



Photo: Matthew Newton

Nathan Males and Jan Cameron at Laughing Jack Lagoon, Bronte district

Issue 27 Summer 2010

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Contact Us

Nathan Males (Chief Executive Officer)

PO Box 2112, Lower Sandy Bay, TAS 7005

Tel: 03 6225 1399 Fax: 03 6225 1394

www.tasland.org.au info@tasland.org.au

ABN 887 43 606 934

We are excited to share with you this special newsletter edition which is dedicated to the Tasmanian Land Conservancy's New Leaf project.

New Leaf commenced in October 2010 with the purchase of 27,390 ha of land previously owned by Gunns Limited.

The purchase is a wonderful conservation outcome and another step towards our vision for Tasmania to be a world leader in nature conservation and sustainability.

Large areas of the land which have been productive working forests in the past will now be set on a course towards full restoration of their habitat value. Within the portfolio of properties there are stunning conservation jewels. Properties like Skullbone Plains and Blue Tier have outstanding natural values and are absolute treasures.

The scale of the New Leaf project is at an unprecedented level and has been led and made possible by international businesswoman and philanthropist Jan Cameron. Jan first became interested in the properties as potential carbon banks and, through her investigations, decided to work with the TLC to secure as much of the Gunns holdings as possible for conservation. Her leadership and generosity has been incredible and we are extremely grateful to her. Jan has provided an initial gift of \$4.7 million and a loan

of \$13 million to enable the TLC to take on this project.

Rob and Sandy Purves are particularly interested in the conservation of Skullbone Plains and have made an initial gift of \$500,000 towards its purchase in memory of their mother. They are also providing an interest-free loan to help establish this property as our next permanent reserve. Rob and Sandy are keen to assist with the ongoing management of Skullbone Plains and with the development of a science and education centre.

We need to raise additional funds to complete the purchase of Skullbone Plains, which is scheduled for Christmas 2010, and to support the whole New Leaf project. Our overall fundraising target is \$3 million by June 2012. Thank you to all those who have already given donations and made forward pledges.

We are also planning to on-sell some properties or parts of properties to conservation owners, and to investigate opportunities for carbon credits and other commercial enterprises.

New Leaf is a really exciting challenge for us in so many ways: in management, in funding and in developing new enterprises.

Our thanks to Jan Cameron, Rob and Sandy Purves, Graeme Wood, and many others who have already made gifts and pledges.

'protecting Tasmanian land for biodiversity'

