



Conservation success in the Tasmanian midlands

Photo: Diana Cameron

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The Tasmanian Land Conservancy uses a range of conservation approaches which include buying land to be permanently managed by the TLC, operating a revolving fund, and working with private landowners to set up conservation areas on their own properties.

For the last year we have been working on a conservation tender programme in the Tasmanian midlands – which is now set to establish 35 new conservation areas in the region, covering over 8000 ha.

While Tasmania has a high proportion of reservation already, some regions have very few protected areas. The midlands is one of these, even though it is an area of high conservation value. The few remaining fragments of once extensive native grasslands are highly significant; the occasional wetlands nestled in the dry ecosystems are crucially important, and the dry heathy forests are havens for threatened species.

Our strategy is to build a system of secure core areas managed for conservation, essentially a network of biodiversity assets, which are sufficient to keep ecosystems functioning at a basic level. As the Tasmanian midlands is over 99% privately owned, our work in the region is

'Patterdale' with Ben Nevis in background, northern midlands primarily through voluntary partnerships with independent landowners.

The idea of a tender is relatively new. Landowners indicate their interest in participating; a conservation biologist assesses the land they intend to conserve and provides the landowner with a conservation value score. The score is derived from a combination of factors such as habitat types, presence of threatened species, connectivity with other reserves, the size of the area and length of the agreement the landowner wishes to enter into (anything from six years to perpetual).

The landowner submits a tender with a requested price. The tenders are then ranked in order of value for money based on the conservation scores and the funding requested. The best value for money projects are selected for funding and progressed to agreements.

Almost 80 landowners expressed interest in a recent tender programme and around 60 submitted bids. Of these 38 were selected for commonwealth government funding from the Maintaining Australia's Biodiversity Hotspots Program and the Forest Conservation Fund.

The majority of the proposals selected are **continued on the back page**

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The vulnerable Spotted-tailed quoll



Tree planting at Flat Rock Reserve



Dr Niall Doran

TLC reserve news

Due to the generous contributions of our supporters throughout Australia, over the past seven years we have been able to acquire and permanently protect nearly 1300 ha of outstanding habitats and rare ecosystems across Tasmania.

A year ago we launched a \$200,000 campaign to purchase 125 ha of the endangered forest, wetland and saline grassland of the Egg Islands, which is home to the globally endangered Australasian bittern. As announced in newsletter 17, we are delighted to have achieved this goal.

In the next few weeks we will be announcing an even more ambitious and exciting fund raising project to purchase and protect a wild-river valley of natural grassland and old growth rainforest which supports 12 threatened plant and animal species.

This iconic place is widely recognised as one of the most important for nature conservation in Australia. It is of global significance for its rich and dense marsupial carnivore fauna, including the vulnerable Spotted-tailed quoll and the endangered Tasmanian devil.

We have secured \$800,000 towards the purchase of this inspirational place from the Australian Government's Maintaining Australia's Biodiversity Hotspots Program and will need to raise a further \$600,000 from the general public to protect its future.

We will write to you in a few weeks time to give you full details of this wonderful property and how you can join us in securing its permanent protection.

TLC volunteering

Since its inception in 2001, the TLC has relied upon the help of volunteers to assist in the management of our permanent reserves. In the previous 12 months, 95 volunteers have collaboratively provided 402 days of labour. The TLC fosters cooperation with organisations such as the International Student Volunteers, who visit the state twice annually and offer hundreds of hours of volunteer labour to our conservation programmes. Volunteer project outcomes include an extensive revegetation effort at Long Point Reserve, with 5280 trees planted and 2.35 ha of gorse removed by hand; a community planting day at Flat Rock Reserve with 500 trees planted by Bagdad Primary School students, families and locals; and two weed surveys at the Egg Islands Reserve.

We are now developing a volunteer calendar, scheduling activities for up to six months in advance. This will ensure potential volunteers have lots of notice to engage. Activities in the next three months include collecting seed and growing plants for further revegetation in autumn 2009. The aim is to collect seed from the areas intended for planting, and for volunteers to nurture the seedlings until they are mature enough to be planted out, back at the site of the seeds' origin. It is a tremendously rewarding experience to see hundreds of plants in the ground, and to reflect on the care they received to get them to this stage - all from the efforts of TLC volunteers!

