



2013-14 in review

Frosty July morning on the Five Rivers Reserve Photographer: Grant Dixon

Issue 42 spring 2014

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Jane Hutchinson
Chief Executive Officer

With the end of the 2013-14 financial year comes an opportunity to look back over the last twelve months of TLC's biodiversity conservation work – and another terrific year it has been!

So many fabulous biodiversity conservation projects and activities have happened this last year that it's hard to pick the highlights. But some include:

- The Gordonvale and Five Rivers reserves established as TLC's twelfth and thirteenth permanent TLC reserves
- The growth of the TLC Foundation and establishment of the Five Rivers Endowment Fund as the key financial funds for the TLC to ensure effective conservation management for all of our reserves
- The establishment of the New Leaf Carbon Project and sale of the first "vintage" of carbon credits on the voluntary carbon market
- The roll out of TLC's long term monitoring program so that we can capture information about the health of our reserves and track their status as they change over time

- Effective conservation management of our TLC reserves, including through fire management and weed control
- The establishment of the Stewardship and Monitoring Program
- The continued success of our key conservation programs including Midlands Conservation Fund (through the Midlandscapes Program), the Revolving Funds and New Leaf Project
- The Skullbone Experiment and all of the wonderful opportunities we have had to connect with more and more supporters of biodiversity conservation on private land in Tasmania.

The following pages detail these and other projects and activities that have contributed to TLC's important work over the past twelve months. Thank you to all of you who have supported our work in a wide variety of ways: from financial support, to volunteering, to partnerships, to the many inspirational words of encouragement and to sharing stories about our unique plants and wildlife that we hear almost daily. We are always thrilled to hear from our friends and supporters and we are so very grateful for all you do to help us achieve the TLC's conservation goals!



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Dr Sally Bryant observing birds as the sun sets over Moulting Lagoon, adjacent to The Big Punchbowl. *Photographer: Heath Holden*
A magnificent scarlet robin. *Photographer: Sarah Lloyd*

Conservation Science and Planning

New permanent reserves

Permanent protection for Gordonvale marked our twelfth permanent reserve and many stories have been shared over cups of tea about its values and history. Like layers of the onion, Gordonvale keeps revealing more underneath!

We are thrilled that the innovative global partnership between Conservation International and BHP Billiton this year facilitated the conservation and ongoing management of 11,000 hectares of land in Tasmania's Central Highlands by the TLC, in a project called the Five Rivers Conservation Project. This project creates a world-class, financially sustainable, effective nature conservation management model at a landscape scale and in doing so contributes towards achieving the Convention on Biological Diversity's Aichi Target 11.

The Five Rivers Conservation Project landscape features open grassland valleys, old-growth forests and woodlands, native grasslands, cushion plants, endangered sphagnum moss beds and five river systems. It is habitat for endangered wildlife including the iconic Tasmanian devil and Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle and important endemic species not found in any other region on earth.

A critical component of the project is the establishment of an efficient but effective long term ecological monitoring program. This program has been designed to gather

scientific data to inform conservation management using simple, repeatable and robust methodologies. In the future, the Five Rivers Project Area will become one of a network of national sites for long term ecological monitoring across Australia.

In coming newsletters we hope to explore, in depth, the exciting and important Five Rivers Reserve – the TLC's thirteenth permanent reserve.

We have had great support already in the journey to acquire and preserve The Big Punchbowl, a wetland oasis on Tasmania's east coast. Identified through our reserve selection criteria, this precious parcel of land is a vibrant mix of wetlands, reed beds, heathland, saltmarsh communities and woodland species. We hope that by the middle of next year we will be able to share good news about its protection as a permanent TLC reserve.

The stewardship and monitoring partnership

The partnership between the TLC and the Tasmanian state government to deliver the Protected Areas on Private Land Program (PAPL), was strengthened during 2013-14 with a new three-year contract to help deliver stewardship and monitoring functions. Under this new agreement, staff from the TLC and Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) are working together to link conservation covenant landholders around the state with the program through the provision of land management and stewardship advice, ecological monitoring, education and on-going support. We

are most grateful to our Tasmanian state government partners for their commitment.

Since taking effect in March 2014, our conservation officers, James and Anna, have provided 21 landholders with stewardship services and 13 properties have been reassessed and landholders provided with crucial information on the status and health of their reserve. Several landholders have also participated in the use of remote sensing cameras on their properties as a part of the expanded ecological monitoring program. This has been an exciting new development aimed at engaging landholders in monitoring, as well as providing them with a snapshot of their native and exotic fauna and how best to prioritise their management.

