



TASMANIAN | Land | CONSERVANCY



Photo: Andy Townsend - Nature Photographers Tasmania

Early morning at Skullbone Plains

Issue 31 Summer 2011

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One year has passed since we launched the New Leaf Project, the largest private conservation purchase in Tasmania's history. This newsletter focusses on sharing some of our strategic thinking about the long-term opportunities for the New Leaf Project, and the on-ground work behind the scenes for both the New Leaf properties and our existing habitat protection programs with private landholders across the state.

All our results have only been made possible by the fabulous assistance of our supporter donating towards the permanent protection reserves such as Skullbone Plains, and the thousands of hours of volunteer work we receive annually. It was therefore wonderful to be able to celebrate our combined achievements at our recent tenth anniversary family day at the Chauncy Vale Wildlife Sanctuary and the TLC's Flat Rock Reserve.

We are excited about the arrival longer days and warmer weather and intend to run several supporter trips to Skullbone Plains over the summer, along with a number of volunteering activities across our various permanent reserves. All supporters are welcome!

We are well on the way to completing

the fundraising for Skullbone Plains, the first reserve in the New Leaf portfolio, and would love to be able to permanently protect more treasures once our fundraising for Skullbone Plains is complete.

The newly introduced federal government legislation, the Clean Energy Future Plan, gives us the opportunity to lead the way with carbon farming initiatives through our New Leaf portfolio and by working with landholders across the state who wish to do similarly. This is core to our 2050 vision for Tasmania to be a global leader in nature conservation and sustainability.

We are now at a pivotal point in our evolution where our partnerships with like-minded organisations, communities, governments and individual supporters can make that vision a reality. Many years of hard work are ahead but our commitment to achieving our goals for the benefit of current and future generations is unwavering. We hope that if you share that passion you will continue to be involved in our work, support us and help spread the word of the TLC.

Thank you to everyone for making 2011 a truly memorable year and we look forward to 2012 for even greater achievements.

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Skullbone Plains

Photo: Kip Nunn - Nature Photographers Tasmania

Carbon farming with New Leaf

The world is entering a new era – the carbon era. Putting a price on carbon, and encouraging enterprises that are carbon-positive is the first step towards incorporating sustainability into the heart of our economic system. The Tasmanian Land Conservancy is not only ready for this, but is actively working towards it.

Australia, with the Carbon Farming Initiative and the Clean Energy Futures Plan that puts a price on carbon, has taken a bold plunge into this sustainable economic pool. These two legislative packages set up a system that will allow players to generate carbon credits and sell them on the open market, thus taking the first step towards a carbon trading system.

The TLC will participate in a variety of ways, but mainly through selling carbon credits from the New Leaf estate, and working with landowners around the state to help protect land for both biodiversity and carbon.

With our depth of scientific knowledge and our networks within the community, we hope to be able to convert these wonderful opportunities into significant gains for Tasmania.

When the Tasmanian Land Conservancy acquired the New Leaf estate, we recognised that we needed to develop innovative strategies to help defray both the capital costs and the on-going management of this vast and exciting property portfolio.

New Leaf was purchased as a working forest estate and our aim is to redevelop

as much of it as possible into a working conservation estate. A key part of achieving this aim is to derive income from carbon. Now, a year on, we are ready to enter the international carbon marketplace with assets that can protect both unique biodiversity and precious carbon stocks.

In changing the land-use from logging to protection, we prevent carbon dioxide emissions from rotting deadwood of forestry operations and from much of the resulting products (paper, cardboard, etc) decomposing in landfill and elsewhere (see Figure 1).

Detailed carbon accounts are built that calculate all of these emissions and also the carbon that is sequestered back into the trees that regrow in the logged forest areas. This is compared to the emissions and sequestration that occur when forestry operations cease. The difference between these two scenarios is the avoided emissions that we can count and then sell as carbon credits.

Our projections show that we should be able to prevent over 50,000 tonnes of CO₂ a year from entering the atmosphere and warming our planet. By comparison, this is approximately equivalent to taking 10,000 cars off the road.

