



TASMANIAN | Land | CONSERVANCY



A Tasmanian conservation adventure

Photo: Andy Townsend

Dew at the Vale of Belvoir

Issue 25 Winter 2010

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Jane Hutchinson and I have spent the last few days visiting the TLC's Egg Islands and Vale of Belvoir reserves and the sites secured for the national park in the Mole Creek karst cave system. Accompanying us on the tour of these TLC conservation projects were three American visitors who are members of staff and the advisory board of America's Nature Conservancy.

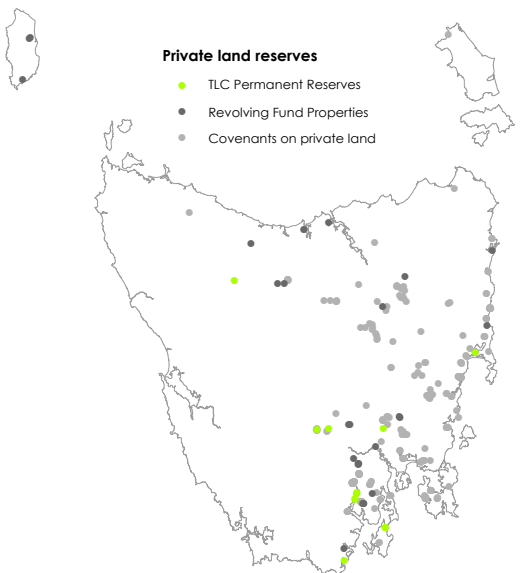
The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is the world's largest nature conservation NGO employing some 3000 people and working in 50 countries around the world. They have a programme in Australia which aims to assist local groups with conservation efforts, particularly in Australia's north.

The three TNC delegates, one of whom had recently served two terms as a senator in the United States, were here to assist local organisations like ours with their fundraising strategies with a view to accelerating their work and making it more sustainable for the long-term.

We were lucky enough to spend a day with these experts in a formal workshop in Melbourne. This was augmented by further opportunities on their visit to Tasmania and we gained a deeper

understanding of their organisation and the incredible philanthropic support provided by the American public for their work.

Alongside the intense learning for us, it was really pleasing that in the view of our American friends our fledgling organisation—as it embarks on its tenth year with substantial results under the belt—has already achieved many of the basics that are needed to underpin our long-term conservation mission in Tasmania.



Private reserves established through the TLC and partnerships with landowners and

'protecting Tasmanian land for biodiversity'



Photo: Wolfgang Glowacki

Vale River at sunset

A Tasmanian conservation adventure (cont)

The fundamentals of a successful conservation NGO are:

- a substantial number of really supportive individuals and families that provide core funding;
- high quality governance and administrative systems to ensure funds are well managed;
- well-developed communication systems;
- robust systems for managing bequests;
- a great team of staff and volunteers;
- a science-based vision that drives the work; and
- key strategic relationships such as, in the case of the TLC, with the State government's Private Land Conservation Program (PAPL) and the Commonwealth's National Reserve System Programme.

Of course, the TLC is still only in the early stages of the long-term conservation mission in Tasmania. The board, staff and supporters are currently developing a 50-year vision and mission. We hope to work alongside government, other NGOs and private landowners in the State to make Tasmania no less than a world leader in conservation and protected area systems.

This is an entirely achievable goal. It is magnificent that over 40 per cent of Tasmania's public land is protected in reserves. Strategic and careful additions of private land, such as the Vale of

Belvoir and private reserves including those being established through the PAPL Program, have the potential to provide us with a comprehensive reserve system that enables Tasmania's rich biodiversity to persist.

Ongoing management of reserves is one of our most important challenges. We must work to ensure the flora and fauna that rely on protected areas are cared for, while also providing value to people through opportunities to access these places, enjoy them and benefit in mind, body and spirit. There are now clear indicators that outdoor activities in natural areas are significant factors in improving the health of people.

As we close in on our tenth birthday, I am really excited about the long-term future for Tasmania as a leader in establishment and management of protected areas. I think the TLC staff, volunteers and supporters have a key role to play in making that vision a reality.

