



Fish fantasies: Simon Varwell in New Zealand, left, at Mullet Channel, Farewell Spit; at Mullet Drive; and at Mullet Bay, Matutopu Island, near Auckland.

Flannery award

LOS ANGELES: Australian scientist, explorer and conservationist Professor Tim Flannery has been named winner of a prestigious award in the United States. The Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia will present Prof Flannery with its Joseph Leidy Award later this month. Described as "one of this generation's most influential thinkers, writers and speakers on environmental topics", Prof Flannery is the first Australian to gain the award.

Van Rudd out

SECURITY guards have ejected Kevin Rudd's nephew from the Melbourne Museum as he sought to draw attention to the 2001 sinking of the asylum seeker vessel SIEV X, in which 146 children drowned. The political activist and artist Van Rudd placed a dummy of a child in a pram in a special exhibition on the doomed ocean liner Titanic. Van Rudd said it was wrong to support a memorial for the 1500 Titanic victims but not one for Australia's own maritime tragedy.

Tas baby boost

TASMANIANS are still having more babies than any other state or territory, Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show. Australia's fertility rate declined from 1.96 to 1.90 babies per reproductive woman in 2009, according to ABS data released yesterday. Despite the figure dropping in every state except Queensland, the average for Tasmania was 2.18 babies per woman, while the ACT had the lowest at 1.74.

Reserves fail

AUSTRALIA'S national parks, marine parks and nature reserves are failing to adequately protect more than 80 per cent of threatened species, new research shows. The University of Queensland study is a damning assessment of the way protected areas have been selected in the past. Lead author James Watson said the aim of securing species most at risk was not being achieved as the protected areas were simply "randomly placed".

Mad Scot's adventure in search of mullets

By ANGELA THOMPSON

A MULLET-MAD Scotsman who travelled halfway around the world to paddle in Dapto's Mullet Creek has published a book about his offbeat adventures.

Simon Varwell came to the Illawarra in July 2005. It was the third stop in what has become a 28-leg world tour of locations with Mullet in their name.

With 14 of the locations under his belt, Mr Varwell has published a travelogue of the first seven, titled *Up the Creek Without a Mullet*.

"Many of the mullets I visited were fairly insignificant and out of the way places," said Mr Varwell, of Inverness.

"Mullet Creek near Bundaberg was ... just a dried up ditch along a fairly minor road.

"In a sense, that's part of the appeal - visiting places I might not otherwise think of going to and being surprised as a result.

"It's been a fascinating experience throwing caution, cost, prejudice, preference and convenience to the wind and letting a figurative throw of the dice decide where I am to travel to.



Head for mullets: Simon Varwell in Dapto's Mullet Creek. Picture: SYLVIA LIBER

"The mullets that stood out were the ones where I met interesting people. I [met] a number of lovely folk in Dapto who told me more about the area - one of whom had emailed me to say her family loved

the idea of the mission, her husband had a mullet, and they wanted to meet me." The 32-year-old became a keen spotter of the mullet haircut in 2001 when he was travelling

through parts of Eastern Europe - "hotbeds of mulletry" - with a friend.

The pair made a game of it, with one point for every male mullet they saw, two for every "skullet" (receding mullet), three for each "femme brulee" (female mullet) and four for the elusive "chullet" - child mullet.

He decided to take it further when he discovered there was a place in Albania called Mullet.

This, and locations in Ireland and Australia, comprise the first seven stops in the book.

A sequel, due out next year, will chart trips to England, Canada, New Zealand and the West Coast of the United States.

Mr Varwell believes there is another book in the remaining mullets of the US, the Caribbean and the Falkland Islands, not all of which will be easily accessible.

"Mullet in Haiti, for instance ... that's not going to be easy."

Mr Varwell, who has never sported the "hideous" haircut, will be joined in future travels by his new wife.

"She thinks it is a fun mission," he said.

MULLETS ACROSS THE WORLD

BELMULLET County Mayo, Ireland, April 2004	TIGER MULLET CHANNEL South Stradbroke Island, Queensland, Australia, July 2005	MULLET CREEK Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, Sep 2007	MULLET CHANNEL Farewell Spit, South Island, New Zealand, January 2008
MULLET CREEK Dapto, New South Wales, Australia, July 2005	MULLETT CREEK Near Bundaberg, Queensland, Australia, July 2005	MULLET POINT Mahurangi Peninsula, North Island, New Zealand, January 2008	MULLET BAY Cosy Nook, South Island, New Zealand, January 2008
MULLET CREEK Wondabyne, Hawkesbury River, New South Wales, Australia, July 2005	MULLETT'S FARM Great Finborough, Suffolk, England, July 2006	MULLET BAY Motutapu Island, North Island, New Zealand, January 2008	LONGUEUIL* Montreal, Quebec, Canada
MULLET CREEK Narrabeen, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, July 2005	MULLETT'S FARM Barking, Suffolk, England, July 2006	MULLET CREEK Tabora, North Island, New Zealand, January 2008	* "Honorary mullet" - <i>La Coupe Longueuil is the Quebec-French for a mullet haircut.</i>

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