



SUMMER 2020

NL 64



Silver peppermint (*Eucalyptus tenuiramis*) at Flat Rock Reserve. Photo: Andy Townsend

In a year that no one predicted, defined by uncertainty and change, one fundamental element of Tasmania has remained core: the value of nature and the importance of conserving places that make this island so unique.

Humans' travel plans may have been impacted by the global pandemic, but the swift parrots are still making their migration. Their recent return to Tinderbox Hills reminds us all that nature remains constant. Tinderbox is home to some of our most iconic plants and animals, from towering blue gums to the cryptic and elusive 40-spotted pardalote. It is also home to an array of other species: entomology (insect) enthusiasts Tim Rudman and Dr Simon Grove recently visited Tinderbox to introduce us to even more of the local residents. You can read more about what they found

in this newsletter. Thank you so much to all who have contributed to the protection of Tinderbox Hills. We are closer than ever to reaching our goal and establishing Tinderbox Hills as our latest reserve.

The field season is well underway across the Tasmanian Land Conservancy (TLC) reserves and conservation programs. Ecological monitoring, reserve management and engagement activities are in full swing and the team have valued re-connecting with supporters, volunteers and landholders across the state. A personal thrill was to share our newest reserve on the Prosser River with 60 of our Natural Guardians – those generous supporters who have left a gift to the TLC in their wills. To explore and connect with supporters on a property that was

protected through a gift in a will was a real privilege and reminder of the role bequests play in protecting the places we value today, forever.

As we reflect on a tumultuous year, I wish to acknowledge and thank the TLC team for their commitment, adaptability and focus on achieving so many results across all TLC programs. We finish the year with more area protected and managed for conservation across Tasmania, an achievement that would not have been possible if it were not for the support and generosity of so many. On behalf of all of us at the TLC, we say thank you and wish you and your loved ones a happy and safe festive season.

James Hattam
Chief Executive Officer

HIGHLIGHTS



Iris Farm Private Nature Reserve. Photo: Eddie Safarik

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Conservation-minded covenant landholders are a vital part of Tasmania's reserve network.



Along the Prosser River. Photo: Andy Townsend

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Bequests made our new reserve possible and made a great day out for our Natural Guardians.



Ecological burn at the Vale. Photo: Heath Holden

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Keeping track of weather at the Vale of Belvoir Reserve lets us plan for burning.



LITTLE LIVES OF TINDERBOX

Immature male jumping spider (*Jotus* sp) at Tinderbox Hills. Photo: Tim Rudman

In late October, we paid a visit to Tinderbox Hills with TLC supporter and keen invertebrate photographer, Tim Rudman, and Dr Simon Grove, Senior Curator of Invertebrate Zoology at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. We wanted to find out more about the little creatures that keep Tinderbox ticking over.

Around the world, there have recently been fears of an ‘insect apocalypse’, with locations in Europe particularly seeing a huge drop in insect abundance. While those frightening numbers may not be true for Australia, insects here do face many threats. One is the lack of taxonomists, the scientists who classify species – without more of them, we don’t even know the insects we have. We do know, however, that those we have are threatened by agriculture, pesticides, human interference, extreme weather events and light pollution.

Saving habitat is as important for land-dwelling invertebrates as it is for larger species. In the same way that we set up marine protected areas so fisheries can be restocked from a healthier population, insects and arachnids need a ‘meta population’ and habitat connectivity so that when local populations are hit by a catastrophe there is a source of creatures to re-fill the depleted area.

Networks of protected land, like the one now spanning the Tinderbox Peninsula, are as important for click beetles as they are for bandicoots and swift parrots. And arthropods are vital for the continued survival of other animals (including us) and of plants.

They are pollinators and seed dispersers. They cycle nutrients and maintain soil structure and fertility. They keep populations of other species under control, remove carrion and are a major source of food, including for eastern quolls and some of the many bird species that Tinderbox is home to.

It was a cool and cloudy day when we visited Tinderbox, not really the right weather or season for optimal insect sightings, but we did see several jumping spiders, velvety shore-bugs, snipe flies, crane-flies, fungus-gnats, flower-wasps, bullants, grasshopper nymphs, enamel spiders, wolf spiders and eucalypt weevils. The process of looking for invertebrates is deeply mindful – slow, focussed and entirely in the present, it is highly recommended as a way to take some time out from stress. As Simon pointed out, most kids love to look for bugs, but for some reason most adults give up on it. Invertebrate hunting is a way to rediscover our sense of wonder about the natural world, even if you only have a small space to search in.

