



Positive signs of recovery after the fire at TLC's Silver Peppermint Reserve

Regrowth after the fires at Silver Peppermint Reserve

Photo: Matthew Newton

Issue 36 Autumn 2013

Positive signs of recovery

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Australia recorded its hottest month on record in January 2013 with weather stations setting all-time record high temperatures, including Tasmania's capital Hobart (41.8°C on 4 January). The hot and gusty northerly winds exacerbated wildfire impacts in Tasmania and other states, which very sadly led to the loss of animals, homes, buildings and community infrastructure.

The Ellendale fire (near Mount Field, Tasmania) covered approximately 11,600 ha and burnt through the TLC's 40 ha reserve, Silver Peppermint. Whilst other TLC reserves were close to impact, no other fires directly affected them.

Fortunately, Silver Peppermint Reserve is expected to recover naturally, with positive signs of renewal already happening. TLC ecologist, Matt Taylor, inspected the reserve just days after the fire and noticed signs of regeneration and habitation by woodland birds, lizards, insects and marsupials.

There is now an opportunity to gather long-term ecological information following the fire. Change in floristic and faunal diversity is being closely recorded via photo monitoring points, which capture the progress of revegetation. Additionally, regular bird observations and weed control are occurring. Dr Sally Bryant writes in this newsletter about

our newly implemented, long-term ecological monitoring and management effectiveness program for all TLC reserves, including Silver Peppermint.

We manage over 32,000 ha of land and, prior to summer this year, revised our emergency response protocols to fire. This included updating access and contact information for the Tasmanian Fire Service, Parks and Wildlife Service, Forestry Tasmania and our neighbours. The first priority for control of wildfire near reserves is the safety of people, followed by assets and then the natural environment.

Controlled ecological burns, deliberately introduced to our reserves during milder weather and at cooler times of the year, allow wildfire events to be more easily managed and also promote ecological diversity.

Thanks to the increasing support of the TLC Foundation, which provides the essential funds to help manage our permanent reserves, we are now developing the increased capacity we need to use fire as a tool for ecological management. In the long-term, this will also help us minimise the effects of wildfire as we continue to experience the extreme temperatures experienced in January this year.

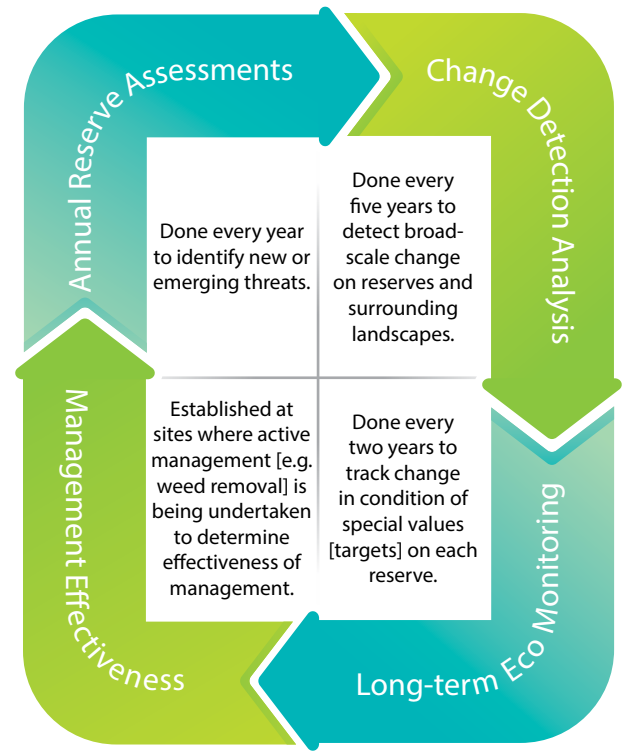
Jane Hutchinson | CEO

protecting Tasmanian land for biodiversity



Photo: Matthew Newton

Matt Taylor, TLC Intern Conamara Burke and Dr Sally Bryant monitoring change at Silver Peppermint



Graph 1: the four-tiered monitoring management program

Monitoring framework | managing the wellbeing of our reserves into the future

2013 marks the start of another exciting era in the TLC’s reserve management. We have developed a comprehensive monitoring program for our reserved lands and have begun rolling out the first component: long-term ecological monitoring.