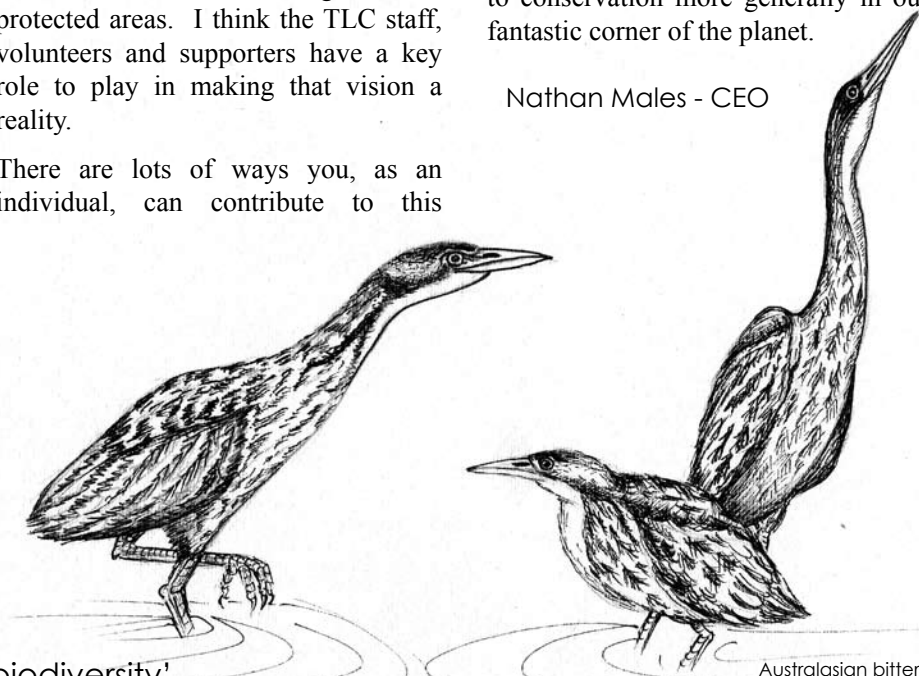
There are lots of ways you, as an individual, can contribute to this

mission. These include:

- assisting with important on-ground management activities at our permanent reserves;
- making essential annual or monthly gifts to keep the organisation's work moving forward;
- making planned future gifts as part of your estate;
- considering the establishment of private reserves on your own land.

We are looking forward to sharing the outcomes of our strategic planning with you in the coming months and continuing to work with you to carry out essential practical conservation projects. Until then, we thank you for all the various and wonderful contributions you have made to the TLC's work and to conservation more generally in our fantastic corner of the planet.

Nathan Males - CEO



Australasian bitterns

Image: Margaret Vandenberg



Photo: Matt Newton

Volunteers fencing at the Vale of Belvoir

Managing the Vale of Belvoir

The warmth of mid-summer sees a flurry of activity at the Vale of Belvoir. Butterflies flutter above the grassland; a sea of grassland flowers emerge amongst the tussocks; a cow bellows across the valley; and excitement can be heard in the voices of enthusiastic volunteers as they locate threatened plant species they have spent days searching for.

Ecology

Understanding the ecology of the Vale of Belvoir is vital to managing the landscape successfully, and summer presents the perfect opportunity for answering the ecological questions we don't know the answers to. Denna Kingdom, TLC Reserves Manager, has spent much of the past 12 months identifying what is known and unknown about the Vale. "There's a lot that we do know" explains Denna. "We know what threatened species have been recorded here in the past. We also know that these grasslands are incredibly diverse in comparison to others nearby and, thanks to the Charleston family, we have a good understanding of how the landscape has been managed for the past 150 years."

