EDITION TWO | SUMMER 2021

LAND FOR WILDLIFE News

TASMANIAN LAND CONSERVANCY

TASLAND.ORG.AU

Photo: Chris Crerar

Welcome to our wetlands-themed summer newsletter.

It's been a wetter year than usual for most areas around the state, thanks to La Niña, and many Land for Wildlife properties have enlarged wetland areas, providing summer havens for aquatic species. Frogs are loving it! Hopping marsupials, reptiles and insects – but also rabbits and rodents – are taking advantage of the good year to produce numerous offspring. Conservation on private land is important in providing safe water courses, and in turn, helping the native species persist in these times of increased biomass.

This newsletter gives some tips on enhancing wet areas, be they ponds or saltmarshes, as well as advice on setting up a wildlife camera to catch a glimpse of the nocturnal inhabitants.

A big thanks to all who responded to the UTAS survey late last year, with a brief analysis later in the newsletter. With the program still in the transition phase, these insights are really valuable in helping us reimagine the scheme to provide effective and meaningful support to your conservation efforts.

Thank you again for looking after the ecosystems on your private land, providing resources and refuges for our unique Tassie species, many of which exist nowhere else in the universe!

— SHAUN THURSTANS,
LAND FOR WILDLIFE CO-ORDINATOR

Wetlands and waterways

Nature lovers know the value of water. Even though many animals extract the moisture they need from what they eat, when water is freely available it's constantly used for drinking, bathing and socialising and during drought or extreme heat, reduces stress and is a life saver.

Providing water also makes a richer wildlife experience for you. Research has found that having a river or creek line on a farm site, for example, results in a 20 per cent increase in the diversity of woodland-dependent birds that visit the site.

Offering a range of water sources on your property is ideal because it reduces the energy wildlife expend finding it. By varying depth and heights, you will attract different creatures. A water bowl raised ~ 1m above ground is an ideal stop-over for most birds but cannot be reached by reptiles and small mammals, so placing shallow bowls on the ground is equally important.

A small pond fringed by vegetation offers multiple access points for different species in rotation and becomes permanent habitat for frogs. The small murky dam on TLC's Tinderbox Hills Reserve, hardly noticeable as you're walking by, is a constant hum of activity and attracts masses of birds from a one to two-kilometre distance.

If you have a pond or dam, you might want to plant semi-aquatic vegetation around it to provide shelter for thirsty critters. Telling the difference between native and invasive bullrushes in Tasmania can be tricky though. Cumbungi (*Typha latifolia*) is a weed (introduced from the northern hemisphere), while broadleaf cumbungi (*T. orientalis*) and narrowleaf cumbungi (*T. domingensis*) are native to Tasmania. The introduced cumbungi can be distinguished by the colour and size of the flower head. The female (or lower and cylindrical) part of the flower head is blackish-brown in colour, 100-200 mm long and 15-30 mm in diameter. The female flower head of broadleaf cumbungi is chestnut-brown, 100-200 mm long and 15-25 mm in diameter and that of narrowleaf cumbungi is cinnamon-brown, 120-300 mm long and 6-15 mm in diameter. See dpipwe.tas.gov.au/invasive-species for more info and have a chat with your local native nursery for more advice on which species of bullrush and other aquatic plants best suit your area.

***SAL'S TIP:* Old satellite dishes make great water bowls for birds and reptiles.**

Lutregala Marsh Reserve. *Photo: Andy Townsend*

Coastal saltmarshes

Coastal saltmarsh wetlands are unique habitats where salt-tolerant plants such as succulents, herbs, grasses and low shrubs grow. Coastal saltmarsh is generally tidal and inundated regularly or occasionally. It is habitat for crabs, snails, insects, spiders and fish. Saltmarshes connect terrestrial and marine environments and are an important filter for surface water run-off.

Coastal saltmarsh wetlands are found in a narrow margin around Tasmania, in 'low energy' and shallow, sheltered intertidal zones. They occupy the shallow upper intertidal areas below the high tide mark and extend inland to areas flooded by storm tides.

Living Wetlands is a superb online resource for identifying and recording species found on Tasmania's saltmarsh wetlands. Visit livingwetlands.com for more information about wetland plants, birds and threats.

Half of Tasmania's saltmarsh wetlands have already been lost or degraded, mostly due to land-use changes. Climate change and sea-level rise are bringing more threats. If your property contains saltmarsh, or is near one, you can help conserve this important habitat. Watch for fertiliser or other chemical run-off; if you have livestock, keep them off fragile vegetation; and avoid clearing vegetation along the boundary of the saltmarsh.

