



Annual Report

Gordonvale World Heritage Reserve 2018-19



www.tasland.org.au

Introduction

The Tasmanian Land Conservancy (TLC) protects important natural areas as permanent reserves and aims to demonstrate excellence in reserve management for biodiversity conservation. The TLC has adopted an adaptive management framework – the Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation which comprises 5 key steps – planning, implementing, monitoring, reporting, review/adaptation and communication.

Gordonvale was acquired by the TLC in 2013 and protects 80 hectares of wet eucalypt forest, moorland on the site of Ernie Bond’s historic homestead in the Vale of Rassellas in southwest Tasmania. The Reserve is surrounded by and included within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. The management of the Reserve is guided by the Gordonvale World Heritage Reserve Management Plan which is implemented by TLC staff through an Annual Work Plan and Monitoring Plan. Details of ecological monitoring methods can be found in TLC’s Ecological Monitoring Procedures Manual on www.tasland.org.au.

This report describes progress made towards delivery of the management plan in 2018-19, and is divided into three sections:

1. Reserve Scorecard – a table summarising the results of management effectiveness and ecological monitoring to date;
2. Management Effectiveness Summary – providing details of the implementation of key management strategies and making recommendations for plan improvement;
3. Ecological Monitoring Summary – providing details of the status of conservation targets and trends of key ecological indicators

The recommendations made in this report are used to adapt and improve management of the Reserve, update the management plan, and revise work and monitoring plans for the coming year. Key findings of this report are communicated to TLC Board, supporters and other stakeholders.

Gordonvale World Heritage Reserve Scorecard 2018-19

Ecological Monitoring			
Target	Indicator	Status 2016-17	2018-19 Trend
Native ecosystems	Floristic diversity Structural complexity Canopy recruitment Terrestrial mammal diversity Bird diversity	34 species 5.7 strata/site 1.6 cohorts/site 6 species detected 16 species 2 ha homestead zone	Baseline data collected in April 2017, trend data due to be collected in 2020
Wilderness value	Not yet identified	Good On Track	No Changes Known
Management Effectiveness			
Strategy	Indicator	Status 2017-18	2018-19 Trend
Cultural heritage preservation	Ernie Bond’s legacy preserved	0	Unknown - Deteriorating
Fire management	# of unauthorised fires at the Reserve	0	1 event - Increase
Weed and disease management	Weed control (m2)	0	No Action Undertaken
	Disease status	Unknown	Unknown

Note: Community engagement has been removed as a strategy and is now being assessed across all TLC reserves

Cover image: Location of fire impact on Gordonvale Jan 2019 from ESRI imagery. Supplied by DPIPW from TFS

Monitoring Summary

Native ecosystems		Status: Very Good
Goal: Maintain the condition of native ecosystems		Outcome: Needs Assessment
<p>Target Description: Tall, wet eucalypt forest occupies a fire-protected, south-facing slope and the riparian zone along a small creek that crosses the property. Open woodland dominated by Smithton peppermint occupies much of the property and is in excellent condition, with high species richness, no weeds and complex vegetation structure. Buttongrass moorlands with emergent shrubs are widespread on Gordonvale and form part of a vast extensive moorland system in very wet situations with poor drainage on nutrient poor rock types such as quartzite.</p>		 <p>Access to Ernie's farm precinct 2012. photo M McCoid</p>
Ecological indicator	Previous status	Status - 2018-19 Trend
Floristic diversity	34 species total	No further information. Baseline data collected in 2017, trend data due in 2020 or earlier due to fire event in 2019
Structural complexity	5.7 strata/site	
Canopy recruitment	1.6 cohorts/site	
Terrestrial mammal diversity	6 mammal species detected	
Bird Diversity	16 species detected in homestead precinct	No further information. Baseline data collected in 2017, trend data due in 2020 or earlier due to fire event in 2019
<p>Key findings 2018-19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A preliminary assessment has shown that native vegetation and mammals at Gordonvale are in excellent condition and have remained largely unmodified since European settlement except for the area contained in the E Bond precinct. • Trend data due is to be collected in 2020 or sooner is now essential given the significant fire event in Jan 2019 		
<p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat TLC's long-term ecological monitoring in 2020 or sooner and ensure song meters are deployed, and potentially remain in-situ for a lengthy period. • Obtain accurate fire boundary maps to determine potential impact on natural systems 		

