



Annual Reserve Report

Gordonvale WHA Reserve 2014-15



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. To achieve this aim, the TLC has adopted an adaptive management framework – the Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation. The framework comprises 5 key steps – planning, implementing, monitoring, reporting, review/adaptation and communication.

The Gordonvale property 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 Rasselas in southwest Tasmania’s world heritage area WHA. The Reserve is surrounded by and included within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. The management of the Reserve is guided by the Gordonvale WHA Reserve Management Plan. The plan 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.

This report describes progress made towards delivery of the management plan in 2014-15, 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 WHA Reserve Scorecard

Monitoring			
Target	Indicator	Status 2014/15	Trend
Native ecosystems	Floristic diversity Structural complexity Canopy recruitment Vertebrate fauna diversity	Unknown	Baseline data collection is scheduled for 2016
Community connection to landscape	# volunteer days on the Reserve # visitors to the Reserve		
Cultural heritage	Not yet identified		
Wilderness value	Not yet identified		
Management Effectiveness			
Strategy	Indicator	Status 2014-15	Trend
Community engagement	# of volunteer activities at the Reserve # research activities on the Reserve	0 0	Flat
Fire management	# fires on the Reserve	0	Flat
Weed and disease management	Weed control (m2) Disease status	0 Unknown	Flat
Cultural heritage preservation	No progress		Flat

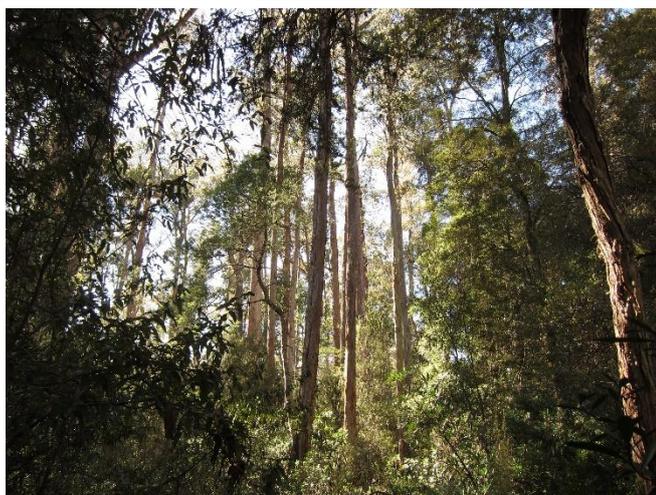
Monitoring Summary

Native ecosystems

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.

Goals

- Maintain the floristic diversity of vegetation within 25% of baseline (ongoing)
- Maintain the structural complexity of vegetation within 25% of baseline (ongoing)
- Maintain the extent of wet forest (ongoing)
- Maintain vertebrate fauna diversity (ongoing)



Tall eucalypt forest

Ecological indicator	Current status	Trend
Floristic diversity	Data collection scheduled for 2016	Unknown
Structural complexity	Data collection scheduled for 2016	Unknown

Key findings

- A preliminary assessment has shown that native vegetation at Gordonvale is in excellent condition and has remained largely unmodified since European settlement.

Recommendations

- Install TLC's long-term ecological monitoring program

Cultural heritage

Gordonvale was the outpost home of the legendary pioneer Ernie Bond, who purchased the property in 1934. Ernie built his house and outbuildings and during his 18 years there lived a fairly solitary self-sufficient life with few companions other than his dog, livestock and native wildlife. His reputation for hospitality and kindness became legendary to all who passed his way reflecting the spirit of a true pioneer in the wilderness. 'Gordonvale' is registered on the Tasmanian Historic Archaeological Sites Catalogue (THASC 8112-009) with a heritage listing on the dwellings, garden, and exotic vegetation, camping area, pits and farm implements. Some of the structures were still standing in the 1980s but have subsequently fallen to ruin with few remains other than fragments of post and rail fencing, farming implements, dwelling foundations, some garden plants and decaying felled timber. Documenting, and where appropriate, protecting these cultural remnants is an important component of retaining Ernie Bond's legacy.