One of the major risks to saltmarsh vegetation is introduced weeds, particularly rice grass (*Spartina anglica*). This large, erect perennial grass grows 30-130 cm tall. Its green or greyish-green leaves (10-45 cm long) are long and narrow with flat or in-rolled edges. If you believe rice grass is on your property, get in touch with your local NRM authority for advice.

The Tasmanian Land Conservancy is working on a project with the Cradle Coast Authority to protect threatened coastal saltmarsh on private properties, including some Land for Wildlife properties. If you own land with coastal saltmarsh in the Cradle Coast NRM region and are interested in protecting it with a nature conservation covenant, contact Helen Morgan hmorgan@tasland.org.au

Bringing in bats

Tasmania has eight species of bats, all microbats. While we are occasionally visited by the larger fruit-eating grey-headed flying foxes, Tasmania's resident bats are tiny and live on a diet of insects.

Like so many animals, bats love hollows in old trees, which they use for sheltering and breeding. (To learn more about finding, conserving and encouraging hollows, search for the article 'Hello Hollows' on the TLC website.) Because they're so tiny, though, bats can also roost in much smaller spaces – they can be found in fissures in tree trunks, and even under bark. They've also adapted to human habitat, roosting and even setting up maternal colonies in building roof cavities and inside walls (you can sometimes spot where bats live by the pile of bat guano at the entrance).

So how can you encourage bats? Like many species, bats prefer bigger areas of habitat so contiguous clusters of Land for Wildlife properties are great. If your own property is small, perhaps encourage your neighbours to conserve habitat on their land too. Hang on to any trees with hollows; if your property doesn't have any, you can build nest boxes to provide homes for bats (see our previous newsletter for more info on building boxes).

If you don't already have more insects than you want, you can plant bushes and trees to attract more. Your best resource for advice on insect-attracting vegetation for your region will be your local native plant nursery or understorey-network.org.au/municipalities.html. Finally, bats need a source of water – see page one for more on that.

If you want to know more about attracting bats, or identifying the ones you have, Lisa Cawthen's book *Tasmanian bats and their habitat* is invaluable. You can download it from fpa.tas.gov.au.

Lesser long-eared bat (*Nyctophilus geoffroyi*). *Photo: Lisa Cawthen*

Tasmanian bettong. *Photo: Matt Palmer*

Setting up a wildlife monitoring camera

If you got issue #1 of LFW News, which had advice on choosing a wildlife camera, you might now be wondering how best to use it. Here's a step-by-step guide.

You'll need a star picket, some fish oil (available from fishing shops), your camera and – for best results – a bracket (this is usually just a triangular offcut of wood that you can use to point your camera towards the ground; see the diagram for more details). Before you get started, read the manual for your camera or watch some YouTube videos to find out how best to set it up for what you want, be that stills, video, night or day shooting, and make sure it's ready to go.

1 Choose a monitoring site

Find a location on your property that is easily accessible, where the vegetation is fairly open and where there are signs of animal activity (such as a track or diggings). The forest edge, beside a dam or on a disused vehicle track can make a great location.

2 Identify a target area for the camera trap

Ideally the target area should be a patch of ground at least 3 metres across where there is little vegetation that can be buffeted by the wind (this can trigger the camera inadvertently). If possible, cut back any vegetation that might trigger the camera.

3 Install a star picket

Find a spot about 3 metres from the target area. Hammer the star picket into the ground ensuring the side of the picket with the holes points directly at the target area. Keep hammering until the picket is firmly embedded in the ground (0.5m) and the top of the picket is about level with your chest.

4 Mount the camera

Attach the camera to the wooden camera bracket using the strap. Make it as secure as possible. Use gaffer tape if necessary. Check that the bracket is tightly attached to the star picket. Secure the strap so that it can't wave around in the wind.

5 Lay the bait

Slosh about a measuring-cup of fish oil on the ground in the target area.