Long-term ecological monitoring

A major achievement of the Science and Planning team this year has been the development of TLC's long-term ecological monitoring program and the commencement of its rollout across our reserve system. The ecological monitoring program brings together a four-tiered approach to capturing the health of the TLC's reserved lands and tracking their status as they change over time. It incorporates photo-monitoring of vegetation structure and floristic diversity, surveillance monitoring of fauna, the use of GIS software to identify shifts in community boundaries, and an annual reserve inspection as an early warning system for emerging threats. So far we have established 140 photo-monitoring sites and 56 fauna surveillance sites on the Five Rivers, Long Point and



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Five Rivers Reserve. *Photographer: Matthew Newton*
Detail of The Big Punchbowl Reserve. *Photographer: Matthew Newton*

Silver Peppermint reserves, and collected the first year of monitoring data. In addition we have completed 12 months of monitoring at Silver Peppermint Reserve after it was severely burnt during the 2013 summer bushfires, and established monitoring of cattle and fire impacts on the Vale of Belvoir Reserve. The value of this ecological monitoring program will become increasingly evident as our reserves change over time through drought, flood, fire and climate change and we adapt our management accordingly. It will give us the basic yet vital health report that all land managers need.

Five Rivers Bush Blitz 2014

In February, the TLC's Five Rivers Reserve and neighbouring Tasmanian Aboriginal land, Gowan Brae, went under the microscope when over thirty scientists, staff and volunteers from around Australia spent ten days gathering information about poorly known plant and animal groups. Bush Blitz 2014 was coordinated by the Australian Biological Resources Study through Environment Australia and was enthusiastically supported by ten BHP Billiton volunteers coordinated by Earth Watch Australia. This amazing event enabled an impressive amount of scientific information to be collected on lesser known species. Although samples are still being processed, we already know that over 20 species of land snails were found by Dr Kevin Bonham from the University of Tasmania. Professor Gerry Cassis from the University of New South Wales amassed a huge collection of Heteropteran bugs and Dr Robert Raven, from the Queensland

Museum, collected at least one species of terrestrial spider new to science.

The TLC's contribution to this program was to set motion sensor cameras, including six sites where Tasmanian devils displayed the fatal facial tumor disease. The prevalence of feral cats at 14 sites highlights the need for more intensive data on cat populations to enable the development and implementation of a cat management plan. This information has already been included in the Five Rivers Management and Monitoring Plan. Never before has the TLC been able to compile such a comprehensive natural inventory on one of its reserves in such a short time. Our sincere thanks go to everyone involved.

Reserve Services

Fire management

The past year has been the first full year of a consistent approach to managing the whole of the TLC land estate. For the Reserves team, it has been a time of skill development, plan implementation, training and testing of equipment.

Throughout the winter of 2013 we reviewed our requirements for managing over 30,000 hectares of native vegetation. The review identified issues relating to our capacity to deal with fire threats, weed control, and access management, in particular. The reserve team addressed this in several ways, including training in wildfire suppression, purchasing specialised equipment and the creation of an organisational Fire Policy and Fire Action Plan. This proved timely as a wildfire on the

Pine Tier property meant we could assist the Tasmania Fire Service by putting into practice our action plan and training.

Weed control

This year we have successfully implemented a variety of weed control projects across several reserves, particularly in the central highlands, where there has been a significant reduction in ragwort. Working with a private landowner to implement the Bruny Island pine control project is another great achievement. This project saw the treatment of approximately 80,000 pine wildlings within a native forest context, and follow up to this project will occur over the next four years and beyond. The motivation for this project is to protect the native vegetation from further degradation and provide better quality habitat for a range of threatened species, including the forty-spotted pardalote.

Our efforts have been well supported by volunteers and will continue during the 2014/15 summer. Volunteer working bees were held at Marakooa and Liffey with funding assistance from NRM North. At the Long Point, Lutregala Marsh and Egg Islands reserves our efforts were again supported by more volunteers with funding from Landcare Tasmania. Spanish heath removal at Underwood was carried out by a group of ten Telstra volunteers. Thank you to all of our tireless, energetic and enthusiastic reserve volunteers.



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Detail: Bone and flower fields, Skullbone Plains 2014 by Richard Wastell. Photographer: Matthew Newton
Artist Megan Walsh. Photographer: Matthew Newton

Fundraising & Engagement

One of the most powerful ways to achieve conservation is collectively, as a community. We have continued to have the terrific support of many, many people giving what they can towards our science and community based work. We thank them all so very much. This year we have also engaged with many new supporters and communities through a range of conservation-driven initiatives.