Goals

- Document and preserve cultural heritage



Little evidence remains of Ernie Bond's iconic homestead

Community indicator	Current status	Trend
Cultural heritage condition	Unknown	
Historical information	Unknown	

Key findings

- The remains of Ernie Bond's homestead are slowly being reclaimed by the forest.

Recommendations

- Document and map features of historic significance
- Gather an archive of historical records related to the Reserve

Wilderness values

The concept of wilderness has been questioned (Reynolds 2015) as it may belittle the history of aboriginal occupation of the landscape. In the context of Ernie Bond’s settlement at Gordonvale, the concept becomes even more questionable. Nevertheless, 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.

Gordonvale is unusual as a private land parcel within the TWWHA – less than a dozen such parcels exist – and it must be expected that pressure to use these parcels for enhanced access to the TWWHA and for embedded experience of the wilderness values will increase over time. The TLC will need to assess its position to this, as it seeks to balance people’s appreciation of and connection to the landscape with its cultural, natural and wilderness values.

Goals

No change to the wilderness character of the region caused from within the Reserve.



Rugged peaks of the Denison Range in the TWWHA

Community indicator

Not yet defined

Current status

Trend

Key findings

- The wilderness character of the area is of outstanding universal value as recognised by the Reserve’s listing in the recent WHA extensions.

Recommendations

- Activities that detract from the wilderness character of the Reserve and surrounding landscape should not be permitted.

Community connection with the landscape

The TLC encourages connection to the landscape as an end in itself, and to ensure that reserve networks are valued and supported in the community. Access to this reserve and the ability to use it as a base to further explore the region is a goal for all of our reserves, and for reserves generally.

The remoteness and isolation of this region has long attracted recreational users who over generations have fostered a sense of community and attachment. Members of the bushwalking community hold valuable knowledge about the cultural and conservation values of the Gordonvale WHA Reserve and may be able help the TLC with management. Providing opportunities for interested parties to remain engaged or to contribute will help protect the reserve and well as the wider WHA landscape.

The cultural history of this reserve and the wilderness character of the region is important to the bushwalking community and the people of Tasmania more widely. The TLC seeks to provide access to this reserve while not compromising these values, and seeks to ensure effective communications to achieve this.

Goals

Community connection with the reserve and region is maintained or enhanced



Bushwalkers en route to Lake Rhona

Community indicator	Current status	Trend
Visitors	Unknown	Baseline data collection planned for 2016
Research and education	0 projects	Flat

Key findings

- TLC hosted several staff and supporter trips at the time of the Reserve’s acquisition in 2013. There have been no TLC supported trips since.

Recommendations

- Continue to encourage community connections to the reserve by providing research, education, recreation or volunteering opportunities

Management Effectiveness Summary

Fire management

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 which will be identified by signage and associated material including the closure of TLCs reserves during days of total fire ban. 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.

Key objective(s)

No unauthorised fires start on the reserve

Outcome 2014

No fires were recorded

TASMANIAN Land CONSERVANCY

Private Land

The Tasmanian Land Conservancy manage this land as a private conservation reserve to protect its natural values, which include threatened plants, animals and vegetation communities. Members of the public are welcome to visit the reserve to enjoy these values.
Please respect and help protect our land by observing the following rules:

NO DOMESTIC ANIMALS

NO HUNTING OR FIREARMS

NO UNAUTHORISED VEHICLES

NO LIGHTING FIRES

NO WOODCUTTING OR COLLECTION

At times authorisation may be given by the TLC for the above activities, to manage threats to wildlife and habitat. Anyone undertaking these activities without written authorisation will be prosecuted.

The TLC is a non-government, non-political organisation with the goal of protecting Tasmania's biodiversity through conservation on private land. The community assist us in caring for this private reserve by volunteering their time and expertise, and by making tax-deductible donations to support our work. For more information about the TLC or this reserve, please visit www.tasland.org.au or phone (03) 6225 1399.

