



Photo: Matthew Newton

## The Big Punchbowl

### Issue 41 winter 2014

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#### Jane Hutchinson | CEO

Wetlands are very close to my heart. I am thrilled that the TLC's efforts over the coming year are to protect part of a very special wetland complex near Freycinet on Tasmania's east coast – The Big Punchbowl.

As you know, wetlands are a vital part of ecosystem function in the landscape. They protect the land from erosion and flooding by coastal seas; they filter pollutants and enhance water quality.

Wetlands are commonly home to a wide diversity of plants and wildlife and are a critical link between land and water. Globally, they provide significant ecosystem services to humankind for their economic, social and environmental value.

These landscapes also boast startlingly natural beauty, as you can see from the sublime images in this newsletter.

The Big Punchbowl hosts a chain of wetlands adjacent to the internationally significant Moulting Lagoon – one of Australia's 65 Ramsar listed wetlands.

Named after the largest of the lagoons on the property, The Big Punchbowl is a 240 hectare parcel of native vegetation in excellent condition. It includes expansive reed beds, heathland, threatened white gum and black peppermint woodlands.

Leading scientist Dr Richard Fuller has just recently announced that Tasmania's shorebirds are in a state of 'catastrophic collapse', and species using the East Asian Australian migratory flyway are battling threats at every staging post after leaving the Arctic. The saltmarsh communities around the coastline of The Big Punchbowl offer refuge for some of these species.

Patches of woodland with heathy understory on the property provide habitat for threatened New Holland mouse and several of its key food plants have been identified. Despite targeted surveys in all of its known colonies this little native rodent has declined significantly to the point where it is now on the verge of



Photos: Matthew Newton

*Xanthorrhoea australis* and *Sarcocornia quinqueflora* are part of the special features of The Big Punchbowl

## The Big Punchbowl *continued*

extinction in Tasmania. Hopefully we can help conserve this species.

From the air, you can see the property is a critical part of a large wetland network of permanent and ephemeral waterways that drain into Moulting Lagoon, supplying the area with food and resources for a host of terrestrial and freshwater species. Many of Tasmania's wetland systems are poorly known biologically but, by their very nature, are likely to have highly distinct and endemic fauna, flora and microorganisms.

A critical element of The Big Punchbowl is its proximity to the Long Point reserve, protected by the TLC in 2005. These two properties are connected by the waters of Moulting Lagoon, playing host to migratory waterbirds. Some of these, like the *Australasian Bittern*, make their way across the world annually to feed during our summer.

The *Australasian Bittern* was once more easily detected in Tasmania, but is now a nationally endangered species and listed by the IUCN as declining globally. This unusually cryptic waterbird has been heard calling from The Big Punchbowl reed bed, so it is imperative

we maintain the integrity of the freshwater wetlands for this species.

We were very excited when our recent survey found at least two eagle nests – although we don't know yet if they belong to a threatened White-bellied sea eagle or a nationally endangered Wedge-tailed eagle (or both!).

In a landscape context, The Big Punchbowl falls within the Swan-Apsley Focal Landscape area, one of the fourteen areas identified as being critical for private land conservation in Tasmania.

By acquiring The Big Punchbowl the TLC aims to protect this serene and exquisite wetland gem from the threats of subdivision, development, invasive species, and wood cutting. There is also scope for taking advantage of the bioregional connection to the Long Point permanent reserve to explore the potential for seed collection and restoration work between the two protected properties.

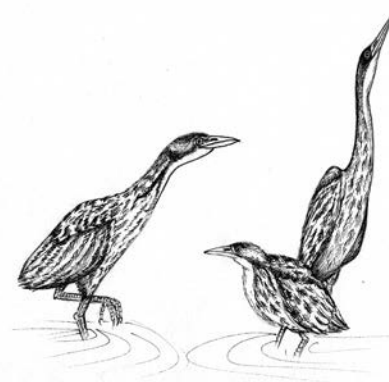
The Big Punchbowl is also a site for Tasmanian devil monitoring in the wild and many scats have been found in our recent surveys of the property which is a very hopeful sign.

