



TASMANIAN | Land | CONSERVANCY



Photo: Matthew Newton

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With seven permanent reserves already established, an active revolving fund, and an increasing role in working with private landowners, the Tasmanian Land Conservancy is working towards a strategic vision to guide its conservation work.

Tasmania has a wonderful natural heritage. It is a rare place that has so much of its original flora still intact, so many of its native wildlife species still abundant, and so much of its natural habitat still standing.

With over 40% of the state already protected by magnificent reserves, we are superbly placed to develop one of the world's leading protected area systems - a reserve system that provides sufficient habitat for the long-term survival of our biodiversity.

The challenge is that parts of Tasmania are virtually unrepresented in the reserve system while other parts are very well reserved. For example, the mountainous south-west is splendidly reserved while areas like the Tasmanian midlands have only a handful of small areas formally protected.

Despite good overall reservation, our state has almost 700 flora and fauna species in

The Midlands: Tasmania's biodiversity hotspot danger of extinction and many of those live in the drier and warmer areas where there have been fewer reserves established. Our rarest and most depleted habitat types are often in these regions. Native grasslands rich in endemic herbs and orchids are now almost all cleared and only a few hectares have been formally protected. Similarly some types of forest, particularly those that occur on wetter fertile soils, have been mostly converted for agriculture and few pockets remain. Other types remain reasonably abundant but poorly reserved.

The pressures on natural habitats are building. Also, as the climate changes there is increasing pressure to drought-proof the state. Irrigation schemes provide opportunities for new rural enterprises but they often compete for land. Conversion of forest to plantation has altered large areas of native habitat and the continual pressure of residential development is accelerating.

As the remaining habitat dwindles and fragments the pressures on it grow, weeds invade and the opportunistic species that thrive in habitat edges gradually dominate. The fragile species of habitat interiors cannot survive in shrinking habitat patches, **continued on back page**

'acquiring and managing Tasmanian land for biodiversity'



Denna Kingdom and Paul Rapley, Egg Islands weed survey



Australasian bittern



Sophie Underwood

Egg Islands conserved, bitterns observed

We are very excited to announce that, through the generosity of our supporters and funding through the Australian Government's National Reserve System Programme, we have successfully raised sufficient funds to conclude the purchase of the private land on the Egg Islands in the Huon River estuary. In less than a year we have reached our goal of permanently protecting these important islands of endangered forest, wetland and saline grassland communities which provide habitat for the globally endangered Australasian bittern. We sincerely thank everyone who contributed.

With the fund raising now complete, work is well underway to develop our reserve management plan to ensure that all conservation values of the islands are maintained into the future.

The importance of the islands as bittern habitat was confirmed recently when volunteers carrying out a weed survey made three separate observations of the secretive wading birds. Paul Rapley was one volunteer who was lucky enough to see a bittern during the survey. He described the encounter: "This heavy-set bird burst out of the waist-high grass before us, flying just above the grass for only a short distance before slipping back into it again and out of sight."

The Egg Islands weed survey was carried out in February 2008, and included the neighbouring Conservation Area which is managed by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service. The survey identified six 'acquiring and managing Tasmanian land for biodiversity'

weed species of concern, including three nationally declared environmental weeds – gorse, Spanish heath and blackberries. Five of these six weed species were located in three infestations in areas that were farmed throughout much of the twentieth century.

The weed information collected has been mapped and used in the development of a weed management strategy for the entire islands, including the adjacent Egg Islands Conservation Area which will continue to be managed by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service. The strategy recommends a short-term aim of halting the spread of weed infestations, with a longer-term objective of eradicating high and moderate priority weed species.

Funding for the development of the weed strategy was secured with a grant from the Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority, and the weed survey was accomplished in five days with the wonderful support of dozens of enthusiastic volunteers who also helped to compile lists of the flora and fauna of the islands.

Thank you again to all who supported our acquisition. We will continue to work on the management plan, which will be made available for comment through the TLC website by the end of the year.