Filling in the gaps

This history is a good start, but now we need to fill in the gaps in our knowledge, and start to identify why the threatened species and incredible diversity is here. Stepping up to help the TLC fill these gaps are enthusiastic volunteers, interested scientists and natural resource management professionals who have spent days at a time over

summer searching for threatened plants, such as the rare Tadgell's leek orchid (*Prasophyllum tadgellianum*), the nationally endangered grassland paperdaisy (*Leucochrysum albicans* var. *tricolor*) and the vulnerable alpine candles (*Stackhousia pulvinaris*). Data collected from these surveys have been captured in a database and electronically mapped, allowing our reserves managers to more thoroughly plan management activities such as grazing and burning.



Male Ptunnara brown butterfly

Photo: Denna Kingdom

As volunteers moved through the grasslands in February, it was difficult not to be distracted by orange and brown butterflies fluttering strongly in the warm sunshine. These butterflies are all relatively common and well known at the Vale. However, as the warmth of summer fades, these butterflies die, leaving nestled amongst the vegetation their eggs for the next generation to

emerge next summer. But over two weeks at the end of March, the grasslands are again filled with butterflies, this time small butterflies that seem to flop, rather than fly, from tussock to tussock. These are the threatened Ptunnara brown butterfly (*Oreixenica ptunnarra*), whose populations at the Vale of Belvoir were unsurveyed prior to this year. The volunteer survey resulted in recording high numbers of butterflies across most of the valley, indicating that the Vale may be a stronghold for the future of this species.

Cattle

As the warmth of summer fades, so too does the amount of feed available to the cattle, which have been brought to the Vale by the Charleston family over the summer months for the past 150 years. The continuous summer presence of the cattle may be linked to the high diversity of the grasslands; however, their presence in wetland and karst areas can result in damage by increasing the amount of nutrients and sediments entering the water that flows through the limestone. To minimise the impact of the cattle, new fences have been installed to exclude the cattle from sensitive areas.

Fencing

Enthusiastic volunteer voices again echoed across the valley in April, often muffled by the layers of clothing protecting them from the sharp wind and pelting rain. Alongside the TLC staff and contractors, these volunteers worked solidly installing two kilometres



Alpine mound spring at the Vale of Belvoir

Photo: Rolan Eberhard



John and Annette: proud new owners of the revolving fund property "Tall White Gums"

Photo: Rod Pearse

of fences around cattle-sensitive karst outcrops and wetlands, in spite of the unpleasant weather. The fencing will be completed later in the year, once the biting winter weather has eased into spring.

Mound springs

Heavy winter rains last year led to the geomorphologist Rolan Eberhard's discovery of a mound spring at the Vale in July 2009.

Mound springs are a rare geomorphological occurrence in karst landscapes, where water rich in dissolved minerals rises up through the limestone substrate. This results in a mound-shaped mineral deposit that occurs over time. "The discovery of this mound spring is exciting" explained Rolan, "because it's the only example of an alpine mound spring in either Tasmania or Australia that I am aware of." The mound spring compounds existing evidence that the hydrology of the karst system at the Vale of Belvoir is complex.

As the snows of this winter begin to melt, the TLC will be developing a fire management plan, which will enable us to continue the mosaic grassland burning undertaken by the Charleston family in the past.

Then when the chill of winter has passed, Denna has plans to bring back the voices of enthusiastic volunteers in search of the answers to our ecological questions, joining again in the summer flurry of activity amongst the butterflies and grassland flowers.

Finding 'Tall White Gums'

Tall White Gums Reserve at Gunns Plains was purchased by the TLC in December 2008 with funds provided by the Forest Conservation Revolving Fund, which the TLC manages for the Australian Government. The property was acquired because it supports a forest of tall white gums, an endangered forest community, and was an attractive proposition to protect with a conservation covenant and resell. John Thompson and Annette Vojinovic agreed to buy the property in February 2010. This is their story:

"Exploring the north-west last December for possible retirement locations in Tasmania, we happened upon Gunns Plains on the back roads between Burnie and Deloraine. With a name like that we expected logging trucks, clear-felled old-growth forests and lots of plantations. Instead, our first view of the picturesque valley from the lookout on South Riana Road took our breath away – the sparkling Leven River meandering towards Bass Strait, the patchwork of verdant fields flanked by forested hillsides, and the Dial and Black Bluff ranges to north and south.