Please call us on 03 6225 1399 if you are interested in becoming a TLC volunteer.

Staff profile

Dr Niall Doran is well known in government and private sector conservation management in Tasmania, and the TLC is very pleased to have him on our staff. He has over 15 years experience in both field work and policy/legislative work on threatened species, World Heritage Area management, forestry and agricultural land clearing practices, industrial environmental systems, private land reservation and incentive programmes, and the development of environmental solutions with community groups, organisations and landowners.

Niall is a strategic advisor for the TLC. He is developing mechanisms for working with councils that are aiming to mitigate environmental impacts by strategically securing natural values across the landscape. This includes the development of a pilot project in cooperation with all 12 southern councils. He is also investigating methods for the TLC to offer carbon offsetting services for Tasmanian businesses.

Outside the TLC, Niall sits on the State Threatened Species Scientific Advisory Committee. He is currently also coordinating a new not-for-profit environmental scholarship programme, the Bookend Trust www.bookendtrust.com, which aims to inspire Tasmanian school students with career opportunities for work in environmental fields. Initial scholarship projects include work on great white sharks and the rehabilitation of injured and orphaned wildlife, the latter in cooperation with the Bonorong Wildlife Centre, Brighton.



Greg Irons with two injured Tawny frogmouths



'Patterdale' grassy woodland



Grassy white gum forest

Midlands biodiversity hotspot covenant success stories

At 24, Greg Irons is the youngest and one of the keenest landowners to participate in the Midlands Biodiversity Hotspot Tender.

Greg owns a 20 ha block of forest near Campania. His black peppermint and silver peppermint forests are on sandstone country so they generally have a dry heathy and scrubby understorey with limited patches of grass cover. These vegetation communities are listed as vulnerable and are an important conservation asset.

Greg's tender was for a covenant in perpetuity covering 17.5 ha of his 20 ha block. He was insistent that there be no firewood or grazing activities on the covenanted area and asked that the covenanted land be used for rehabilitation and release of rescued native wildlife. This provision is permissible on covenanted land provided the owner complies with the Code of Practice for Wildlife Rehabilitators currently approved by DPIW's Nature Conservation Branch.

Greg works at the Bonorong Wildlife Conservation Centre and is passionate about wildlife rescue and rehabilitation. He is concerned that too much forest is being lost to clearing and overgrazing, leaving precious few safe areas as decent habitat for native 'critters'. However he is optimistic, because the Midlands Biodiversity Hotspot Tender and other similar programmes have resulted in some substantial areas of private land being reserved.

Greg is available on 24 hour call for urgent advice about wildlife rescue. His mobile number is 0424 333 360.

'Patterdale' is a 4500 ha farming operation which focuses on superfine wool production, cropping and irrigation. Two thirds of the property is native grasslands and bush, most of which is used for the production of premium quality superfine wool. The landowners, Carol and Rodney Westmore, have tendered 120 ha for a 24 year covenant and 130 ha for a 12 year stewardship contract. These areas are a good example of the diverse matrix of grassland, woodland and forest communities unique to the Tasmanian midlands.

The stewardship and conservation contracts will limit grazing, mainly for purposes of managing the natural values, and the landowners will be responsible for weed control and fencing in return for stewardship payments.

Patterdale was first settled by the artist John Glover in the early 1830s and many of his most iconic paintings provide a record of the Patterdale landscape. The Westmores like the concept of tendering for conservation services and would consider protecting further areas of native bush. "As I see it," says Carol, "the landscape in this quiet and beautiful part of Tasmania still has many of the natural qualities that John Glover recorded in his paintings 170 years ago."

"Yes, the good arable soils on the valley plains have been developed to sustain more productive and profitable agriculture (beginning with Glover himself), but the surrounding hills are still basically the same. I hope it can remain so if we manage it gently with a sense of stewardship."

'Camelford' is an 1800 ha property near Campbell Town run by Frank Chester and his family. A little over half the property is on the midland plain and has mainly been developed with improved pastures for sheep meat and wool production with some cereal cropping. However the rest of the property is native bush run country extending into Nicolson's Tier.

Frank successfully tendered for a six year stewardship contract to cover 800 ha of this run country. He has undertaken to only graze sheep for purposes of managing the natural values and is limited to taking ten tonnes of firewood per annum for his own domestic use. Gorse control is also a requirement under the contract.