Point Reserve, Spanish heath removal on Egg Islands Reserve and the potential impact of cattle grazing using exclusion fencing at the Vale of Belvoir.

Until quite recently, ecological monitoring traditionally involved a thorough flora and fauna assessment using a range

of mapping and trapping techniques, across several visits throughout the year. This work is time consuming and expensive and organisations rarely have the capacity to undertake or sustain it.

Digital photography and remote sensing cameras have revolutionised the way we collect information and allows more people (including specialists and non-specialists) to gather it. Photo point-monitoring is becoming a widely adopted monitoring technique, which is efficient and versatile.

Our program involves establishing a number of fixed photo monitoring sites across our reserves and, with the aid of a camera and three steel poles, it is possible to take a time series of photographs from which a range of ecological indicators can be measured.

The poles are set at 2 metres and 10 metres from a fixed point and the camera is secured at a height of 1.5 metres. If the distance and field of view are set, then every time a photograph is taken it captures the same set of environmental indicators from ground layer, to understorey to canopy.

The sites are selected by stratified random sampling, which involves dividing the study area into targets and taking random samples within each target. The main drawback with this technique is that it divides the study area according to a human’s perception of the environment, which can sometimes exclude important faunal habitats or ecotones from the sampling process. By using remote sensing cameras, we can survey these habitats independently and add to the ecological information collected.

It is important to have reliable and consistent data to tell us what is happening in our micro-environments, and to have the capacity to link this information regionally and globally.

We can plan remedial actions around species at risk and broaden our thinking into planning for what future landscapes will look like. A robust, versatile and effective long-term monitoring program helps to underpin management decisions — it’s really exciting!

Dr Sally Bryant | Conservation Research and Planning Manager

A robust, versatile and effective long-term monitoring program helps to underpin management decisions — it’s really exciting!

We are gathering information about the status of our reserves on a regular basis, by tracking any changes in their condition to determine whether our on-ground management is having a positive effect.

So what does TLC’s comprehensive monitoring program involve and how do we undertake long-term ecological monitoring? We have designed a four-tiered monitoring program, where each tier provides us with a different level of information.

The tiers of this program (see Graph 1), individually and in combination, will ensure that we continue to maintain a strong, on-ground connection with our reserves and gather useful ecological information about their condition.

This work builds upon the good work already conducted over the past five to ten years, including monitoring the effectiveness of gorse removal at Long



Val Schier signing the deed for Schier Block at the Falmouth ceremony



Swift parrot who was kind enough to pose for the camera

Photo: Peter Troode

Photo: C. Tzaros

Land gift unites TLC and North East Tasmania Land Trust

Story by Andrew Lohrey

Andrew is the current President of the North East Tasmania Land Trust. He was a Member of the Tasmanian House of Assembly for 14 years in which time he served as a Cabinet Minister and Speaker of the House of Assembly. As Minister for National Parks he was instrumental in saving the Franklin River from being dammed.

In an informal ceremony at the Falmouth Community Centre on 7 January 2013, the Schier family of Falmouth made a generous offer of land to the TLC with the North East Tasmania Land Trust (NETLT) accepting stewardship over the property's day-to-day needs.

The Schier family signed over to the TLC the gift of a 50 acre block of land, which is completely forested and is located on the northern side of the North Sister mountain and looks out onto the north-east of Tasmania.

The gifting of the land had special significance for members of the Schier and Lohrey families who swapped stories of their heritage at a ceremony.