Thank you

We are grateful to the Tasmanian Licensed Guiding Operators Association for their recent generous donation to our Egg Islands conservation management fund.

Board profile

Sophie Underwood is a conservation scientist and passionate environmentalist. She has an Honours Degree in Environmental Science and over ten years' experience working in natural resource management in the public and private sector in Australia and overseas.

Sophie works for Christine Milne, Australian Greens Senator for Tasmania. Sophie joined the TLC Board in 2005 and explains her reasons:

"I have been fortunate to grow up in my island home of Tasmania, which I love very much. I love the complex geology that gives rise to our vegetation communities and biodiversity. I am inspired by our outer islands, coastlines, tall forests, landscapes and cultural heritage.

I would love Tasmania to be true to its natural brand and protect all those things that are unique to Tasmania. Research commissioned by the Cradle to Coast Authority recently stated that 'Tasmania's status as a state of iconic natural wonders has fallen and is well behind Queensland and New South Wales.' I have chosen to be a part of the TLC as I believe it has an important role in conserving Tasmania's special places.

I enjoy working with the TLC Board and staff, helping to guide the organisation through land acquisition and management, which significantly contributes to Australia's reserve system."



Tasmanian devil



Risdon Peppermint Reserve revolving fund property



Grey goshawk

Protected Areas on Private Land

Since its inception, the TLC has been committed to working with private landowners to achieve conservation outcomes on private land. One of our ways of doing this is through our involvement in the Protected Areas on Private Land Programme (PAPL).

PAPL is Tasmania's longest running programme which facilitates voluntary conservation agreements between the state government and private landowners with important natural values on their properties. It is a unique joint partnership between the TLC, Department of Primary Industries and Water, and Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, and is primarily funded by the National Reserve System Programme.

Already this financial year the TLC through PAPL has facilitated perpetual Conservation Covenants on the titles of seven properties, totalling 277 hectares. By the end of June, TLC Conservation Officers Kim Sly and Janine Berechree expect to have finalised covenants for an additional 15 properties, totalling 333 hectares.

The covenants negotiated this year cover a wide range of ecosystems, from threatened scrub and heath communities on Flinders Island to wetlands and marshes on Bruny Island and beautiful areas of forest throughout the state, some considered to be vulnerable. These areas contain an array of rare and threatened species including breeding habitat for the endangered Tasmanian devil and 40 spotted pardalote.

PAPL is a wonderful demonstration of how individual landholders can demonstrate their commitment to conservation and make a worthwhile contribution to the reserve system. Angus and Sue Sprott have recently been working with the TLC to covenant eight hectares of their land near Margate. This land has excellent white peppermint, brown-topped stringy bark and swamp gum forest and a healthy population of the threatened plant *Epacris virgata* (pretty heath). The pretty heath population represents approximately 5-7% of the estimated total population in Tasmania.

Angus recalls, "Once we knew we had an important *Epacris* population on our land we felt that it was important to protect it. Our property has a number of wonderful features and by minimising our impact we hope to ensure that what we have today is here in 50 years time, and better. Obviously we are at the right altitude and have the right soil type, and we hope to provide more suitable habitat for the *Epacris* through the re-habilitation of degraded sections of our property. We really love the tranquillity of living in the bush and hope to protect our little patch from future degradation."

Roslyn Alexander has also been working with the TLC to covenant 17 hectares of her land at Eaglehawk Neck. This land has excellent brown-topped stringy-bark wet and dry forest and is part of a much larger area of contiguous forest. Roslyn was planning to sell her property but beforehand wanted to be sure that the natural values of

the land were protected forever.

"After being caretaker of the property for 25 years and living sensitively with the native animals and plants, I was not prepared to sell it without the protection of a covenant registered on the title. I felt a responsibility to do what I could to preserve the true value and diversity of the land," said Roslyn.

Both of these properties demonstrate that by protecting even small areas of land, we can preserve high natural values.

I think PAPL has a great future in Tasmania and I look forward to working with private landowners throughout the state.