If we are able to secure the property, with the help of our fabulous supporters, we will continue to survey for and monitor these very important birds and marsupials in the future.

Protecting The Big Punchbowl property as a permanent TLC reserve is an exciting and important project and we hope to share news of our success in the coming year.

We are so very grateful to all of our supporters who have already made or are considering making a generous donation to help us preserve this very special place.

Thank you!



*Australasian Bitterns* by Margaret Vandenberg





Photos: Matthew Newton

Landscape ecologist Daniel Sprod shows volunteers how to set monitoring cameras during the Bush Blitz on the Five Rivers reserve

## Bush Blitz 2014

Following the amazing success of the Bushblitz of Skullbone Plains in 2012, in February 2014, the TLC's Five Rivers Reserve and the adjacent property 'Gowan Brae', owned by the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania and managed by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, also went under the microscope.

Over thirty scientists, staff and volunteers from the Tasmanian Land Conservancy, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Earthwatch Australia, the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, the Australian National Herbarium, the Queensland Museum and University of New South Wales, the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania and BHP Billiton conducted the Bush Blitz, an innovative programme that is helping to fill the gaps in our knowledge of biodiversity across Australia's national reserve system.

For ten days the group conducted surveys for a diverse range of species and mapped their findings. They targeted the lesser known groups such as invertebrates and non-vascular plants in ecosystems such as highland marshes (particularly grassy systems), highland forests above 1000m and tiny patches of remnant rainforest.

Even with ten enthusiastic BHP

volunteers helping with every aspect of the work, there was no rest for anyone.

The TLC's contribution to Bush Blitz 2014 was to set 50 motion sensor cameras which across the reserve for a three-week period to survey carnivorous animals such as Tasmanian devils, eastern quolls, spotted-tailed quolls and feral cats. The cameras were purchased through a grant from the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program, and the information collected will contribute to state-wide survey information.

The cameras were placed near roads and tracks to maximise the chance of predator movement, and meat-based lures were used to attract animals to where the cameras were ready to snap their picture.

From each camera location a 500m transect was walked to collect predator scats, and the process repeated when the cameras were collected. In total, 50km of transects were walked and over 500 scats collected for DNA or diet analysis.

Processing of the images is still underway, but so far there is no shortage of images of our furry meat-eaters. One camera alone has

captured 300 images of fauna, including Tasmanian devils and feral cats. Sadly, several of our devil pictures reveal animals with clear signs of the facial tumour disease confirming the disease is still prevalent in the central highlands region.

Bush Blitz 2014 has already yielded a greater understanding of the reserve's natural values; the exciting tally of 21 different species of land snails found by Dr Kevin Bonham in a small pocket of rainforest is just one example of how the study has helped to further quantify the rich biodiversity of this landscape.

A huge collection of Heteropteran bugs was found by Professor Gerry Cassis from the School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University of New South Wales.

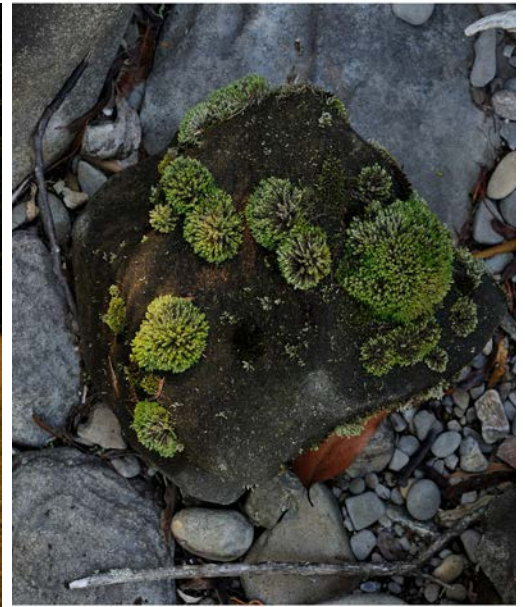
Dr Robert Raven, Senior Curator and Head of Terrestrial Environments and Natural Environments Program at the Queensland Museum, who beamed with delight after identifying a completely new member of the Racing stripe spider family on Gowan Brae. All great outcomes from the Bush Blitz 2014.

