also been influenced by the Irwin family's commitment to saving wildlife.

Worker for our wildlife

■ THE Bob Irwin Wildlife Fund charity is affiliated with RSPCA Queensland and redirects money to wildlife most in need – www.bobirwinwildlife.com.

■ BOB has supported and written the foreword for Tony Frisby and Julie Gatehouse's book, *My Mate Steve Irwin: Life Before The Crocodile Hunter*. Some proceeds will go to the fund. It is available from book-sellers or at www.longmedia.com.au.

■ BOB will speak at a special musical fundraiser for his charity at Montville tonight, where French concert pianist Pascal Roge and wife Ami will perform *Carnival of the Animals*. Bob's "true grit and commonsense" inspired local koala lovers Ian and Lee Lucas to organise this one-off event. For inquiries phone 5478 5667.

■ HE recently backed a Noosa-based website mapping public sightings of koalas, saying people power is "our best avenue of saving species". Visit www.koaladiaries.com.au.

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