Tinderbox Hills is one such small space. This 67 hectare property is on the brink of becoming a reserve, with \$100,000 left to raise so that we can fund scientific research and management here in perpetuity. Turning Tinderbox Hills into a reserve isn’t just a matter of buying the land. For reserves to work – to function as safe havens and truly protect the plants and animals they contain – they must be looked after. Ecological values need active management, with on-ground actions – from annual weed control

to drainage work and erosion mitigation – targeting a range of threats. Even more importantly in a time of changing climate, we need to research what interventions will be necessary to keep Tinderbox Hills’ vital natural values intact.

We take conservation research and management very seriously: for us, a reserve isn’t a reserve unless we know we have the funding to maintain it forever. We want to know we can make good on our commitment to nature, raising money for the property acquisition and for the TLC Foundation endowment that will generate funds for ongoing ecological monitoring and on-ground management, year after year.

As we plan Tinderbox Hills’ conservation future, invertebrates will be part of the picture. As Paul Kelly wrote, ‘from little things, big things grow’: the insects pollinate the white gums that the 40-spotted pardalotes need to prosper, and even the smallest donation will help us protect this brilliant diversity forever.

**Jane Rawson
Communications Coordinator**

GIVE
Help us protect Tinderbox Hills for the little species and the big ones, by making a donation at tasland.org.au/donate-now



CELEBRATING CONSERVATION LANDHOLDERS

Covenants are a vital part of the conservation network. Photo: Eddie Safarik

More than 600 landholders across Tasmania are making the ultimate commitment to protect nature on their land by entering into a conservation covenant. They are conserving habitat for our rare and threatened species, managing threats and protecting the landscapes we all value.

Covenants are part of the Australian National Reserve System (NRS), a national network of public, Indigenous and privately protected areas over land and inland freshwater. Covenants are the primary mechanism to secure conservation on private land in perpetuity. Two-thirds of Australia's landmass is privately owned or managed, so private landholders play a critical role in conserving natural heritage.

Next time you're driving up the east coast, pause for a moment as you pass Devil's Corner on Cherry Tree Hill. Look out at the beautiful, protected landscapes of Moulting Lagoon, the Hazards and Freycinet National Park, then look back over your shoulder – from here you can see 15 privately protected areas scattered through the landscape.

Currently, Tasmania has 900 covenants protecting 110,000 hectares of private reserves. Their contribution to nature conservation, ecosystem services, and the Tasmanian community really matters. And they should be celebrated. Tasmanians all benefit from an environment in good condition – a healthy landscape gives us clean water, fresh air, productive soil, pollination services and climate resilience.

The Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) administers conservation covenants, while the TLC helps covenant holders, making site visits and

providing general information and land management advice.

In recent months, we have been approached by some covenant holders concerned that changes to Tasmania's planning provisions under the new state-wide planning scheme will undermine their land's protection. Covenants are established independent of the planning system, and the protections remain in effect regardless of the zoning of the land. Although no covenant (or some other reserve classifications) can guarantee exemption from mining interests, covenants exclude extractive timber harvesting and a range of other inappropriate activities.

Under the *Nature Conservation Act 2002*, conservation covenants are legal agreements between the binding parties (landholder and the relevant minister) registered on land title. Therefore, the requirements and protections of the covenant remain in place regardless of the zoning of the land under the planning scheme and are independent of the regulatory planning scheme. As a conservation landholder myself, with many covenants across our estate, the TLC is encouraging local government to ensure local provision schedules reflect the land-use potential of covenanted land and to ensure all covenant holders understand that their land is protected in perpetuity.

Conservation covenants are still a very important mechanism in the conservation toolkit and used by government at all levels. Covenants remain the mainstay of the TLC's network of reserves and of our highly successful Revolving Fund program. The Australian Land Conservation

Alliance, which comprises a range of national and state-based conservation organisations like the TLC that work on private land, is working collaboratively to ensure the role of private landholders and mechanisms such as conservation covenants are supported and encouraged into the future. Just last year the Queensland Government announced a new form of privately protected area, Special Wildlife Reserves. The special wildlife reserve class of protected area provides a national park level of protection to private land that contains exceptional natural or cultural values and that is managed in a way that focuses on conserving those values.

Maintaining a network of private protected areas is critical to building healthy and resilient landscapes for future generations of Tasmanians and for nature itself. The TLC has had the privilege to work with a diverse range of conservation landholders over the years and their connection to their properties and commitment to their patch is unquestionable and inspiring. These landholders should be congratulated and celebrated for conserving the places and species that make Tasmania so remarkable.