The Skullbone Experiment

The Skullbone Experiment, an innovative project exploring the link between art and nature, raised the profile of the TLC and our critical conservation work. The Skullbone Experiment's nineteen artworks exhibited for eight weeks at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, with more than 17,000 people viewing the exhibition in Launceston. It is now on display at UNSW Galleries, Sydney from July to 30 August 2014. A documentary about the project will screen on ABC 1 later this year. We again thank the Purves Environmental Fund and the Purryburry Trust for their generous support.

Camera monitoring

Donations from the public this year enabled our conservation scientists to progress our long-term ecological monitoring program. We have detected new species such as the long-nosed potoroo, Tasmanian bettong and spotted-tail quoll on the Five Rivers Reserve, and tracked healthy Tasmanian devils in the recently burnt

Silver Peppermint forests. This science-based work is an empowering way for individuals to make a contribution to preserving biodiversity across the reserves. Photographic data from monitoring sites is critical for our conservation scientists to make informed, science based decisions about protecting these precious places, forever.

Field days

One small way of thanking supporters for the important part they play in protecting Tasmania's precious places is through TLC trips to permanent reserves – just like the Gordonvale and Five Rivers reserves protected this year. Ninety TLC enthusiasts came to the Vale of Belvoir wildflower field day with interpretation by valued volunteers Sib, Keith and Christine Corbett, and bat expert Lisa Cawthen.

There will be more field days on TLC reserves this year as the weather warms over spring and summer, so please keep an eye out for information about upcoming events.

Spreading the word

TLC staff and volunteers spread awareness of our work at Sustainable Living Festivals in Hobart in November 2013 and Melbourne in February 2014, with craft activities for children highlighting the importance of protecting our threatened species. Many new people joined the TLC family through these events.

Our fabulous volunteers

TLC volunteers continue to help us keep our costs down and provide valuable

expertise across all sections of our organisation, helping us in the areas of science, planning, reserve management, governance, fundraising and administration. They gave 899 days of their time, both on and off reserves, equivalent to \$215,760 worth of paid work. We are enormously grateful for this incredible contribution.

Conservation Business

New Leaf

Now in its fifth year, the New Leaf Project continues to progress with all three core elements of the business plan coming to fruition. Over 11,000 hectares have been secured as the Five Rivers Reserve supported with an endowment fund for the reserve's long term, effective conservation management. The New Leaf Carbon Project has successfully monetised its first "vintage" (or year) of credits, with a second vintage approved. Property sales have continued in line with the market. However these sales continue to repay the generous loans of the Elsie Cameron Foundation that supports the New Leaf Project.

Revolving conservation funds

The Australian Government's Forest Conservation Fund – Revolving Fund (FCF-RF) continues to provide a major contribution to conservation through the Tasmanian real estate market place. Several other TLC operated revolving funds have also continued to achieve strong conservation outcomes this year.

Carbon

Three years in the making, the TLC has successfully monetised the New Leaf



2013-14 in review cont...

Images from the Five Rivers Reserve captured by the Nature Photographers of Tasmania.
Photographer: Grant Dixon. Photographer: Arwen Dyer

Carbon Project. This is a huge achievement for the TLC in positioning the organisation to be part of national and international carbon markets by 2015. Over 12,000 hectares of land have been assessed using the internationally recognised Verified Carbon Standard, abating approximately 36,000 tonnes of CO₂ annually. The TLC has negotiated and sold the first 2011 vintage of credits to Virgin Australia, and is working towards an ongoing partnership. This project highlights the TLC's approach to using market-based instruments and business principles, informed by science, to achieve biodiversity conservation.

Midlandscapes

Midlandscapes is a long-term conservation action plan for the Tasmanian Midlands that the TLC, Bush Heritage Australia, DPIWWE and Midlands farmers have been working on together since 2007. The main objective is to work with a range of stakeholders, to protect, manage and restore more than 64,000 hectares of the key conservation assets in the Tasmanian Midlands.

To date approximately 30,500 hectares of these key assets have been protected, predominantly under conservation covenants.

Central to the Midlandscapes plan is the need to protect the critically endangered lowland native grasslands of Tasmania and the grassy woodlands and wetlands associated with them. These are unique features of the Tasmanian Midlands ecosystems, and have proved more difficult to protect under covenants because of their lowland proximity to more productive

farmland and greater management risks.

Midlands Conservation Fund

The Midlands Conservation Fund (MCF) was established by the TLC and Bush Heritage to overcome these problems.

\$3.3 million has been raised for the MCF to date from private sources and the fund is managed as an endowment. Earnings from the MCF are used to support conservation agreements with farmers which can be continuously rolled over every five years, and farmers are paid an annual stewardship fee.

