



Protecting Karst Forest at Mole Creek

A sinkhole in flood and the same sinkhole dry - the sinkhole is part of a complex underground river system

Issue 11 - Summer 06

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In October 2006, we were very pleased to be appointed by the Department of Environment and Heritage to deliver an exciting new project at Mole Creek, in the central north of Tasmania. The Mole Creek Karst Forest Programme is part of the Forest Conservation Fund, an Australian Government initiative, and the Tasmanian Land Conservancy was invited to run the programme because of our experience in negotiating land purchases and conservation covenants.

The Mole Creek area is highly significant for conservation. It is located on the slopes of the Great Western Tiers in northern Tasmania and is an internationally significant karst (cave-forming limestone) system. It contains over 300 known caves and sinkholes, as well as gorges and large underground streams and springs. The karst landscape has evolved through erosion of limestone rock by acidic water which has created numerous ecological niches.

The area contains important forest communities such as *Eucalyptus viminalis* wet sclerophyll forest and *Eucalyptus ovata* shrubby forest. A number of threatened flora and fauna species are present, including the endemic Cockerills

cave beetle, the cave harvestman and the extremely rare cave false scorpion. A feature of karst areas is the close relationship between the above-ground and below-ground environments. This means that above-ground land use can severely impact upon the cave environment, so careful management is required if the sensitive karst systems are to be protected and maintained.

The programme is voluntary and private landholders have the option to sell or covenant their land. Funds are available to pay landholders for either option. Purchased land will be added to the Mole Creek National Park or revolved through TLC's revolving fund process, while covenanted land will remain with the existing owners. Covenants will protect the cave systems by ensuring the forest on the surface is managed for conservation.

We expect to begin work at Mole Creek shortly and have already appointed a team of staff to work on the programme (see page 2).

For further information please contact Ruth Osborne at the TLC or visit the website www.deh.gov.au/land/forestpolicy/fcf/index.html.



Left to right: Nathan with Rod and Ross. Insert: Ruth

The Mole Creek Karst Forest Programme

The programme will run until June 2008 and aims to protect up to 2400 ha of forested land. It will be a huge task. Programme funds have allowed TLC to appoint three new very talented staff members. We are delighted to welcome the new staff to the team and look forward to the additional expertise that they bring to TLC's work.

Ruth Osborne has joined us as the Programme Administrator. After studying Agricultural Science at the University of Tasmania, Ruth worked at the Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Production Forestry for four years. She then spent four years working on Natural Resource Management and Community Development projects in Nepal.

To manage negotiations with landholders and assessments of the forests the TLC has appointed two field agents, both based in the north of the state. The field agents are responsible for meeting interested landholders to assess the conservation value of their land, negotiate financial incentives, and prepare covenants and land purchase agreements.

Ross Waining has a forestry degree from

Sydney University and the Australian Forestry School in Canberra. He spent the majority of his career in senior management positions in the forest industry in NSW and Tasmania. After retirement, he spent a number of years on the Forest Practices Board, and was a negotiator for the Private Forest Reserve Programme. Ross' deep understanding of forest practices, as well as his extensive experience in negotiating conservation covenants for private reserves, makes him a great asset to our team at Mole Creek.

Rod Pearse has a zoology degree from Sydney University and a graduate diploma of Environmental Studies from the University of Tasmania. He had a long career with Parks and Wildlife as a wildlife biologist and senior manager, and with the state government's Nature Conservation Branch as manager of the Commonwealth funded Private Forest Reserves Programme.

We feel very privileged to have such experienced new staff. It bodes well for the delivery of the Mole Creek Programme as well as for the future of TLC.

Looking forward

It is always gratifying and humbling as an organisation to be selected as the recipient of a grant, contract or donation. There are many worthy organisations and it is tough for grant makers and individuals to decide how to direct their funds. The last few months have been particularly heart warming.

Many people have made donations or pledged their monthly support for the TLC. As a small organisation with growing responsibilities for important areas of our natural and historic heritage we need ongoing funds. Those who give regular or monthly donations are making the very existence of the organisation possible. Without it we just could not survive and I thank you very deeply for that commitment.

This foundation of support helps TLC to accept the considerable ongoing challenges of owning and managing lands like Long Point and Recherche Bay Reserves – jewels in Tasmanian conservation. We hope to protect many more of these incredibly important areas in future years.

Due to our growing reputation as an honest broker of conservation purchases and covenants, the Australian government selected us to operate the Mole Creek Karst Forest Programme. The programme will be particularly challenging due to historic disputes about the potential to harvest forests on karst landscapes. We are very lucky to have field agents with an extensive understanding of both forestry and conservation issues to help us negotiate outcomes.

The coming year promises to be busy. We are exploring a number of opportunities to develop additional programmes and acquire new reserves that protect our most important natural places. I look forward to working with you to make them a reality.