Schier block was originally granted in 1872 to John Frederick Lohrey one of four brothers who had arrived on the east coast of Tasmania from Hamburg, Germany in 1855. Unlike his brothers Phillip, William and Henry, John chose not to clear and farm the land and it

remained in the John Lohrey family for three generations until purchased by Gilbert Schier in 1974.

"Dad always respected and looked after the bush and my mother was a bit of an activist when it came to protecting the natural environment."

Gilbert's wife, Jean, is a descendant of John Lohrey and following her death her children David, Val, John, Murray and Robert Schier decided to conserve the forest on it, and protect the land for future generations by bequeathing the block for conservation.

Val Schier said that both her mother and father would be really pleased that this land will now be conserved.

"Dad always respected and looked after the bush and my mother was a bit of an activist when it came to protecting the natural environment.

"It's satisfying to us that our distant cousins Andrew and Robin Lohrey, who are descendants of Henry Lohrey, are active members of NETLT and have assisted my brother David in the legal practicalities of gifting the land," she said.

TLC CEO, Jane Hutchinson, and Chairperson of NETLT, Andrew Lohrey, accepted the land gift on behalf of the organisations. Jane thanked the Schier family for their generosity in freely giving this land and congratulated them on their commitment to preserve the natural values of forests in the north-east.

Jane said she hoped this generous gift by the Schier family would stand as a beacon for other north-east land owners to follow.

The Schier block has many conservation values, being home to a range of rare and endangered species. It also hosts many old blue gums that provide ideal nesting habitats for the endangered swift parrot. In addition, the block is surrounded on three sides by reserves.

A conservation covenant is in the process of being placed on the block and when this is completed it will become a reserve in perpetuity.

In the last six months TLC and NETLT have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for working together in the north-east.

The land gift by the Schier family represents the first material expression of the MOU. The land title of Schier Block will be held by TLC while the yearly management duties, such as weed control, will be carried out by NETLT.

The partnership between the TLC and the NETLT will see the organisations working together to achieve their shared objectives of protecting, enhancing and conserving the natural environment by acquiring and managing private land of ecological significance.



Phil Bell showing how to identify ptunarra brown butterflies

Photo: Denna Kingdom



View of the Vale and Lake Lea from Black Bluff Lookout, Vale of Belvoir

Photo: Anita Lopez

Managing the Vale of Belvoir

Long before Europeans came to Tasmania, the Tommeginner tribe of north-west Tasmania travelled through the open grasslands of the Vale of Belvoir, a practice they had probably done for thousands of years. They may have rested here, and early Europeans observed them burning the grasslands, perhaps to keep the encroaching shrubs and trees at bay to maintain the open, native grasslands as pastures for their herbivorous game. Then they would move on, returning as their travelling cycle dictated, to rest and burn again.

This practice of disturbing the grasslands through seasonal burning, in addition to low-intensity stock grazing, was subsequently undertaken by the Charleston family and their ancestors since the 1890s. The Vale of Belvoir is one of only a handful of highland tussock grasslands in Tasmania to be continuously managed this way. Whilst it sounds disruptive, scientists recognise that periodic disturbance is required in native grasslands to reduce competition from the dominant poa grasses. This allows the less competitive herbs to regenerate. As a result of the long-term disturbance regime, the Vale exhibits high species diversity within the grasslands, retains numerous threatened plant species and is predominantly in good condition.

These highland tussock grasslands are rare and endangered in Tasmania and were the primary reason for the TLC's 2008 purchase of the property.

Key to maintaining the condition of these grasslands is ensuring that management practices are not changed until we better understand, through

"Many of the lessons learnt over the past four years have been gained from working closely with the previous owners..."

scientific monitoring, which aspects of past management have led to the Vale retaining its current natural values.

This management effectiveness monitoring (as it is known in scientific jargon) began in 2009 with surveys to establish the presence, absence and distribution of any threatened plant species. These were followed by monitoring the populations of key threatened plant species, which included the stunning white grassland paperdaisy and the mat-forming herb, alpine candles.