Seven weeks later with one-way tickets, we returned to Gunns Plains to check out a couple of properties that we had found on the internet. While driving up Raymond Road, disappointed in what we had seen, Annette noticed the Tasmanian Land Conservancy signs outside a property called 'Tall White Gums'.

The search criteria for our retirement property were four plus hectares, a bit of bush, a bit of pasture and a house with potential! As keen gardeners with

a love of native plants we also wanted a place where we could get serious with propagating and revegetating.

'Tall White Gums' met all our criteria with its 14 hectares of 70 year old regrowth wet white gum forest, small paddocks for a few sheep and a 19 year old owner-built rustic house needing more than a bit of attention. The clincher for us was that it would be sold with a conservation covenant on the forest and a nature conservation plan that fully aligned with our botanical aspirations. Coming from Canberra we thought the price was pretty good too!

The TLC, through Rod Pearse, closely involved us throughout the drafting of the conservation documents, and they were happy to negotiate the covenant boundaries around the house and the conditions of access to the land for weed control and revegetation. In return we agreed to include several hectares of blackberry-infested pasture within the covenanted land, with a commitment to help return them to wet white gum forest.

Having retired in our mid fifties we still have a few good years left and will be using our time and energy over the next 20 or so years to enhance the natural resource under our stewardship for future generations.

Our biggest challenge will be to slow down and enjoy the opportunity and challenge which 'Tall White Gums' affords and try not to do everything at once. We feel privileged to be the owners of such a beautiful slice of Tasmania and grateful that we spotted Rod's signs back in January.

'protecting Tasmanian land for biodiversity'



Photo: Matthew Newbourn

Ian and Bronwyn Johnstone, Maria Island Walk



Stuart and Rosie Barry near Adams Peak in Sri Lanka

40 spotted support

Tasmanian tourism operators Ian and Bronwyn Johnstone are supporting the Threatened Woodlands Birds Project with their donation of \$10,000 to help protect critically important 40 spotted pardalote habitat on Bruny Island.

“When we set up The Maria Island Walk we wanted to run a successful business as well as help out the environment and community in which we live,” Ian recalled.

“We see these exquisite, tiny pardalote on nearly every one of our four-day guided walks on Maria so they are close to our hearts. It saddens us that creeping habitat loss means that the most significant populations remaining are now on Maria and Bruny islands. The magnificent white gum forests of Maria are protected by its national park status, however those on Bruny are not.

When we heard that the TLC was taking steps to protect critical habitat we knew we wanted to do our bit to help.

Our guests come from all over the world to marvel at the unique Tasmanian animals on Maria Island and that is one of the key reasons why The Maria Island Walk is recognised as one of Australia’s top eco-tourism experiences, collecting a remarkable six national tourism awards in the past three years.

Well done TLC for this initiative. We are proud to contribute with this donation.”



Photo: Bill Wakefield and Es Hayward

Meet the Board

After over 20 years working in the global investment markets, both in Asia and mainland Australia, Stuart Barry, with his wife Rosie, moved to Tasmania seven years ago. They were attracted by the beauty of the state and its family and community-minded lifestyle.

“My wife and I can be described as travel addicted, having been to over 60 countries. During our travels we have seen many special parts of the world. Tasmania truly is one of these special places. However, many of these areas are under threat and need urgent protection before it is too late.

What excites me most about the TLC is its role in working with private landowners to assist them in protecting important natural values on their properties. Managing many areas identified as critical to preserving biodiversity rests with long-term, often multi-generational

landowners. A partnership approach between landowners and the TLC can bring benefits to the whole community by harnessing knowledge and expertise from many sources.

Rosie and I have been financial supporters of the TLC’s permanent reserves and regular donor programs for a few years and I am pleased to volunteer in a professional capacity on the Board. Presently we have a focus on the investment program backing bequests received from supporters. Bequests are critical to ensure the areas protected in permanent reserves have long-term sustainable funding available to pay for the on-going costs of managing this land. As the reserves are intended to be held in perpetuity, having a well-constructed mix of quality long-term investments to fund their management is an important part of the program.”