EXPLORE

Find out more about our
landholder programs at
tasland.org.au/landowners



NATURAL GUARDIANS

TLC Conservation Biologist Joe Quarmby discusses the threatened vegetation communities of the reserve Photo: James Hattam

On 10 October, a group of around 60 TLC Natural Guardians – those generous supporters who have left a gift to the TLC in their wills – and staff spent a soggy but informative and inspiring day exploring part of TLC’s newest reserve, on the Prosser River.

After several days of heavy rain, the road had decided to become one with the river and vehicles couldn’t access the reserve as intended. The morning quickly took an adventurous turn as we walked in from the old highway, crossing the suspension bridge into the property, laden down with coffee urns and (extraordinarily delicious) rhubarb cake. The sodden terrain meant a change of plans, for safety: rather than half the group taking a long walk through the extensive hills and gullies of the property, we stayed together on the river-side flat lands, watching out for birds, frogs and other natural wonders as we walked. TLC Head of Science, Alex Kutt, spoke about some of the wildlife found on the reserve, while Conservation Biologist, Joe Quarmby, was our guide to the fascinating riparian plant life. Contributions from some of the many attendees also made the day informative and engaging: it was particularly interesting to hear the insights of Bob Graham, whose property neighbours the reserve and who has a unique view on the history of the area.

This reserve was established thanks to a very generous bequest from David and Jean McGregor. The McGregors were not wealthy but they had a strong commitment to making the world a better place. After Jean’s death, David determined that most of his estate would be devoted to preserving endangered wildlife and bushland habitat. David’s son Bruce and daughter-in-law Ann settled

on funding the purchase and protection of a property the TLC had its eye on: 1,534 hectares, including six threatened vegetation communities and home to 11 threatened plant and animal species. Hearing the story of how a bequest made it possible to establish this reserve was particularly resonant for the TLC’s Natural Guardians.

It was wonderful (as always) to spend time with our bequesters on a reserve that would not have been possible without the foresight and generosity of our supporters. Thank you to all of you who have made the powerful pledge to preserve nature, in this special way. If you have included the TLC in your will and are yet to let us know, please do. These trips are a great way to bring our Natural Guardians community together, and for the TLC to personally thank you for your extraordinary commitment.

If you would like to find out how gifts help the TLC conserve nature, learn how to word a bequest, or get more information about our Natural Guardians reserve trips, you can download a copy of our bequests booklet at tasland.org.au/bequests-to-the-tlc.

**Sophie Marshall
Planned Giving Coordinator**

ACT
Is the TLC in your will? Let us know so that we can thank you for your gift and ensure you’re invited to future Natural Guardians trips. Email Sophie at smarshall@tasland.org.au



Shaun assessing the property of landholder, Bob Graham. Photo: Eddie Safarik

TLC PEOPLE – SHAUN THURSTANS

Our inaugural Land for Wildlife Coordinator, Emma McPhee, is now on maternity leave. We congratulate Emma and her husband Phil on the arrival of wee Oliver McPhee! While she’s gone, Shaun Thurstans is coordinating the program: we’re delighted to have him.

Shaun has led an explorative life across many regions and many aspects of lutruwita/Tasmania. After years spent monitoring wildlife and assessing impacts, he recognises the important role of communication and creativity for conservation. Shaun has developed a keen eye for careful messaging, vibrant data visualisation (maps!), and he loves applying creative innovation to empower public scientific inquiry. He has helped create online tools, mobile apps, interactive databases and communication material for government, community organisations, court cases and campaigns, with seven years supporting Aboriginal land management, including establishing long-term muttonbird monitoring.

Shaun is in his element when he is coordinating and streamlining the Land for Wildlife program, meeting landholders and sharing his enthusiasm for community-led conservation.



A FIRMER FORECAST

The Vale of Belvoir Reserve on a snowy day. Photo: Heath Holden

The Vale of Belvoir Reserve presents a conundrum. Of all our reserves, it's the one that needs the most active management – for thousands of years humans have been burning this land, and fire is necessary to subdue the more dominant species and keep these grasslands diverse. However, the property is remote, reaching it takes time, and the windows available for burning are narrow and unpredictable. Our reserves management and science teams can devote a lot of time to trying, and failing, to run successful burns. But we need to devote this time because without burns, the Vale's conservation values are at risk.

Luckily, we may have hit on a solution: a remote weather station for the Vale of Belvoir.

Gathering data from this station will help us learn over time when conditions for burns are best and give us the power to predict when we need to schedule a burn.