Wilderness values		Status: Good
Goal: The wilderness character of the region is maintained.		Outcome: On Track
Description: The Gordonvale WHA Reserve is surrounded by the Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park, is within the TWWHA and is designated as having WHA status: its world heritage context and its wilderness values are therefore significant.		 <p>Gordonvale on route to the north 2012. Photo: M McCoid</p>
Indicator	Previous status	Status 2018-19 Trend
Not yet defined -	No change in activities detracting from wilderness values	Fire event 2019 – no affect on wilderness value – Stable
Key findings 2018-19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The wilderness character of the area is recognised as being of outstanding universal value hence the Reserve’s inclusion and listing as part of Tasmania’s World Heritage Area. • The fire event in 2019 may have impacted the reserve but may not necessarily be classed as a ‘disturbance’ affecting its wilderness value 		
Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure any activities that potentially detract from the wilderness character of the Reserve and surrounding landscape are not permitted. 		

Management Effectiveness Summary

Fire management		
Key objective(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No unauthorised fires occur on the reserve (ongoing). 	Status 2018-19 Needs Assessment ASAP	
Strategy description TLC recognises the threat posed by unplanned fires to human life and the environment but acknowledges the difficulty of responding to fire in this remote location. The TLC will implement the restrictions of a 'fuel stove only' policy. The TLC will work with Parks and Wildlife Service and the Tasmania Fire Service in the event of a bushfire in this area and keep up to date with any changes to fire policy, any fire restrictions or management burns being undertaken in the wider region.	Gordonvale fire zone Jan 2019. Photo: DPIPWE via TFS 	
Indicator	Previous status	Status 2018-19 Trend
No. reported or unauthorised fires at the Reserve	0 fires reported	1 fire event in Jan 2019
Progress in 2018-19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No visit to the reserve made by TLC staff during this period. A major fire event occurred in January 2019 during the South West National Park fire. Fire information supplied by Jayne Balmer DPIPWE (15 Jan 2019) "According to the fire map provided by TFS- available through the ListMap much of the forests and structures associated with Gordonvale appear to have escaped the bushfire but the moorland has been burnt as would be expected. Screen shots were provided of the ListMap -one with the topography as the background and the other with the Esri imagery as the background which shows that the unburnt patches are the forested bits. Some bits of the forest have burnt in the surrounding region. To know if there is still a risk to the unburnt Gordon Vale forests- I'd have to investigate if there are any remaining hot spots are in the area (not shown in this map). If there are any live edges or burning forest in the 10 km region around here then there may still be the risk of a live ember attack later in the season when the forest has dried out further and will be more vulnerable to burning... But I imagine Parks have their eye on this as an asset for protection and will be trying to keep the fire out of there." No more detailed information has been obtained at this time 		
Key recommendations for future management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A site assessment should be made in spring 2019 or 2020 to map boundaries and any on-ground impact of the fire and to re-survey the monitoring sites. Continue to implement a fuel stove only policy for the Reserve. Continue to develop the whole-of-TLC fire management strategy. 		

Weed and disease management

Key objective(s)

- Existing weeds are eradicated by 2017 and any new outbreaks are addressed in a timely manner.

Status 2018-19

Needs to be Assessed

Strategy description

The aim of this strategy is to eradicate existing infestations of Californian thistle on the reserve by 2017 and recommend biosecurity procedures to prevent or minimise the infestation of any new pest, weed or diseases in the future. Annual monitoring as part of the annual reserve assessment will ensure that any follow-up control can be undertaken.

The exotic plant species associated with Ernie Bond’s settlement (e.g. spring bulbs and Rhododendron etc.) will be conserved for heritage purposes but their current distribution will be mapped and monitored to ensure they do not spread beyond this precinct.

Flowering spring bulbs and rhododendron 2012. Photo: M McCoid



Indicator	Previous status	Status 2018-19 Trend
Weed control (m2)	0	No information - Unknown
Disease status	Unknown	No information - Unknown

Progress in 2018-19

- No visit to the reserve was made by TLC staff during 2018-19 hence no updated information is available on weed status or exotic (? heritage) species.
- PWS continue to provide a boot-wash down station and soil hygiene information at the bushwalker access point.
- Long-term monitoring photographs in 2017 recorded increasing size of the rhododendron plant/s.
- A potential impact of the 2019 fire could be an increase in weed species

Key recommendations for future management

- All weeds and heritage plants need to be assessed and mapped as soon as possible (in spring).
- Treat any infestations of California thistle at the time during the site visit.
- Maintain sign at access point.