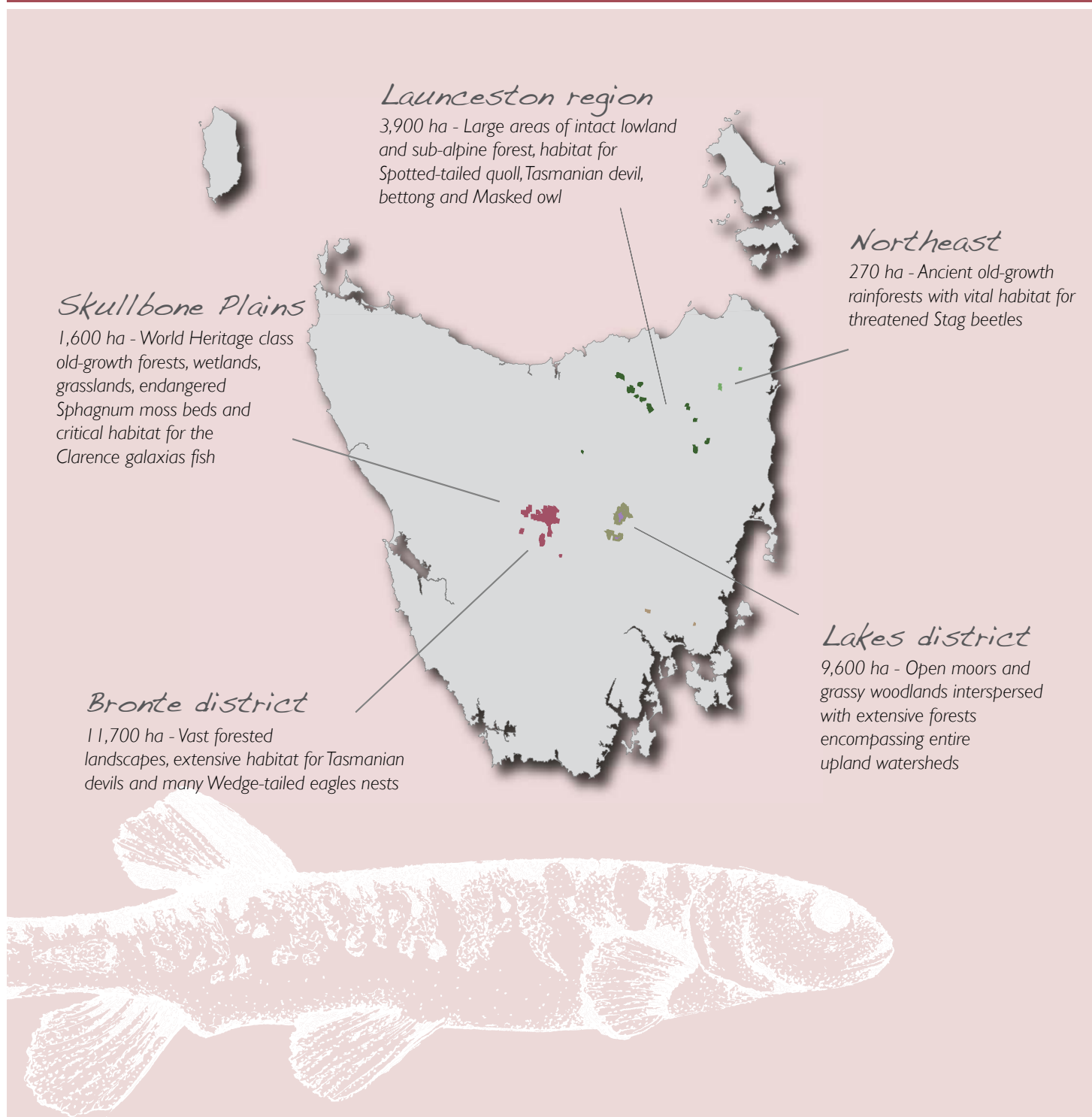
Turning over a New Leaf

TLC to June 2010:

1,729 hectares of reserves owned and managed
8 properties over 29 titles
Value of TLC reserves: \$4.7 million
21,989 hectares protected through covenants

New Leaf adds:

27,390 hectares: 34 properties over 94 titles
15 fold increase in area to manage
1% of Tasmania's private freehold land
Purchase price: over \$23 million





Dry Gum-top stringybark forests stretching to the horizon on the New Leaf property Roscarborough in the Bronte district. This is typical of much of the central highland properties

Photo: Andrew Townsend

Managing New Leaf properties

Conservation on private land starts with acquisition, then quickly moves to management.

The Tasmanian Land Conservancy bases its management planning on the international 'Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation', and its associated planning tool 'Miradi' - see the diagram below.

This approach identifies key 'targets' for conservation and prioritises actions to either manage or reduce threats that affect these targets, or increase the health, persistence or viability of targets.

The prioritisation process considers the scope of threats (ie how widespread the potential impact) and the severity of threats (ie scale of impact in places that it occurs). Actions and strategies to deal with the threats consider costs, leverage and the ability of actions to address multiple threats and/or targets.

Due to the sheer scale of the New Leaf project, we have started the process by nominating targets across all properties. Over the coming months, the reserve management team will expand to deal with the work and develop detailed work plans to manage the portfolio.



Conservation targets

Extensive, contiguous, native forest systems

Fragmentation of forest systems reduces the availability of connected and viable habitat for native species and ecological systems. New Leaf properties have large, structurally intact forest patches with functioning ecosystems and vegetation communities expressed at a landscape scale.

They provide refugia for many locally restricted or sensitive species, as well as connectivity facilitating movement of wide-ranging species. Potentially, scale may provide sufficient buffering for insurance against the changes wrought by climate change and edge effects.

This conservation target is particularly evident in the central highlands properties, but several blocks near Launceston also exhibit scale, and in some instances contain old-growth forests.

Nested within this target are the animals that require scale such as the nationally threatened Wedge-tailed eagle, Tasmanian devil and Spotted-tailed quoll.



Photo: Matthew Newton

Grassy woodlands

Grassy woodland habitats are often the most species rich and favour a range of niches and lifestyles. For instance, the open tree canopy allows the proliferation of herbs and grasses in the ground cover, plus flowering shrubs in the mid-layer. This provides food and shelter for a high diversity of insects which in turn provide high density food as well as a variety of physical habitats for birds, bats and other mammals.

Grassy woodlands occur throughout the central highland properties, but are a particular feature at the northern end of the Lakes district and to a lesser extent in the blocks underneath the Ben Lomond massif.

Intact patches of grassy woodland—often with old growth elements—contain a wide range of eucalypts including Swamp peppermint (*E. rodwayi*), Gum-top stringybark (*E. delegentensis*), Cider gum (*E. gunnii*), Mountain white gum (*E. dalrympleana* and *E. pauciflora*) and Snow peppermint (*E. coccifera*) at higher altitudes. Long term survival of woodlands presents some real management challenges for tree regeneration.