More discoveries are bound to happen - so stay tuned! [www.bushblitz.org.au](http://www.bushblitz.org.au).

Photos: Chris Crerar



Volunteers remove old fencing and barbed wire at the Marakoopa reserve working bee



Marakoopa mossy rock

## Busy days on the reserves

### Leigh Walters | TLC Reserve Management Services Manager

It seems not a week goes by without a new activity, task or interesting new job popping up. The reserve team is always ready and has a huge range of skills: from coordinating volunteer support to fencing, wildfire control, threatened flora surveys, road and gate maintenance, weed control and visitation assistance.

The team uses these skills to ensure that our properties are well managed to achieve the long term goals of our strategic plan and meet the expectations of our neighbours and the community, which is critical to the long-term future of the TLC.

Ongoing activities across our properties include:

- installation of gates and security trenches at several locations in the central highlands;
- weed control around the central highlands and north-eastern properties;
- management of the various deer hunting groups;
- ongoing pine control project at

Bruny Island;

- annual Vale of Belvoir Ptunarra brown butterfly survey;
- fire management and planning.

We were also successful in obtaining a grant from the Cradle Coast NRM (Natural Resource Management) to support ongoing monitoring at the Vale of Belvoir. The TLC have had great support from Cradle Coast NRM for this property and we hope the monitoring will give further insight into the natural values and management requirements for this fantastic property.

The Central Highlands road maintenance program continued through the rather dry autumn which allowed 94 kms of roads to be treated to maintain good access.

As planned, we replaced a bridge on the Skullbone Plains road and undertook repairs on another. The tasks are many and varied, so staff are continually learning new skills such as what it takes to replace a small timber bridge and maintain hundreds of kilometres of gravel roads.

A working bee was held at the

Marakoopa Revolving Fund property, which was attended by 25 volunteers over two days. We treated blackberry along approximately 350m of creek-line with the cut, scrape and paste method. The blackberry in this creek stopped just before the World Heritage Area and national park boundary which is a fantastic outcome.

We were able to cut and paste holly, briar rose, hawthorn, Spanish heath, gorse and plum. We also dug up lots of garlic plants that the volunteers were happy to take home to eat.

There is much work to be undertaken on this property, with a large infestation of Sycamore planned for removal during the winter. A big thank you to all that attended, and to NRM North for contributing sponsorship to the event.

Finally, the winter months will be a great opportunity for the reserve team to evaluate our progress, maintain equipment and plan the spring and summer works program.





Lagoon and lichen covered rocks, 2014 by Richard Wastell



Photo: Mathew Newton

Photo: Kane Keichi Hiki

A nationally threatened Tasmanian devil

## The Sydney Skullbone Experiment

The Skullbone Experiment is the TLC's creative force of nature; an exhibition of works by eleven outstanding Australian artists following a four-day retreat at Skullbone Plains in 2011.

The Skullbone Experiment artists were drawn together by Tasmania's eminent landscape painter Philip Wolfhagen, and the resulting exhibition assembled by co-curator Catherine Wolfhagen.

The highly successful eight-week exhibition at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery (QVMAG) in Launceston has just wrapped up and works are now in transit to the next venue at Galleries UNSW/COFA in Sydney.

The feedback we have received from both patrons and the QVMAG staff has been glowing. We have also sold hundreds of copies of the beautiful catalogue produced to accompany the exhibition.

Not only has the Skullbone Experiment resulted in an outstanding creative outcome, it has generated a significant interest and awareness of the TLC's work protecting biodiversity throughout Tasmania.

You will have found enclosed with

this newsletter an invitation to the opening of the the Skullbone Experiment at COFA in Sydney. We would love to see you there.