The native bush consists mainly of white gum and grassy woodland with some heathy woodland on sandy soils. Small areas of native grassland and sedgeland occur along with communities of black gum and black peppermint. It provides an excellent example of the diversity of the midlands native vegetation.

Whilst Frank had no previous experience with programmes like the Midlands Biodiversity Hotspot Tender he was comfortable with participating. "It is very good to be able to look after and keep this bush in its natural state. It provides a nice balance to the property. The assessment and application process was quick and efficient and the options allow us to try a short term contract to see how it works for us. Earning money from conservation is a better option than selling chip logs."

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Pandani Detail #1

Art exhibition

We are very pleased to announce that photographer Doug Thost will be exhibiting his latest images, which will be for sale, at the TLC premises in lower Sandy Bay next month.

Doug's exhibition entitled 'Two Months at the Lake' is the culmination of his Arts Tasmania Natural and Cultural Residency at Lake St. Clair National Park in 2006. The works will be displayed in the TLC gallery for two weeks from Wednesday 8th October.

The aim of Doug's project was to explore new ways of photographing the Tasmanian wilderness, as well as exploring the contradiction of people within wilderness.

The exhibition showcases the natural beauty of the area. Doug says, "It was a real privilege as well as a challenge, to have so much time in such a beautiful area, to really explore, and to just sit and wait and watch." Probably best known for his Antarctic work, Doug exhibited images of the Franklin River at the TLC in 2005 entitled 'Dark River : the Franklin'.

Doug has very kindly offered to donate 30% of the sale proceeds to the TLC's conservation work.

You can preview Doug's work at www.dougthost.com.

Come along to the opening on Wed 8th Oct from 6pm, enjoy a glass of wine, and meet Doug and TLC staff members. RSVP to the TLC office on 62251399 or email us at info@tasland.org.au

We are grateful to the following organisations for their support in recent months



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Photo: Doug Thost

Supporter visit to Flat Rock Reserve

Supporter events

The last day of winter provided excellent conditions for an enthusiastic group of TLC supporters to spend a day walking in the Chauncy Vale Wildlife Sanctuary and the TLC Flat Rock Reserve. A special thank you to Heather Chauncy and Dr Nick Mooney for interpreting the walk and providing insights into the history and ecology of this important conservation area and wildlife corridor.

With the warmer weather approaching, we are offering the opportunity for a group of 15 supporters to visit another TLC reserve on Saturday 1st November 2008. The Egg Islands are located in the Huon estuary, opposite Franklin, about 30 minutes south of Hobart.

We will hire five rowing boats and row across the sheltered estuary and around the south island. We plan to land on the south island and spend time walking through the scrub and forest, stopping for lunch in an area where bitterns have previously been seen. The globally endangered Australasian bittern is a secretive and rarely observed resident of these magnificent islands. Whilst there is no guarantee of sightings, experiencing the rich diversity of the Egg Islands is a treat not to be missed.

Spaces are limited to 15 supporters. **If you would like to be included please contact us on 03 6225 1399 or email jnaylor@tasland.org.au to register.**



Photo: Matthew Newton

Ross landscape, Tasmanian midlands

(cont. from page 1)

for the establishment of perpetual covenants but some are also for 24 year covenants and 12 and six year stewardship agreements. We are currently preparing legal documents to progress the selected proposals.

The tender programme has been a major step towards establishing a network of conservation reserves through the region.

Along with partners Bush Heritage Australia and DPIW we are planning to continue to work in the region. We have already purchased five properties in the midlands through our revolving fund and are discussing some options to purchase land as permanent reserves to be held jointly by the TLC and Bush Heritage.

This work is increasingly guided by a strategic vision for the landscape, identifying 'focal landscapes' or areas of high conservation value where we would prioritise investment should opportunities arise to work with landowners.

Our hope is that this work, along with the work of government, other NGOs and private landowners, will create a framework of conservation lands that can support our biodiversity into the future. Of course we need to understand more about the amount of conservation lands required to achieve this goal and how the likely effects of climate change may influence the lands selected for investment. This work is underway and, in the meantime, we are taking important steps towards establishing one of the world's leading reserve systems.