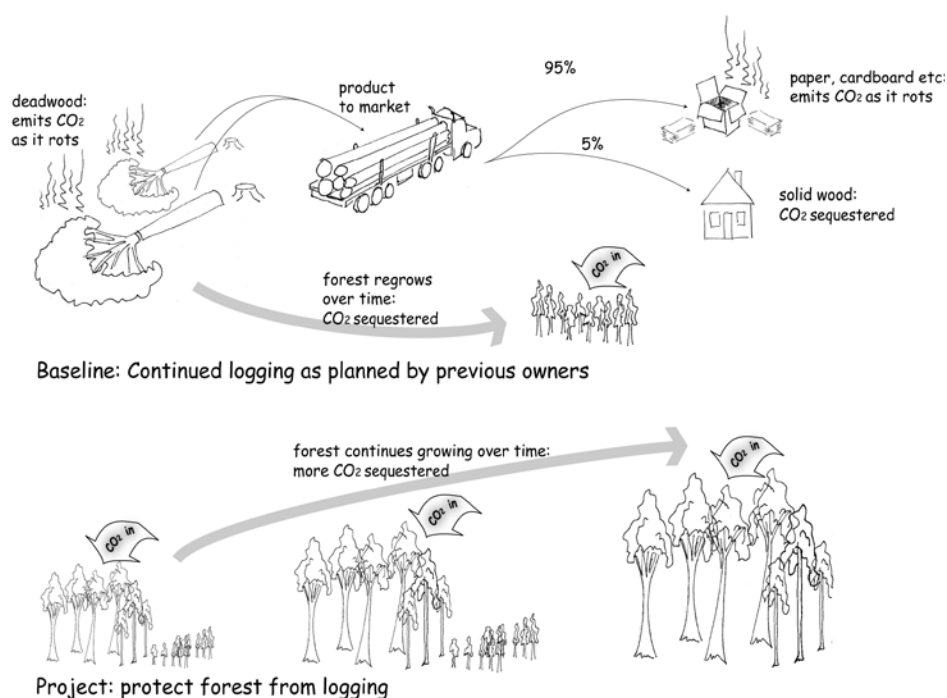


Figure 1

'protecting Tasmanian land for biodiversity'



Photo: Mstf Taylor

Myrtle tree in the Blue Tier, part of the New Leaf portfolio



Photo: Tim Devereux

Wedge-tailed eagle nest on a New Leaf property

Eagle nest protection on New Leaf

The New Leaf blocks in the Blue Tier contain ancient old-growth rainforest that has a particularly high density of carbon. Typical forestry operations would clearfell the entire loggable forest, yielding predominantly myrtle which historically was mainly turned into wood chips. Protecting this forest allows us to retain its magnificent beauty and vitally significant biodiversity.

The beauty of sequestering carbon into the forest biomass means the TLC can continue to provide protected habitat for the full range of Tasmanian plants and animals. In the Blue Tier area, these include rare flightless beetles that rely entirely on the huge rotting logs that litter the forest floor, and are exposed to the drying elements following logging and, commonly, fire for regeneration of eucalypts to replace the lost myrtles.

In marketing carbon credits to clients both in Australia and internationally, we will build upon the enviable reputation that Tasmania already has, by emphasising how these credits do so much more than just limit carbon dioxide pollution. When buying credits, clients will be reassured that they are also saving a precious portion of the planet's biodiversity.

Entering the global carbon market is a living example of how the Tasmanian Land Conservancy is implementing our vision for Tasmania to be a global leader in conservation.

Daniel Sprod
TLC Landscape Ecologist

The natural values on the TLC's New Leaf properties are of national and international conservation significance. The TLC's acquisition of this land means that as an organisation we can now play a vital role in protecting so many localised populations of native plants and animals that previously were under imminent threat of disturbance.

Of all these values few are as visually iconic as our own endemic sub-species of Wedge-tailed eagle, *Aquila audax fleayi*. This nationally endangered bird of prey is regularly seen gliding over the ridge-tops and mountain ranges of New Leaf, searching forest, grasslands and road lines for either live food or carcasses.

Wedge-tailed eagles maintain large territories spanning many hundreds of hectares and build their nests in a fork of an old-growth eucalypt, sheltered from prevailing winds and hidden from disturbance.