Cultural heritage preservation		
Key objective(s)		Status 2018-19 Deteriorating – a plan is needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ernie Bond’s legacy is preserved. 		
Strategy description		Cross cut saw at Gordonvale 2012. Photo: M McCoid
<p>The legacy of Ernie Bond and his settlement at Gordonvale has been documented in various sources but the settlement physically has deteriorated to scattered remnants of huts, tracks, fences and farming implements which will continue to disappear over time. Community knowledge and a willingness to be involved with oral or physical preservation are essential if we are to retain any of these last fragments. A preservation strategy is needed on how best to proceed with undertaking this, however, in the immediate term the existing remnants of Ernie Bonds settlement will not be disturbed and the current distribution of the spring bulbs and Rhododendron will be mapped to ensure they do not spread beyond their former precinct.</p>		
Indicator	Previous status	Status 2018-19 - Trend
Not yet identified	Unknown	No data – likely to be deteriorating
Progress in 2018-19		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No visit to the reserve was made by TLC staff during this period and no further developments on preserving cultural heritage have occurred. Historical article supplied by Lindsay Crawford published in 2019 (inserted in full below) Action is needed to ensure Ernie’s legacy is documented before further deterioration and a decision made on whatever can be stabilised or ‘showcased’ done so within the next 3 yrs. 		
Key recommendations for future management		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A site visit should be planned in spring 2019 or 2020 to record heritage values remaining and assess potential disturbances including from the 2019 fire Encourage a skilled volunteer to map and document the cultural heritage features. Continue discussions with Mountain Hut Preservation Society on potential of protecting or reinstating Ernie Bond’s dwelling 		

A piece of nostalgia....

An article about the Rasselas Valley, written in 1946

by Lindsay Crawford

The following article was written by Lindsay Crawford (b.14/9/1926 - d.2/6/2017) when studying for his B.Sc. at University of Tasmania. It was published in the Student Union Magazine "Togatus" dated 7th October 1946, only a few months before the LWC was founded in December that year. He subsequently led many LWC trips to Gordonvale.

Have you ever followed the wallaby tracks up the Rasselas Valley? Have you ever gone "skylining" in the far Denisons? Have you ever pushed through dense thickets of leatherwood trees, so white with blossom and so fragrant that you don't believe they're true?

About this time of the year, my view of the printed word gets interrupted with alarming frequency by a vision of high mountains, and I find myself longing for the rhythmical creaking of a pack on my back and the uneven feel of button-grass under my feet. I even yearn for a good healthy blister or two. . . . When I should be swotting, I'm looking for dried apricots, or admiring the awful holes in my old socks. If you've ever been "up the Rasselas," you'll share my nostalgia. To be away from Tasmania is to hunger and thirst, hopelessly, for the sense of its mountain-country, and for the keen pleasure of being hot and tired and miles from your journey's end, of sitting down to lunch with your feet in an ice-cold stream, and eating cold bacon and limp chocolate, and scooping anaspides out of your tea. . . .

If you have experienced mountains only as a glory on the horizon, or as an abiding beauty at the back of a city, then borrow a pack and a sleeping-bag, buy some boracic and some bacon, and set off to revise your ideas.

I've been there once only. We left home in the rain, slept in the train at Maydena, to an orchestral accompaniment of thunder and splashing rain, and next morning took the Adamsfield track towards the wilderness. It goes through forest, over the shoulder of the Humboldt Range, opposite Tim Shea. If you take bikes as we did, you spend a half-day pushing up steep slopes and careering in terror down the other side. For a great part of our way, the soft drizzle of rain among the trees was mingled with a snowy drift of fragrant leather-wood petals. Then came a long dip downward to the floor of the Florentine Valley, and several miles of corduroyed track under a few inches of water, to the river. We had intended to sleep at the "Florrie Huts," but found them occupied, so we left our bespattered bikes and pushed on for the Gordon Bend, feeling tired and shoulder-sore and rather low. But the sunset tipping The Thumbs with gold was glorious, and the rain added intensity to the purple and green of their mass. We went through dripping myrtle forest, floundering from moss to mud, across the low Gordon Range until the Rasselas Valley opened out in front of us, and we saw in the far distance the Gordon Bend, with the hills seeming to converge like a series of veils. It must be

best to approach the Gordon by daylight, though it might lose something of the sense of mystery. (By day, too, of course, there is the fun of collecting bones from the litter of skeletons, which suggest that the local fauna die with their boots on). We paddled along a track worn down below the level of the plain, and filled with water, or as an alternative we stumbled alongside through the scrub. We felt rather nervous as our objective faded to a dark shadow in the darkness, without our seeming to get any nearer; but at last we splashed up to the hut, at about 10 pm. After struggling with a wet fire long enough to heat soup and stew, we tumbled into the bed -- ten feet square and matted with sword-grass -- without looking for snakes; and slept the clock round.