Nathan Males, CEO



Above: Beach nearby to Colliers Forest Reserve Photo: Matt Newton Below: Green Rosella Photo: Dave Watts

King Island – The latest Revolving Fund property from the TLC

We are very pleased to announce that the TLC is in the final stages of acquiring a wonderful 143 ha property on King Island as part of our Revolving Fund.

King Island is midway between Victoria and Tasmania in western Bass Strait. The island is 65 km long and 25 km from east to west with an area of approximately 110,160 ha. About 12,000 years ago, King Island was part of a land bridge between Tasmania and the Australian mainland. Although there is no evidence of permanent Aboriginal settlement at the time of European discovery, there are scattered middens, especially on the west coast. Native vegetation now covers only 33% of the island's area and much of this occurs in narrow bands and as small remnants in the island's centre, south-east and north.

The new TLC property, Colliers Forest Reserve, is in the south-east corner of King Island and adjoins the Colliers Swamp Reserve. It is predominantly comprised of forest and scrub and incorporates the lower catchment of Mount Stanley Creek. The aspect is south-westerly with spectacular views of

the coastline and ocean. The landscape context and the vegetation of the block make it very important from a conservation perspective.

The 143 ha site includes 122 ha of King Island blue gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*) forest and 17 ha of tall paperbark (*Melaleuca ericifolia*) swamp forest (both listed as rare and endangered), and a further 3 ha of King Island scrub complex and 1 ha of short paperbark (*Melaleuca squarrosa*) scrub (listed as vulnerable).

This provides potentially good habitat for a number of vulnerable and endangered bird species including the King Island Green Rosella (*Platycercus caledonicus brownii*) and the King Island Scrubtit (*Acanthornis magnus greenianus*). A number of other vulnerable bird species are also known to use the area.

There are several possible sites on the property suitable for the construction of a dwelling. Once the TLC has concluded the transfer of the property we will be drafting a covenant to protect the sensitive areas and identify the domestic zone.



The main photograph above shows the local beach that is 2 kms away and accessible by track. On clear days it is said you can see as far as Hunter Island from the Colliers Forest Reserve.

Should you be interested in finding out more about this wonderful property please contact us at the TLC for further details.

Also the excellent web site of the King Island NRM Group is available at <http://www.kingisland.net.au/~naturalresources/threatened.htm> which provides further details of the habitat and threatened flora and fauna.

Recherche Bay painting SOLD

Many thanks to all who expressed an interest in bidding for the wonderful oil painting of Recherche Bay kindly donated by Tasmanian artist Val Whatley.

Jane Hutchinson, TLC President, was very pleased to present the painting to the highest bidder, Doug Nichols, at the TLC AGM held on 28th November 2006.

Along with continuing donations, this latest fund raising activity has helped us to reduce the outstanding balance to Dick and Pip Smith to just under \$1,430,000. So, still a long way to go but it is very heartening to see the figure reduce each month.

A big 'thank you' to Fullers Book Shop in Hobart for displaying the picture as part of the promotion.



Doug Nichols receives painting. Photo: Matt Newton

We greatly appreciate the voluntary contribution of time over the past three years from our retiring Treasurer Brian Barry.

Thank you to Laurell and Peter Brown for a second donation to Recherche Bay in celebration of the birth of their grandchild Reuben Vince Page-Brown.

Thank you to the following organisations for your support in recent months



Bequests and Trusts Gifts that keep on giving



Lutregala Marsh - Photo Matt Newton

TLC supporters know us as a small organisation with big ideas in permanent protection of high conservation value Tasmanian landscapes. During our five years of operation we have acquired over 1300 ha of land and directly facilitated the protection of another 1700 ha through conservation covenants. However, there remains much more to accomplish to ensure that the rich biodiversity of our unique island is permanently protected.

We truly appreciate the generosity of all who support us in our regular calls for donations. Others have demonstrated their passion and commitment to our goals by donating land to the TLC as in the case of our Silver Peppermint Reserve, donated by a Hobart doctor.

In newsletter number 9 we were very pleased to announce the Miriam Obendorf Trust, established by her son David from his inheritance. The interest earned from this investment is donated to the TLC for our ongoing work. This gives David the satisfaction of knowing

his mother's gift to him is funding valuable conservation outcomes. He has access to the principal, should the need arise, and the interest donated to the TLC is tax deductible.

The TLC is pleased to announce our **Bequests and Trusts Programme – Conserving Our Future.**

Bequests are a simple and incredibly powerful way to help ensure that our rich and unique environment is conserved forever. By bequeathing land or funds you can make a practical and lasting contribution to conserving our future.

We would welcome the opportunity to send you our information pack on the TLC Bequest Programme.

Please use the compliments slip and return it to the TLC should you wish to receive more detail, or contact Jo on 03 6225 1399 or jnaylor@tasland.org.au.

A donation has been received from the Jerie family to commemorate the life of Peter Storey. *"In memory of Peter Storey from the Jerie Family"*.

FITZGERALD AND BROWNE
Lawyers



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