Stock-proof fencing has been installed around sensitive wetlands, and the tussock grasslands incidentally included within these, will be monitored for any effects occurring from the absence of summer stock grazing.

A recent planned grassland burn passed through one of these fenced areas. This offers an excellent opportunity to explore the varying effects of grazing and burning, or their absence, on the grasslands.

Many of the lessons learnt over the past four years have been gained from working closely with the previous owners, Kevin and Wendy Charleston and their daughters, who have been very generous with their knowledge of the Vale. This information is being collated and has formed the basis of the Vale of Belvoir Reserve Management Plan. In addition to the management plan, a fire management strategy is also currently being developed.

It is still too early to ascertain the specific effects of burning and stock grazing on the grasslands; however, we are establishing an excellent understanding of the otherwise little-known ecology of some of the threatened plant species. For instance, alpine candles appears to respond very well to burning in early spring, with established plants observed to have vigorously re-sprouted within two months and have apparently expanded into areas previously dominated by grass tussocks.

It is quite probable that much of this knowledge existed long before European settlement in Tasmania, but was lost with the removal of Aboriginal people from these lands. However, as the Tommeginner tribe are likely to have done, we will return each year to share and build on our slowly increasing knowledge of this exceptional landscape.

Denna Kingdom | Reserves Manager



Wildflower day at the Vale of Belvoir - Huxley Charleston demonstrating how to best jump into a sinkhole



Stag beetle (Lissotes spp.) at the Blue Tier

Photo: Matthew Newton

Photo: Rob Blakers

Vale of Belvoir wildflower day a success

The next TLC supporter event is going to be held in April at the magnificent Blue Tier, so be sure to read about it on this page and join us if you can!

The threat of rain and heavy mist was not enough to keep 60-plus rugged-up visitors away from the Vale of Belvoir wildflower day on Saturday 2 February 2013.

The day kicked off at Black Bluff lookout to launch the freshly installed visitors' interpretation signage, which honours the reserve's history, its environmental significance and the many supporters who helped secure the property in 2008.

The Mayor of Kentish Council, Don Thwaites, was kind enough to join Jane Hutchinson (our CEO) in celebrating the signage along with passionate, long-time Vale of Belvoir enthusiasts Sib and Keith Corbett and their daughter Christine. We were also fortunate to have members of the Charleston family there on the day, whose ancestors owned the land for over 100 years prior to the TLC purchase.

The first of the guided tours started at 11am and was headed by Sib, Keith and Christine who talked about the flora, fauna and geologic evolution of the Vale, especially its famed sinkholes.

Sib's background as a botanist shone through as she talked everyone through the Vale's wealth of flora and fauna, including the ancient cool temperate rainforests and the endangered grassland paper daisy.

Lisa Charleston recounted a story of her ancestors from the early 1900s who produced cheese in the Vale. Apparently

the whey (a by-product of cheese making) was sometimes left in troughs or buckets, which attracted thylacines that were said to sometimes come into the camp to feed on it. It was also apparently highly attractive to tiger snakes, large numbers of which were often found drinking at the troughs! Not surprising, as the alpine grasslands are very 'snakey' — thankfully not on this day though.

Members from the Australian Plant Society and the Hobart Photographic Society freely explored the Vale and took some spectacular shots despite the heavy mist.



Wildflower day at the Vale of Belvoir - a butterfly perched on an orange everlasting (*Xerochrysum subundulatum*)

Photo: Matthew Newton

Blue Tier event in April

Saturday 27 April 2013

1pm - 'enthusiasts walk'
2pm - 'family-friendly walk'

Last year we asked our supporters to help us purchase and protect 85 ha of one of the most beautiful glacial refugia Tasmania has to offer, within the eastern slopes of the Blue Tier. Only because of their generosity and commitment were we able to finally do just that.