Charlie Livesey - Conservation Programmes Manager

Revolving Fund properties for sale

- Snows Hill Reserve, Colebrook
84 ha, vacant forest, \$122,000
- Marakoopa Creek Reserve, Mole Creek
26 ha, shack with forest, \$160,000
- Sassafras Creek Reserve, Mole Creek
40 ha, house with forest, \$390,000

Soon to be available:

- Risdon Peppermint Reserve, Bridgewater
30 ha, vacant forest
- Mount Charles Reserve, Lachlan
32 ha, vacant forest
- Powranna Reserve, Epping Forest
650 ha, vacant forest
- Moss Beds Road, Lachlan
155 ha, vacant forest

'acquiring and managing Tasmanian land for biodiversity'



Photo: Matthew Newton

Flat Rock Reserve



Photo: Matthew Newton

Ross landscape, Tasmanian midlands

Visit to TLC Reserve

TLC supporters are invited to join us for a bushwalking day at the TLC Flat Rock Reserve and the adjoining Chauncy Vale Wildlife Sanctuary on Sunday 31st August 2008. The walk will be guided by TLC staff, with special guests Heather Chauncy and biologist Dr Nick Mooney providing interpretation of the social history and conservation values of the area.

Numbers will be limited to the first 15 to register. The walk is classified as an easy to medium six-hour return, including lunch break at our scenic Flat Rock Reserve. For a \$2 donation to the Chauncy Vale Wildlife Sanctuary, walkers will have the option of a guided tour of the house where Heather's mother, famous Tasmanian children's author Nan Chauncy, wrote her many manuscripts and novels inspired by this local landscape.

If you would like to find out more or register to come along, please call us on 03 6225 1399 or email Jo Naylor at jnaylor@tasland.org.au.

Donations received in memory of

Ms Carolyn Parsons, who cared and loved the environment and natural places; and

Mr Lindsay Whitham who was an enthusiastic and long-term supporter of our organisation.

Focal landscapes - a vision for Tasmania

or escape to other patches across intervening zones with little habitat, they simply dwindle towards local extinction.

If we are to retain sufficient spaces for our threatened native wildlife to thrive alongside the important businesses of growing food and timber and housing people we need a careful plan. We must think carefully about which parts of the landscape are the most important to retain as native habitat and where our limited resources and efforts should be focused.

In partnership with organisations including The National Reserve System Programme, Bush Heritage Australia and the Department of Primary Industries and Water, the TLC has begun developing a strategic approach to focus our conservation efforts.

The partners have developed a new approach, termed 'focal landscapes', where areas with particularly high concentrations of threatened species and habitats are identified. Using satellite images we can also identify landscape linkages – possible routes for corridors that would enable focal landscapes to remain connected.

The focal landscapes approach will serve to focus our conservation efforts. We will attempt to acquire properties as permanent reserves and revolving fund reserves in focal landscapes where opportunities present themselves. The focal landscapes approach will also help to guide our work

with other private landowners who are keen to establish reserves on their own properties. We have already been able to apply it to several of our conservation programmes and begin implementing the focal landscapes approach.

We purchased a 600 ha forested property through the revolving fund with funding from the Forest Conservation Fund. The property is in the Epping Forest area of the northern midlands and extends the Tom Gibson Nature Reserve. The area supports wonderful forests with a diverse heath under-storey and a host of threatened plants, as well as small marsupials.

We have also been able to secure funding from the Australian Government's Maintaining Australia's Biodiversity Hotspots Programme to support the establishment of private land reserves and conservation stewardship arrangements in the midlands region. Over 80 landowners expressed interest in the programme, resulting in 70 areas being assessed covering a total of almost 13,000 ha. Landowners are now preparing funding proposals and we hope to work with as many as possible to achieve long-term conservation across the region.

Overall, the focal landscapes approach will help us to allocate limited resources as wisely as possible and ensure that every dollar donated is achieving strategic conservation outcomes.

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



FITZGERALD AND BROWNE
Lawyers



Australian Government