For those of you who could not get to the show in Launceston, this is a second chance to catch this breathtakingly diverse display of works inspired by the TLC's World Heritage listed property on Tasmania's Central Plateau.

The project is the subject of a documentary film produced by Roar Film, which we hope will be screened on ABC1 later in 2014.

Recently Jane Hutchinson (CEO) was invited to address the Museums Australia Conference at QVMAG. She summed up the purpose and value of the creative collaboration in her speech.

*'The point of this exhibition is to demonstrate the connection between art and nature and to bring artists, those who appreciate art and its power into the Tasmanian Land Conservancy family.'*

**The Skullbone Experiment shows at COFA in Paddington from 18 July to 30 August.**

## Our eyes and ears in the wild

A heartfelt thank you to all who supported our efforts to resource the TLC with equipment to establish permanent monitoring sites across our reserves.

Sensor cameras, acoustic recorders and weather stations with integrated data collection capacity are a relatively low cost, effective and repeatable means of conducting long-term ecological monitoring.

Your help has enabled TLC conservation scientists and volunteers to begin monitoring species of high conservation significance, such as the nationally threatened Tasmanian devil and spotted-tailed quoll across our Five Rivers, Silver Peppermint, Long Point and Vale of Belvoir reserves.

So far, 256 cameras have been placed across these properties, monitoring flora, fauna and the effectiveness of our management.

The TLC's aim is to establish both permanent and revolving monitoring sites across all of our reserves within the next five years.





Feather detail at The Big Punchbowl



Oystercatcher eggs on the foreshore at theTLC's Lutregala Marsh permanent reserve

Photos: Matthew Newton

## Back page briefs

### Turning shares into tax-deductible gifts

A very effective way to sell parcels of shares and maximise the benefit of making a tax-deductible donation to the TLC, is through the not-for-profit charity, Sharegift Australia.

Often selling shares through a financial broker attracts a fee that can substantially affect your return. The Sharegift Australia Independent Charitable Fund provides a convenient and cost-effective way to sell and then donate parcels of shares without paying a brokerage fee.

For example, if you bought a parcel of shares for \$500 and they increased in value to \$1000 and you donated them to the TLC via Sharegift Australia, you would have a capital gain of \$500 (reduced to \$250 if the shares were held for longer than 12 months). This gain would then be offset with a tax deduction of \$1000 and Sharegift Australia would pass on the full market value of the shares (on the day of trade) without charging any fee as a donation on your behalf.

The selling process is straightforward and is explained on our web-site at [www.tasland.org.au/donations/shares](http://www.tasland.org.au/donations/shares).

For more information please call Jo Naylor on 0409 347 581 or email her at [jnaylor@tasland.org.au](mailto:jnaylor@tasland.org.au)

### Volunteering database

We would like to extend another big thank you to our volunteers for all their valued support both on and off reserves; it simply wouldn't be possible without you.

Thanks also to those who took a couple of minutes to complete our existing volunteer survey. By completing the survey you will have helped us to make the most of your skills, better match your interests with our volunteering opportunities, and ensured that all your information is up to date.

If you haven't completed the survey yet, we would really appreciate it if you could; we are seeking a great response from all of our existing

volunteers, even if you are a volunteer veteran.

The survey is located at [www.tasland.org.au/about/volunteering/volunteer-form](http://www.tasland.org.au/about/volunteering/volunteer-form).

Over the coming months we will be continuing to eradicate Spanish heath from our beautiful Egg Islands permanent reserve. If you would like to volunteer for the Egg Island working bee or receive information about other volunteer opportunities, please call 03 6225 1399 or email [info@tasland.org.au](mailto:info@tasland.org.au)

### This newsletter is brought to you by...

In the last few weeks, our TLC volunteers have folded letters, labelled and stuffed literally thousands of envelopes. A hearty thanks to all who have assisted in our recent mailouts.

We are grateful to the following organisations for their recent support:



The TLC uses **free software or programs** for its online event registrations and communications.