Miena cider gum

Incredibly frost and water-logging tolerant, the Miena cider gum is in dramatic decline – probably due to climate change. This hoary tree is found on the edge of frost hollows in some of the New Leaf properties and carries valuable genes for frost tolerance. Aboriginal people and early settlers ate the sap, as do possums. Often possum trappers set traps under the spreading branches. Protection of the area allows us to research the causes of the tree's decline and explore ways to help its survival.



Intricate wetland complexes such as this one on Skullbone Plains are sensitive to disturbance and critical for catchment management

Photo: Andrew Townsend

Conservation targets (cont)

Rainforests

Three properties in the northeast contain pristine old-growth rainforest: incredibly rare on private land. The rainforest is remarkably diverse, dominated by myrtle (*Nothofagus cunninghamii*) and rich in celery-top pine, tea-tree, dogwood, mosses, ferns and small shrubs.

These ancient forests are refugia still growing in situ from the last ice age, some 18,000 years ago. Many threatened species occur including two endemic flightless stag beetles: Simpson's and Vanderschoor's.

Heathy forests

A variety of heathy forest types occur in the lowland properties near Launceston. These include such rich habitats as the Black gum (*E. ovata*) forests; typically in gullies and minor floodplains where the drainage is poor, and various Black peppermint (*E. amygdalina*) communities; renowned for containing a diverse understorey rich in threatened plants.

Open grassy moors

Nestled between forest tracts in poorly drained valleys and moors are complexes that contain the Nationally listed sphagnum peatland, the State listed highland *Poa* grassland, highland grassy sedgeland, cushion moorland and various heath communities. They intergrade into open woodland on their margins and often to wetlands and riparian zones.

Moors containing sphagnum moss, cushion plants, clover glycine and *Colobanthus*, are dependent on subsurface hydrology for integrity and low levels of browsing from both exotic and native herbivores for seed setting.

Moors are mainly restricted to the uplands and require careful fire and access management.

Wetland and riparian areas

Riparian ecosystems are critical habitat for a range of aquatic dependent and other plant and animal species and provide landscape scale connectivity. Riparian zones contain nesting corridors for the threatened Grey goshawk and vegetation complexes such as riparian scrubs, wetlands, sphagnum moss beds and tea-tree swamps.

Properties in the Bronte district provide breeding and dispersal habitat for seven nationally threatened galaxiid species: many endemic and very localised. The Mt Arthur burrowing crayfish thrives in moist sub-soil on a number of properties near Launceston.

Entire upland watersheds are contained within the New Leaf properties and will give us management control over the ability of the landscape to capture and slowly release pure, clean water.

Galaxiids

Seven small, sometimes cryptic and endangered fish occur in the New Leaf properties. At most risk is the Clarence galaxias (*Galaxias johnstonii*) whose habitat has shrunk to a few small upper catchments around Clarence Lagoon in the World Heritage Area.

Protecting these lands will be critical to all these endemic fish (*Galaxias* and *Paragalaxias*) as they have habitat degradation as a common threat. The Clarence galaxias also faces stark extinction from the introduced predator Brown trout, and it only survives in the trout-free lakes, wetlands and streams that abound around Skullbone Plains.

Community

As well as features of ecological importance, the TLC recognises the key importance of community and social values.

Community knowledge of the landscape

The central highlands region in particular has attracted hunters, fishers and walkers who, along with local pastoralists, foresters and farmers, have over generations fostered a deep sense of community, stewardship and love for the area. This detailed knowledge of the history and management needs forms a critical source of wisdom to inform the TLC's management.

Culturally significant sites

Scattered throughout the New Leaf properties are important cultural sites for Aborigines and early European settlement. For instance, artefact scatters and traditional campsites are known from Laughing Jack Lagoon, and Soldiers Marsh features an early settler's homestead and the gravesite of soldiers who died whilst pursuing bushrangers.

Economic futures

All human activities require resources and a key part of community well-being is the pride generated through meaningful livelihoods. Many properties in the New Leaf portfolio have been the workplace for local people; often for generations. Conservation management must be able to generate ongoing resources and livelihoods to ensure values are not compromised or lost.



Photo: Dr. Sally Bryant

Some forests have been very heavily impacted



Photo: Daniel Spood

From left, Jim Mulcahy, Bruce Hay and Nathan Males discussing management history at Skullbone Plains

Threats

Threats are defined by their direct impact on targets. Underlying these are contributing factors that drive the threats. Actions and strategies may be directed at either of these.

Five proximate threats have been identified:

Habitat fragmentation from continued heavy forestry, illegal firewood harvesting and inappropriate fire regimes is a threat derived mainly from past practices.

Loss of biological and structural diversity caused by over-browsing, competition and predation by exotic or native species (deer, rabbits, native fauna, etc), weeds and disease, unregulated stock access, inappropriate fire regimes and unregulated public access can affect the health of all targets. Managing these factors is critical for conservation.