Ten Wedge-tailed eagle nests occur on New Leaf's central highlands properties and every year these nests will be checked to assess their structural condition and breeding activity. Despite their large size, Wedge-tailed eagles are very shy nesting birds and will readily desert or abandon a nest site if disturbed. A pair may build up to three or more nests within their territory and each year will select one for breeding.

Eagles repair and refurbish the nest, adding more sticks and disinfecting with a fresh sprig of eucalypt leaves, a little like us humans during every spring

clean. Over time, these conical structures accumulate masses of material and become huge in size. Nests are manually checked twice per year, once early in the season (September) and then midway during breeding (late November). The data is collected as part of a statewide effort coordinated by the Forest Practices Authority and the information is used to predict breeding productivity and habitat management prescriptions.

Surveys involve finding a vantage point about 150m above the nest site, well out of sight. Despite stealth and caution, birds are very wary and can see you coming from a distance of over a kilometre away. A spotting scope is used to find the nest and peer onto its platform to search for any signs of activity. These signs can range from a bird sitting near or on the nest, eggs, chicks, a spray of fresh eucalypt leaves in or on the edge of the bowl, or signs of white-wash splash on the lip of the nest or down the tree trunk. Later in the season, active nests contain prey remains, regurgitated pellets and copious amounts of droppings and splash on or under the nest.

Bruce Hay, New Leaf's central highland's property manager has been monitoring these nests over the past 20 years and knows the vantage points, nest configurations and history of productivity like no other. Bruce's expert bush skills enable him to quickly approach the nests, assess the health of the nest trees, which over time decay and occasionally fall, and also to detect the most obvious signs of breeding.

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Photo: Tim Devereux

Bill Brown performing the New Leaf nest checks



Photo: Chris Izard

Lathamus discolor (Swift parrot)

Woodland bird covenants success

This year we were also fortunate to have Bill Brown from DPI/PWE spend a day helping to check some nests and get a feel for the highland terrain.

Knowing your eagle species is helpful as well. Wedge-tailed eagles and White-bellied sea eagles can sometimes borrow each other's nests, as discovered recently on a covenanted property on Bruny Island. A productive nest on the north-east coast had traditionally been used by White-bellied sea eagles but, this year as we approached, a magnificent female Wedge-tailed eagle lifted from the nest and sat quietly nearby, looking as surprised as we did.

The TLC is serious about eagle conservation. If active nests occur on or near a road line to our properties, then these routes will be closed during the breeding season. This could potentially include the main access to Skullbone Plains. Our aim is to provide a lasting safe haven for these threatened birds, so bring it on we say – use those nests and raise those chicks!

Dr Sally Bryant

TLC Manager Reserves and Research



Photo: Leigh Walters

Aquila audax fleayi (Wedge-tailed eagle)

The TLC's delivery of Tasmania's component of the woodland bird program has been an outstanding success. This national program, funded through a Caring for our Country grant, aimed to protect habitat for woodland birds declining across south-eastern Australia. In Tasmania, nine private landholders entered into a permanent covenant to protect their properties for the Swift parrot, Forty-spotted pardalote and a host of other woodland beauties like the Flame and Scarlet robins, Painted button quail and Spotted quail thrush.

While these owners received a small incentive payment for their efforts, all were driven by a strong conservation commitment. The payment was an added bonus which they said would help with management or to buy more bush in the future. A total of 534 hectares were covenanted on ten private properties at the Freycinet Peninsula, Little Swanport, Bruny Island, Tarooma, Lucaston, Kettering and Franklin. Collectively these properties contain magnificent patches of old-growth Blue gum, White gum and Black gum habitat spread with hollows, fallen timber, and understory, and are virtually weed free.

The process of property selection, survey and covenant negotiation was expedited by a team of specialists. In particular Dean Vincent and Cindy Page from DPI/PWE who joined with the TLC's Matt Taylor and Sally Bryant to forge a great partnership in identifying and securing the properties which met the modeled woodland bird priority criteria to a high level.