Lindsay Crawford with Ernie Bond at Gordonvale

So much for our resolution to make an early start! The morning, when we inspected it at 11 o'clock, was warm and sleepy. The bridge over the Gordon seemed an ideal place for breakfast, and we sat there till noon, bemused by the dazzle of sunlight on a line of rapids, listening to the gurgle of brown water over the stones, and the song of birds in the gum-trees. The rest of the trip was pleasant walking -- part button-grass, part through an open forest of very slender tall trees with the river running unseen not far away, and thrushes and pallid cuckoo answering joyfully to our whistling.

The track is dominated on the western side by the razorback range of Mt. Wright, savagely scarred with gullies. At the far end -- about seven miles from the Bend -- is Ernie's "place." It's not a shack, it's a model village. It even has a dairy -- you can't help feeling for the cow, who must have puffed wearily all the way up from the Florentine only to find herself alone with the roos and the devils. But we were grateful to her: we had cream with our new bread and honey, and cream with the raspberries picked from the most luxurious kitchen-garden I have ever known.

Next day we climbed Mt. Wright -- went up the wrong gully and hung on by our fingers to a precipitous rock face, with cold fear in our hearts and empty air wheeling beneath. But the joy of "skylining" along the top, with the vision of mountains westward, was sufficient compensation. Looking down, the valley appears park-like -- the troublesome button-grass seems to be mown and rolled turf, and the tangled scrub is a well-kempt thicket. To the east, Field West stands up salmon-pink in the afternoon light, buttressed like a cathedral.



Gordonvale - Lindsay Crawford

I'd like to spend a month in the Rasselas Valley. As it was, we had only one day for exploring the Denisons, which lie along the nor-west horizon; and the King William Range, even more remote and beckoning, was quite outside our orbit. They say that on a frosty night in winter, the Denisons under snow look as if you could reach out and touch them: in midsummer as we saw them, they are pale mauve, magically traced, and seemingly veiled-off from the world of reality. We thrust our way up the valley to their base, following wallaby and roo tracks where possible, through dense trees and knee-high grass, where every step we expected to tread on a snake. Then climbed up over steep slopes, and followed a well-defined track along a ridge -- animals are energetic -- and looked straight on a circular lake, rich red-brown with a strip of gleaming quartz sand. And facing us, higher by far, was Read's Peak, magnificent and jagged and beautiful, looking as if it would fall forward on top of our world. The peak has a great rift from top to bottom, a rift with a metallic silvery gleam at the top -- was it a waterfall or was it osmiridium?

It's a pity we didn't have enough time or energy to explore the peak that day. (As it was, we arrived "home" so weary that a draught of Ernie's honey-mead skittled us). It's a pity we didn't have time to camp by the lakeside, and swim every morning among the startled anaspides, and explore the wonderful Denisons, to our heart's content.

I think I must go back some day . . .

Lindsay sent greetings to the club on its 70th anniversary in 2016 and this extract gives some background to his article.

"I joined the Club in 1950 in my mid-twenties when I came to Launceston for my first job as the Biologist at the Queen Victoria Museum, along with Bruce Ellis who was the Geologist. I had grown up on the edge of the bush environment of Sandy Bay and was a lone hiker while at school and Uni in Hobart. The members of the Launceston Walking Club made me very welcome and introduced me to the bush, and the club became a very important part of my life. I was active most weekends, and walked to every hut in the Reserve, and led a trip to Federation Peak. My first pack carrying trip was to Mt Anne. There was a memorable trip down the NW coast with Bill Mollison who later made a name for himself in Permaculture. I kept in touch with him for many years, also with Bruce Ellis, Dave Pinkard, Norm Hoyle, Melva Truhanas, and others by correspondence. My many visits to Ernie Bond, including helping him carry out his stuff when he moved back to Hobart, were always memorable."