Thank you Carolyn

In April 2008, one of the Tasmanian Land Conservancy’s supporters, Carolyn Parsons, passed away. In her will Carolyn left a generous bequest to the TLC. That gift was placed in a special fund which will be selectively used to fulfil the objectives of the TLC in protecting Tasmania’s unique fauna and flora and important natural places.

Unfortunately, the TLC was not aware that Carolyn had left a bequest, so we were not able to thank her personally for expressing her concern for the ongoing conservation of Tasmania’s biodiversity by including the TLC in her will.

We love to have the opportunity to express our appreciation to our

wonderful supporters, like Carolyn, who choose to leave a bequest to the TLC, no matter how big or small. We enjoy hosting trips to TLC reserves and extending invitations to special events in acknowledgement of that support.

If you have already made a bequest to the TLC in your will or if you are considering doing so – please let us know so we can say “thank you!” and acknowledge, in an appropriate way, your thoughtful contribution to biodiversity conservation in Tasmania.

For information on making a bequest, or to let us know you have made or are considering making a bequest to the TLC, please contact Sophie or Jane on (03) 6225 1399.



Elizabeth James

Photo: Jennie Ludlow



Wetland at the Vale of Belvoir

Photo: Grant Dixon

Elizabeth Ann James - bequest

31 March 1949 – 5 February 2009

Elizabeth Ann James was passionately committed to her Tasmanian heritage and to the environment. A percentage of her estate was bequeathed for conservation. Elizabeth’s executors determined that a gift to the Tasmanian Land Conservancy would fulfill Elizabeth’s charitable intentions by helping to protect and conserve Tasmania’s most beautiful and biologically diverse places. The Elizabeth Ann James Memorial Fund has been established to assist with the ongoing management of the TLC’s permanent reserves, such as the magnificent Vale of Belvoir near Cradle Mountain and the highly diverse and important Ramsar-listed wetland at Long Point on Tasmania’s east coast.

Born and bred in Tasmania, Elizabeth had a personal and professional interest in environmental matters for most of her life. After completing her undergraduate degree in biology/genetics, she undertook a Masters of Environmental Studies at University of Tasmania in 1985 (with a thesis on the Brushtail possum population).

After several years of researching and teaching in Sydney and PNG, she joined the Federal public service in Canberra, working mainly in environmental and science policy areas, including the Chief Scientist’s Office.

Always full of ideas and with a sense of adventure, Elizabeth returned to Tasmania in 1994. After a short stint in agribusiness near Hobart she settled on a small property near Evandale to establish her own small business ‘SeaChange’, which focused on information technology, project management and environmental consultancies.

In her own backyard, Elizabeth put considerable effort into rehabilitating the creek and waterways on her farm. She was a ready source of advice and assistance about looking after the natural environment in an agricultural context, and numerous community organisations benefited from her knowledge of government processes in obtaining grants for their local environmental initiatives.

Elizabeth was active in many state and local organisations including the Northern Midlands Business Association, Women in Business and the Nile Catchment Management Group. She also served as a member of the Resource Management and Land Planning Appeals Tribunal.

In 2003 Elizabeth was a recipient of the RIRDC Rural Women’s Award.

In 2006, she accepted a position with the Tasmanian Department of the Environment to work on the regulation and management of industrial waste.

Unfortunately she became ill and her illness meant that she had to increasingly withdraw from work and many of her private activities.

Elizabeth wished her Executors to use her estate to benefit both people and the environment. We are confident that making this financial gift in her name to the Tasmanian Land Conservancy towards the conservation of Tasmania’s magnificent natural environment, together with the funds that have been provided to Medicines Sans Frontieres to assist with that organisation’s magnificent humanitarian efforts, will do justice to her wishes.

Jennie Ludlow –
good friend and co-executor.

Thank you Sophie

Sophie Underwood has been an active member of our board for over five years. We are grateful for her voluntary work, which has contributed to the TLC’s growth and success. As Sophie has become a new mother, it is with regret that we have accepted her resignation from the board. We wish her, husband Matt and baby Rose all the best for the future.

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