The MCF supports ten conservation agreements that were established in 2013. In June 2014, TLC and Bush Heritage staff, along with the participating farmers, completed the first round of annual monitoring and reporting.

MCF conservation agreements protect 2,636 hectares of high priority conservation assets which include:

- Approximately 1,100 hectares of nationally threatened lowland native grasslands
- 24 hectares of state listed threatened wetlands
- 16 hectares of RFA (Regional Forest Agreement) listed threatened forest communities
- 1,337 hectares of under-reserved grassy woodlands
- Multiple known site records for 46 state and nationally listed threatened plant species (source: Natural Values Atlas).

We thank our landowning partners for their contribution to managing their land with care for its natural values.

Financial sustainability

It is critical for the TLC to be financially sustainable long into the future. This year we have made significant progress towards achieving that goal with the establishment of the Five Rivers Endowment Fund for the effective conservation management in perpetuity of the TLC's newly established Five Rivers Reserve. New funds have also been established within the TLC Foundation thanks to the generosity of our many, many wonderful supporters.

Governance and Partnerships

We could not finish highlighting our biodiversity conservation work over the past year without acknowledging our volunteer Board and subcommittee members who give countless hours steering the organisation on our path towards achieving our vision of Tasmania becoming a global leader in nature conservation and sustainability. Thank you to you all.

We also have many important partners helping with biodiversity conservation projects and activities across Tasmania. From national partnerships to state and local partnerships, from programs to projects to activities, we are so very grateful to all of our partners who make our work so much more enjoyable and without whom we could not achieve a fraction of what we do together to protect our irreplaceable sites, threatened species habitats and rare ecosystems.



Back page briefs

New life following the 2013 fire at the Silver Peppermint Reserve. *Photographer: Matthew Newton*
Visitors to the Vale of Belvoir on our wildflower weekend in February 2014. *Photographer: Matthew Newton*

Regular giving

Thanks to people like you, we've been able to protect endangered ecosystems across Tasmania through our network of protected natural areas. Regular monthly donations enable us to plan ahead and make strategic decisions for the future. The steady income they provide funds high priority conservation science and management work on our reserves.

Adrian Dale and Allegra Biggs Dale are valued supporters of the TLC who give monthly. Allegra recently explained their motivations for becoming TLC regular donors:

Adrian and I, having travelled, explored and lived in diverse corners of our world, have a deep appreciation for our planet's environment and value the importance of maintaining its diversity.

To make a monthly contribution to the Tasmanian Land Conservancy provides a platform to ensure important areas in our state are secured, protected and managed for the proliferation of flora and fauna and their future.

The Tasmanian Land Conservancy has demonstrated their commitment to this end with a team of dedicated professionals who work tirelessly toward their objectives.

Our decision to contribute was a simple one having watched TLC from inception over ten years ago, with nothing but a few dollars in their account and six committed volunteers who had a dream.

Today, the TLC team continues to dream big and realize their objectives on our behalf. They create awareness about Tasmania's natural values, provide folk hands on opportunities, educate and provide inspiration to many as they demonstrate effectively how optimism and hard work will always eventuate in reality.

We thank them, each and every one!

To support our ongoing science and conservation management work by giving monthly, please call us on (03) 6225 1399 or go to www.tasland.org.au/donations/regular-giving-program-form

Volunteer news

As the sun emerges and the ground thaws, we have started planning our spring activities.

We will be seeking volunteers to help us with reserve-based projects from September through to December.

Tasks will include the installation of monitoring sites, weed surveys and control, and rehabilitation of disturbed areas.

For more information about volunteering or for information about our volunteer survey, please call us on (03) 6225 1399 or go to www.tasland.org.au/about/volunteering

Bruny Island Bird Festival

The Bruny Island Bird Festival is on again from 23 - 26 October. This year, the TLC's Dr Sally Bryant will guide a survey to Partridge Island looking at forty-spotted pardalotes. According to Sally, the white gums are all healthy with great canopy cover, and there are birds calling everywhere!

The survey will take place on 24 October. Participants can travel to Partridge Island, just off Labillardiere Peninsula, in the amphibious craft Aquila to assist in the surveying of forty-spotted pardalote colonies on the island. For more information go to www.bien.org.au

Erratum

In Newsletter 41, we stated that the Australasian Bittern migrates each summer to feed in the waters of Moulting Lagoon. In fact, this is not accurate and thanks to a knowledgeable and alert supporter we wish to correct that error. According to *The Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds* Vol 1, "Movements probably sedentary in permanent habitat but possibly regular short-distance movements during winter and occasional irruptions associated with wet years."

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