In other states the project was driven by Birds Australia, Nature Conservation Trust of NSW and Trust for Nature Victoria. The whole team can now celebrate in the program's success. The TLC's success in delivering this program attracted additional private sponsorship from Maria Island Walks. This private generous donation was awarded to two landholders on Bruny Island to assist them with fencing and watering systems. We now await news of our second application for funding through the Caring for our Country program, which should be announced shortly. Thank you to all involved - what a great program!

Dr Sally Bryant

Five Handy Facts about Woodland Birds ('Birds on Farms' by G. Barrett, Birds Australia, 2000)

- 1 Bird diversity increases by 30% for every ten large trees present on a farm site.
- 2 The critical tree age for woodland-dependent ground foraging birds is 35 years.
- 3 Bird diversity increases by 3% with each additional farm dam.
- 4 A river or creek-line results in a 21% increase in the diversity of woodland-dependent birds on a farm site.
- 5 Bird diversity, especially ground-foraging birds, is lower on farm sites to which fertiliser was applied over the previous five years.

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Photo: Matt Taylor

Ian Hicks amongst the many trees that he has planted



Photo: Matt Taylor

Dry eucalypt woodland supports a high diversity of native animals.

Protecting important bird habitat on Bruny Island

Bruny Island is an exceptionally beautiful place, with a dramatic landscape and diverse vegetation that ranges from the dry open woodlands of north of the island, to the rainforests of Mount Mangana, and the windswept heaths of the south. It is a haven for native wildlife. The forests of Bruny Island are extremely significant for the protection of two iconic and endangered bird species - the Swift parrot (*Lathamus discolor*) and the Forty-spotted pardalote (*Pardalotus quadragintus*).

Over the past few months the Tasmanian Land Conservancy has been working with landowners to protect important areas of native vegetation on Bruny Island with conservation covenants through the Protected Areas on Private Land Program (PAPL). Our work on Bruny Island was timed to coincide with the delivery of projects by the Understorey Network and NRM South. This collaboration aimed to provide landowners with several complimentary mechanisms for conserving important natural values on their properties.

The Understorey Network has been working with landowners to restore Forty-spotted pardalote habitat. Landowners are given trees and shrubs, assistance with planting, and advice on how best to manage their remnant vegetation. The Mountain to Marine program of NRM South has been undertaking a wide range of projects with landowners on Bruny Island, including weed control and fencing of remnant vegetation. Working with these two partner organisations has resulted in some great spin-offs for each program and for the landowners involved.

A great example of this collaboration is provided by the conservation work that Ian Hicks has undertaken on his Bruny Island property. Ian has lived on north Bruny for about ten years and in that time has worked hard to restore degraded areas of pasture and to improve the quality of habitat for native wildlife on his property. Over the years he has planted many White gums and Blue gums, trees that provide important foraging habitat for the endangered Forty-spotted pardalote and Swift parrot.



Photo: Matt Taylor

Camouflaged spider on a heartleaf bushpea on Ian's land

"I wanted to support efforts to protect the Forty-spotted pardalote and Swift parrot. When I first arrived here more than ten years ago I planted many Blue gums. A few years later I worked with NRM South to plant White gums. Over these past years I've watched the bush come back, and now what a beautiful spot! The amount of birdlife here is phenomenal and getting better day by day. I have a native garden and the animals come in and share the space. There are many echidnas, potoroos in the bottom of the garden, and quolls all

the time. This is a gift of a place, I love it, I feel like an elder walking across my homeland."

Most recently Ian has worked with Tom Wright from The Understorey Network to plant a range of species that are native to his property, including more White gums. This latest planting aims to connect two remnant patches of bush by reforesting a large area of intervening pasture.

Tom referred Ian to the Tasmanian Land Conservancy because he was keen to compliment the restoration work that he had been doing with formal protection of significant areas of native forest on Ian's property. These forested areas are exceptionally biodiverse, with a magnificent display of wildflowers this spring - the understorey of shrubs, orchids and flag iris flowering in a myriad of colours. Old-growth trees in gullies provide excellent nesting habitat for a variety of native fauna. Ian is now working with PAPL to protect his magnificent property in perpetuity with a conservation covenant.