Erosion and changes to hydrology derived from inappropriate fire regimes, poor management of the road network and 4WD access. These factors particularly degrade open moor and riparian targets.

A disconnected community may result from a change in management intent leading to a real or perceived loss of job and or recreation/access opportunities, vandalism, lack of support for management and negativity towards the TLC. Unhappy local communities could derail the best-laid conservation plans.

Lack of management resources may compromise the TLC's ability to manage the conservation targets that we seek to retain.

Actions and strategies

Our vision for the future of the New Leaf properties is to identify, conserve, assist people to appreciate and, where necessary, restore their natural and cultural values.

We seek to pass on to future generations lands in as good or better condition than at present, with natural values conserved and protected.

Integral to this is an engaged local community and the resources needed to manage this diverse property portfolio.

Access control

As a priority, uncontrolled access has been identified as the greatest immediate risk to the conservation and social targets identified for the New Leaf properties.

The most appropriate and effective strategy in controlling access is to review and continue the existing system of regulating entry via a permit system as previously used by Gunns Limited.

A permit system will record the details of all approved visitations and establish a tracking system of key use. This seeks to retain the sense of ownership and guardianship by legitimised users within the community by linking rights directly to defined responsibilities. This also contributes to the social target of 'Community knowledge of the landscape'.

Fire management

One key aspect of our fire management strategy will be involving the community and recognising that this in turn will have a huge impact on how the community views our management ability.

Local knowledge from pastoralists, foresters, hunters and naturalists brings the accumulated wisdom and experience from many generations into our management.

Further research is needed into appropriate fire regimes for conservation in many habitats, but particularly where sphagnum bogs and grasslands coincide; to manage regeneration in grassy woodlands, and to encourage regeneration in very heavily logged former production forests.

Economic futures

Conservation management requires ongoing resourcing to ensure values are not compromised or lost. The rising cost of land management must be secured long-term and to do so the TLC requires a diverse and innovative portfolio and long-term strategies.

The TLC is considering a range of economic options including permanent reserves, conservation covenant and on-sell, subdivision sympathetic to conservation, tourism and recreational opportunities, and a range of new economy enterprises such as carbon trading, ecosystem service provision and biodiversity offsets.

The Tasmanian Land Conservancy is eager to explore partnerships with other entities with a view to generating funding for conservation management and the retention of as much of the portfolio as possible.



Photo: Wolfgang Glowinski

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Rainforest: Vale of Belvoir

Photo: Richard Jipe

Ways to be involved in New Leaf

With some central highland properties we are looking at the potential to create smaller titles that can be sold and used as holiday homes. This will leave larger areas within the balance of the property that can be kept by the TLC as reserves.

We are also very keen to ensure that properties are made accessible for TLC supporters and others to enjoy.

We particularly want to investigate options for camp sites and cabins for TLC supporters as well as sensitive commercial tourism options in some places.

If you are interested in owning part of the New Leaf portfolio, or have specific commercial propositions to share with the TLC, please contact the office on (03) 6225 1399 or info@tasland.org.au

Asset inventory volunteers

TLC will soon be undertaking an asset inventory on the New Leaf properties and we need your help. This is a wonderful opportunity to do some summer camping and/or bushwalking and support TLC's exciting New Leaf project at the same time!

Volunteers will need to provide their own transport, be comfortable in the bush, be reasonably fit and able to use or learn to use a GPS. They must also be confident at map reading and navigation.

Most properties are in the central highlands and well suited to a camping trip for a night or two. There will also be a couple of day trips organised from Launceston.

The work will be starting in mid to late January and will continue over several months.

For further information and to register your interest, please contact the office on (03) 6225 1399 or info@tasland.org.au

Wilderness Gallery Exhibition

This exhibition will explore ever widening ways of relating to the landscape of the Vale of Belvoir through the medium of photography.

It will feature the works of some of Tasmania's finest wilderness photographers as well as established and emerging fine art photographers. It will be a true survey of how photography can capture light upon the land.

The exhibition will fill two adjoining galleries at the Tasmanian Wilderness Gallery, Cradle Mountain from 3rd December, see: <http://www.wildernessgallery.com.au/>



Photo: Matt Newton

Support from Gunns Limited

We are grateful to Gunns Limited who have been very supportive of TLC through the property acquisition process. They have also agreed to help us with the management of some of the properties over a number of years. This is particularly important to us as the vastly increased land management responsibility is daunting and a challenge that TLC must rise to rapidly.

Welcome Peter Cosier

We are very happy to welcome Mr Peter Cosier to the Tasmanian Land Conservancy Board.

Peter has extensive expertise in environmental policy, catchment management and land use planning. He is Director and member of the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists and brings to TLC a formidable scientific presence.

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



FSC Logo