Since then, we have been keen to mark the occasion. An event to both showcase parts of this rare Tasmanian ecosystem to the community as well as honour and thank the many people who helped us secure it.

The property provides habitat for many rare and threatened species including the eastern quoll, the spotted-tailed quoll, the Tasmanian devil and Tasmania's largest endemic stag beetle, the Simson's stag beetle, which is a nationally threatened species and is restricted exclusively to this region.

We are planning to hold the event on Saturday 27 April at the Blue Tier State Forest Reserve. At this stage, we are scheduling:

1pm - a Blue Tier 'enthusiasts walk' which is suitable for reasonably fit adults.

2pm - a 'family-friendly walk' which will be shorter and less strenuous.

If you would like to join us, please visit www.bluetier2013.eventbrite.com.au to register your interest which will help us with our planning. Please note that due to the remoteness of the TLC's Blue Tier property, the actual site for the event will be in the Blue Tier State Forest Reserve.



David Tinkerton of the Launceston Walking Club in Ernie Bond's dressing gown at Gordonvale photographing some of the club's other visiting members

Photo: John Olding



Frame capture of the TLC advertisement

Back page briefs

Midland's funding success

In December 2012 the Midlands Conservation Fund (MCF) received a major grant of \$500,000 from the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation (VFFF).

The MCF is a core initiative resulting from the Midlandscapes conservation action plan. MCF is jointly owned by the TLC and Bush Heritage Australia. It is managed as a perpetual capital fund to provide permanent income streams which support annual payments to landholders for conservation services in the Midlands.

MCF provides a new model for conservation on private land with a particular emphasis on management for measurable conservation outcomes, and funding certainty over multi-generational timescales.

The VFFF's generosity builds on the \$2.6 million already raised for the MCF. The TLC also acknowledges the significance of VFFF's support for this important new innovation for private land conservation in Australia.

TLC Foundation and Bequests

We are so grateful to those supporters who have had the foresight and generosity to contribute to the TLC Foundation by establishing a personal fund, leaving a bequest or donating directly to the Foundation.

Thanks to this support the Foundation grew considerably last year and we are now well on the way to achieving financial sustainability, ensuring that the TLC will have the capacity to continue to manage our permanent reserves sustainably for many generations.

The TLC Foundation is supported by funds established from several sources, including (but not exclusive to): bequests, personal gifts (including money, shares, artworks and land); gifts made on behalf of or in memory of another person.

If you would like further information on the TLC Foundation, or on how to leave a bequest, please feel free to call us for a chat on 03 6225 1399 or email smarshall@tasland.org.au

TLC's first TV advertisement sponsored by the SBS Foundation

In January 2013 we announced via our blog the launch of the TLC's first ever TV advertisement, which was sponsored by the SBS Foundation and scheduled for airing over the summer holidays.

We might be a little biased in saying that it looks fabulous, but you should see it and judge for yourselves! Just visit our Vimeo page at www.vimeo.com/tasland

The advertisement would not have been possible without the generous donation

of time and talent from Mark Ringer and Andrew Charles, who guided the development of the creative concept; Red Jelly Hobart for production development at cost; and the SBS Foundation for awarding TLC free-to-air advertising time.

Gordonvale update

The Gordonvale campaign is making strides toward securing the property for permanent conservation.

The story of Gordonvale's 'Prince of Rasselas', Ernie Bond, has been especially captivating and we have had a wealth of feedback from our bushwalking supporters; some of whom even remember staying with Ernie at Gordonvale.

We were lucky enough to have a chat to Ernie's great nephew, Andrew Bond, who is a respected cropping and sheep farmer in the Cressy district. He was delighted that the TLC was campaigning to purchase and protect the property, to be kept in much the same way as his uncle had cared for it.

If you'd like to learn more about Gordonvale and its fabulous conservation and historic values, please visit our website at www.tasland.org.au

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



special thanks to the **SBS Foundation** for awarding the TLC free-to-air advertising time