The weather station is solar powered and connected to the 3G and 4G networks. It provides real-time data every 15 minutes, letting us know about temperature, rainfall, humidity, wind speed and direction, and evaporation rate. A central base station overlooks the whole reserve, and there are nodes spread across the property, including two in fenced enclosures in grazed areas, and some on potential burn sites.

The weather station was funded by the TLC Foundation and set up in early October with the help of Liam Houston and his partner Julia. Liam, who volunteered time during his holidays, is a professional installer of weather technology and part of the Houston family involved in our WildTracker program (see newsletter 63). That visit showed the Vale in all its unpredictable glory: it was -3°C when we were installing the station, and the first reading from it showed a windspeed of 87km/hour. With heavy snow falling and wild winds, it was also so dark in the middle of the day that we had to use head torches to install the stations. It wasn't the most relaxing holiday for poor Liam!

The data from this station won't just help the TLC. Solid climate data is very helpful for researchers working on ecology, conservation and climate change, and this weather station should make the Vale an appealing site for researchers. Working with scientists from other institutions, we can broaden the reach of our research and provide wider benefits for all our reserves. Watch this space for future reports on strategic burning at the Vale of Belvoir.

Matt Taylor
Senior Conservation Ecologist



Tara Howell. Photo: Natalie Mendham

BUSINESSES DOING GOOD

At the TLC, we are proud to partner with many businesses and social enterprises who dedicate themselves to making the world better. In coming months, we'll be profiling some of these on our website and in the newsletter. First: Change Overnight.

Change Overnight is a hip apartment hotel in Launceston, started in 2018 by S. Group and Blue Derby Pods Ride, Sam Haberle and Tara Howell. It has an important difference: when you book a room, you choose a cause from a roster of eight, and part of the cost of your room is donated to that charity.

As Change Overnight told us, 'Change Overnight is a hotel that helps heal the world one room at a time. With the great motivation of leaving the world a better place, the hotel aspires to give every living creature on this earth equal opportunity to thrive.'

Unsurprisingly, many Tasmanians, as well as visitors from interstate and overseas, think conserving nature in Tasmania is a cause worth supporting. So far, Change Overnight, through the support of their guests, has donated just over \$9,000 towards creating and managing Tinderbox Hills Reserve. We greatly appreciate all those who have stayed at the hotel and selected us as their charity, and we are of course extremely grateful to Change Overnight for supporting the TLC in this way.

So if you're planning a trip to Launceston, consider staying at Change Overnight – the beds are comfortable, the location is great, the interior design is witty and thought-provoking and, best of all, you'll be helping us to protect the natural places that make travelling around Tasmania so rewarding.



Bennett's wallaby (*Macropus rufogriseus*). Photo: Matt Palmer

Lutregala Marsh Reserve Photo: Andy Townsend

WHAT'S ON

TLC END OF YEAR GATHERING 2020

Thursday 10 December

This year we'll be gathering at Hobart's Legacy Park for woodfired pizza and drinks to thank supporters and celebrate 2020. Due to COVID-19 regulations, numbers will be limited and we will have two time slots available. RSVPs necessary, see events.humanitix.com/tlcpizza2020.

FIVE RIVERS RESERVE AND CENTRAL HIGHLANDS VOLUNTEER WEEDING

January and February

The grand hunt for weeds continues across our Central Highlands properties in the early months of 2020. Dates are still being scheduled, so make sure you've registered to volunteer at tasland.org.au/volunteering and watch your inbox for an invitation.

OTHER NEWS

Bushfire Mitigation Measures Bill

The Tasmanian Government has released the Draft Bushfire Mitigation Measures Bill 2020, which has potentially wide-ranging implications on the use and management of both public and private land. The School of Law and the Fire Centre at the University of Tasmania hosted a special community event to outline features of the Bill and discuss their implications. Speakers included CEO James Hattam and board member Jan McDonald: www.utas.edu.au/law/events/item/2020/october/the-bushfire-mitigation-measures-bill-2020-what-does-it-mean-for-you.

The TLC has made a submission on the Bill, which will be published on the DPAC web site at www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/osem/bushfire_mitigation_measures_bill.

Strategic Plan and Annual Report

The Strategic Plan for 2020-25 and the Annual Report for 2019-20 are now available on the TLC website. Find out how we've been tracking and what we're aspiring to by visiting tasland.org.au/about-the-tlc. Thank you to supporters and stakeholders who have contributed so generously to the production of these strategic documents.

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**Chief Executive Officer
James Hattam**