6 Turn the camera on

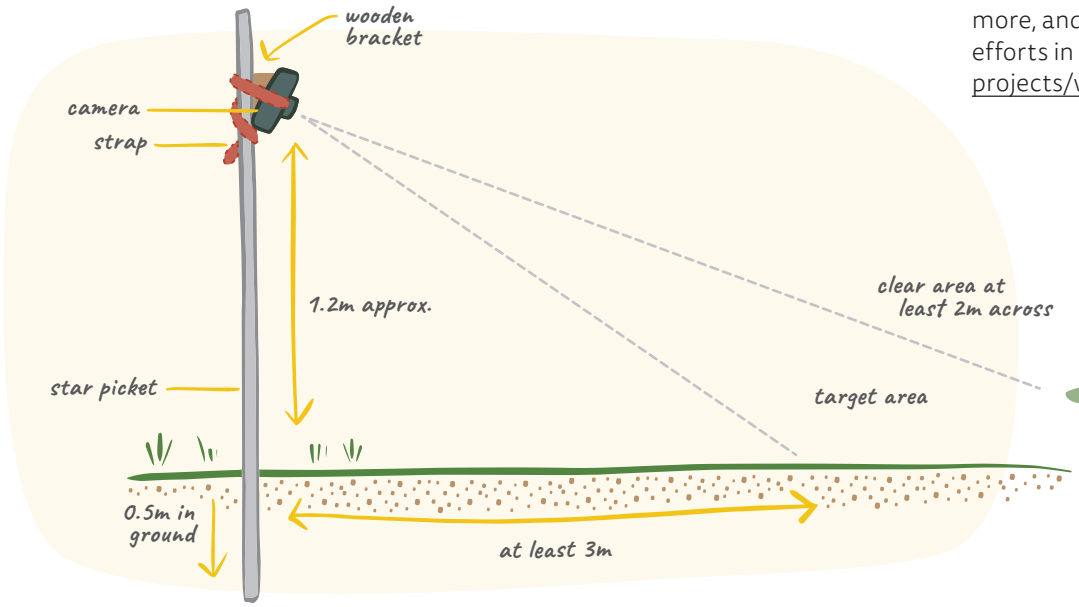
Open the case and move the power switch to the ON position.

7 Wait a few days, then check the camera

Open up the case, move the power switch to the OFF position then eject the SD card from the base of the camera (if you have a card viewer in your computer) or use a cable to attach the camera to your computer.

8 Join WildTracker!

The TLC's WildTracker is a citizen science ecosystem monitoring program, collecting data from wildlife cameras around Tasmania. Find out more, and help target conservation efforts in the state, at tasland.org.au/projects/wildtracker/



We produce a digital and a print version of this newsletter – are you getting the version you want? If not, let us know at landforwildlife@tasland.org.au

Tasmanian devil. *Photo: Heath Holden*

Results from the Land for Wildlife survey

More than 130 LFW landholders responded to an online survey late in 2020. Run by a University of Tasmania (UTAS) Masters student, Lykke Otzen, the survey investigated the potential for LFW properties to be recognised internationally as a legitimate category of biodiversity protection. The survey was also a great opportunity to gain insights into the motivations of LFW landholders and find out the types of conservation actions landholders planned on their properties. Most respondents indicated a desire to protect the biodiversity on their property, while there was strong interest in getting more guidance and assistance through the LFW program and being part of a community of like-minded landholders. Many landholders spoke about their plans for revegetation and fire management, and the importance of access to other conservation programs. We will be reviewing the survey results and using them to guide the kind of information and programs we provide to help you with your efforts to conserve nature on your land. Thank you to all who made the time to respond.

What's on

DEVIL FACIAL TUMOUR DISEASE MONITORING

In 2014, a new and independently evolved transmissible cancer (DFT2), was discovered in Tasmanian devils near Cygnet, in the Huon Valley. In 2021, researchers from the University of Tasmania are increasing monitoring surveys to find out the effects, distribution and prevalence of this disease so they can develop appropriate conservation strategies. Researchers are looking for land access and suitable properties to conduct monitoring surveys in areas of interest in the d'Entrecasteaux Channel and the Huon Valley, from Judbury to Leslie Vale. Surveys involve setting custom-made culvert pipe traps for 10 consecutive nights. If you are interested in participating in these monitoring surveys on your land, please email tasmanian.devil.surveys@utas.edu.au with your contact details, the area where you live and the size of your property.

LIVING WITH WILDLIFE, ABC RADIO

Every second Monday (starting 8 February), Dr Sally Bryant discusses 'living with wildlife' on ABC Radio Hobart's Your Afternoon program with Helen Shield. Tune in from 3-3.30 pm or listen online.

KEEP UP TO DATE WITH LFW

Keep up to date with LFW by following the Tasmanian Land Conservancy on social media:
facebook.com/taslandconservancy
instagram.com/tasland
twitter.com/Tas_Land
or subscribing to our newsletter:
tasland.org.au/subscribe-to-our-newsletter/

We want your land!

The TLC's Revolving Fund buys, protects (with a conservation covenant) and re-sells land to new owners keen to support conservation. We've already protected more than 6,000ha of natural ecosystems this way.

If you know of a property for sale that's more than 10 hectares, with threatened vegetation communities, threatened species or old-growth forest, email Jarrah, the Revolving Fund Coordinator, at jvercoe@tasland.org.au