Matt Taylor

TLC Conservation Programs Officer



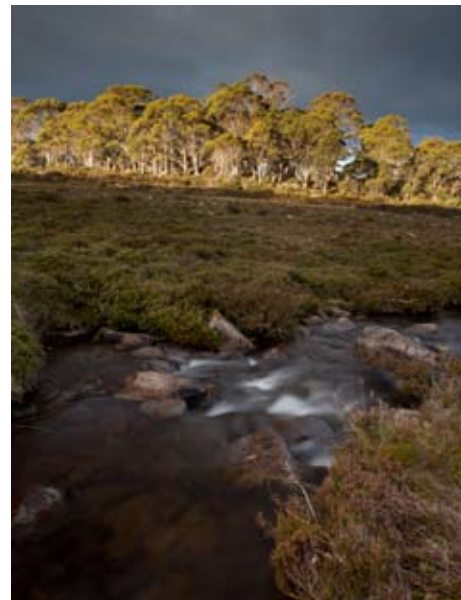
Photo: Matt Taylor

Glossodia major (Waxlip orchid)

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Wild animals, Sienna and Alma, seen at the TLC 10th anniversary family day



The magnificent Skullbone Plains

Photo: Andy Townsend - Nature Photographers Tasmania

Tenth anniversary family day and AGM

It was a rather damp but high energy and fun day at the TLC's 10th Anniversary Family Day celebration at the Chauncy Vale Wildlife Sanctuary and Flat Rock Reserve on Saturday, 29th October.

The face painters were highly talented in creating animal masterpieces (as this marvellous picture of Sienna and Alma attests), the woodland and cave interpretive walks were skilfully led, the BBQ expertly stationed and the movie in the hut at the end of the day had the audience enthralled. Regardless of the rain, hundreds of TLC supporters braved the conditions and thoroughly enjoyed the festivities.

Thank you to all of the tireless volunteers who made the day so successful, to the Chauncy Vale Management Committee for being such gracious and enthusiastic hosts, to the TLC staff and Board for turning their talents to car mustering, burger flipping, guiding, story telling, providing hot and cold drinks, photography and much more.

We are grateful to everyone who gave gold coin donations to cover costs and came along to enjoy the day, making it a very special event indeed.

This year's AGM saw some significant changes in the TLC leadership with Peter Bosworth, our hard working,

quietly determined and highly skilled leader over the last four years, retiring as President. Fortunately Peter has agreed to remain a member of the TLC Board and will chair the newly formed Conservation Science and Planning Council (a permanent sub-committee of the TLC Board). Peter will also continue to sit as a member of the Executive Committee of the TLC Board by virtue of his leadership of the Conservation Council. We are enormously privileged to have had Peter at the helm of the TLC Board for those crucial years.

We are delighted that our former Vice President, Associate Professor Geoff Couser, has taken over the reins from Peter and will no doubt inject his infectious enthusiasm for the TLC into the role of President.

We are also pleased that Stuart Barry and Susan Gough have assumed the roles of Vice President and Secretary respectively, and thank Dr Karina Potter for her role as Secretary for many years. The AGM warmly thanked John Ramsay for his invaluable contribution as a member of the Board and wholeheartedly welcomed Philip Myer to the Board.

This year again, the TLC Board is in very capable hands.

Upcoming Events

The presence of a Wedge-tailed eagle nest delayed our 2011 spring plans for supporter day trips into Skullbone Plains because the nest is located adjacent to the access road. Sally Bryant recently checked the nest for activity and confirmed that it is not being used for breeding this year, so we are able to plan some summer day trips into the reserve. If you are interested in joining us on one of the several trips we are planning, please call, email or write to us. We will then give you all the details you need to enjoy a day out at this magnificent reserve.

There are several volunteer events planned for the summer months in TLC's permanent reserves. If you are interested in volunteering at Flat Rock, Vale of Belvoir or the New Leaf central highlands properties in the next few months – whether it be weeding, fencing, rubbish removal, threatened species surveys or other fun activities requiring your favourite pair of gloves, sturdy shoes and a sense of humour, please contact us for more information.

To register for supporter trips or volunteering please contact us:

Email: info@tasland.org.au
Phone (03) 6225 1399

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