'protecting land for biodiversity'

'No lighting fires' - a standard condition of access to TLC Reserves

Progress in 2014-15

- A fire risk assessment has been prepared that covers all TLC Reserves

Key recommendations for future management

- Install a sign that identifies the Reserve as a fuel stove only area
- Maintain fuel stove only status

Weed and disease management

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.

TLC entry signs and web information will inform visitors about entering sensitive areas and of dirt carrying disease such as Phytophthora, or weed seeds and not to transfer soil or water across the reserve.

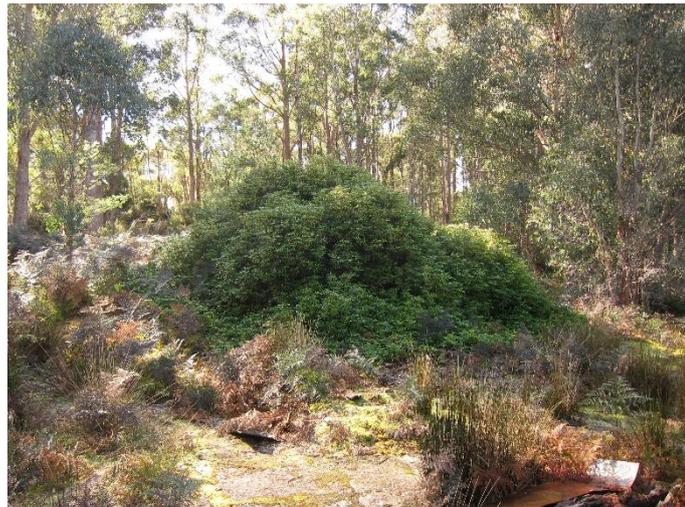
Key objective(s)

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

Outcome 2014-15

Known infestations of weeds are controlled by 2017

Monitoring ensures that heritage plants don’t spread into surrounding native vegetation



The large rhododendron at the Gordonvale house site

Progress in 2014-15

- California thistle has been identified as a threat and control is planned for 2016
- Soil hygiene information is provided to visitors at the bushwalker access point

Key recommendations for future management

- Map all weeds and heritage plants
- Treat infestations of California thistle
- Maintain signs at access point
- Monitor heritage plants to ensure they don’t spread, especially the rhododendron

Community engagement and neighbour relations

The TLC encourages visitation at its reserves but recognises the remoteness of Gordonvale, its wilderness setting and the designated 'self-reliant recreation' zoning in the TWWHA Management Plan (Parks and Wildlife Service 1999). The TLC recognises that foot access to Gordonvale involves crossing the Franklin – Gordon Wild Rivers National Park and that many visitors may be on-route to Lake Rhona with Gordonvale as a temporary stopover site.

Key objective(s)

TLC provides opportunities for the community to experience or benefit from the Reserve

Outcome to 2014-15

Access to the Reserve was maintained but monitoring of visitor numbers has not yet commenced

TLC organised a trip to the Reserve for the TLC board and supporters



TLC staff and volunteers on a trip into the Reserve in 2013

Progress to 2014-15

- TLC organised an overnight bushwalking trip to the Reserve for the board and supporters following the formal celebration of its acquisition
- Tracks and signs were checked.
- Visitors continue to access the Reserve on route to Lake Rhona
- TLC liaised with the Parks and Wildlife Service regarding locating a sign at the track head

Key recommendations for future management

- Maintain access to the Reserve
- Continue to provide opportunities for people to connect with the Reserve.
- Continue to maintain relationships with neighbours

Cultural heritage preservation

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.

Key objective(s)

Ernie Bond’s legacy is preserved



Old post-and-rail fencing

Outcome 2014

No progress to date

Progress in 2014-15

- No progress to date

Key recommendations for future management

- Map and document cultural heritage features