

# AUTUMN 2018

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Barney Wards Lagoon, The Big Punchbowl Photo: Rob Blakers

**Longer days and warmer weather have provided perfect conditions for a range of activities to be carried out across our reserves over the last few months.**

In this issue we highlight some of the achievements made possible through our rigorous science and reserve management programs. To exemplify this we put one of our most distinguished reserves under the spotlight and share with you our latest findings from the Vale of Belvoir.

The newest addition to the TLC's network of reserves, Daisy Dell, was welcomed with some special attention during our latest ecological monitoring spree in February. The inclusion of Daisy Dell into our scientific database means that

all 18 of the TLC's permanent reserves are now being managed in accordance with our ongoing, robust and adaptive ecological monitoring techniques that I was most honored to showcase at the International Land Conservation Network's Global Congress in Santiago, Chile in January.

As many of you already know, I will be finishing my term as CEO this year. The TLC Board is undertaking a recruitment processes due to conclude in the second half of 2018. I feel so very privileged and proud to be part of such an extraordinary organisation for more than 16 years. I am excited for the future, knowing the TLC is in incredibly capable hands. With the passion and

commitment of our supporters, staff, volunteers and partners the TLC will continue go from strength to strength.

Thank you to everyone for making the TLC such a leading light for nature conservation in Tasmania, Australia and beyond. I will continue my personal support for the TLC through my monthly donations and bequest. I hope to be able to introduce you all to the TLC's next CEO very soon.

**Jane Hutchinson**

**Chief Executive Officer**

## HIGHLIGHTS



Striated pardalote (*P. striatus*). Photo: Peter Vaughan

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Many bird species are declining across Australia. Learn more about how you can safeguard them via the TLC's Bird Conservation Fund.



Risdon Peppermint (*Eucalyptus risdonii*). Photo: Matthew Newton

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Explore some of the remarkable conservation outcomes that have been made available through the TLC's Revolving Fund.



The Vale of Belvoir. Photo: Heath Holden

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We take a closer look at one of the most important places for nature conservation in Australia: TLC's Vale of Belvoir Reserve.



# BIRD CONSERVATION FUND

New Holland Honeyeaters (*Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*). Photo: Peter Vaughan

**They act as pollinators, help control pests, disperse seeds and encourage nature based tourism. We value them for their diversity and for their cultural, environmental and economic services – but what do we do for our birds?**

Tasmania has over 220 species of birds – including 12 species found nowhere else on Earth. Over 40 globally recognized sites of conservation significance are listed for birds within the state, incorporating areas protected by the TLC’s reserves. For instance, Panatana’s sheltered estuarine shores and forests accommodate an abundance of rare woodland birds. Meanwhile, Recherche Bay Reserve provides critical habitat year after year for a pair of white-bellied sea eagles, in addition to endangered grey goshawks and masked owls, who use the area for nesting, roosting and feeding.

To survive in such diverse habitats around the world, bird species have evolved into an outstanding variation of forms. It is not surprising then that birds are no less assorted in character and function than they are in distribution. In Tasmania, a high percentage of endemic species and sub-species have even adapted to fill the ecological niches left vacant from birds that don’t reach our shores. Yet with most birds in Tasmania found close to urban areas, it is easy to forget how precious their presence truly is and just how easy it is to disturb.

Tasmania’s beaches have been receiving unprecedented visitation in recent months - yet we haven’t been the only one’s struggling to find a spot on the sand. Our shorebirds are increasingly having to compete for a place to nest

and breed over the summer months, and yet finding space is just the beginning. Eggs are often so well camouflaged that they are barely visible to the untrained eye, and with every misplaced step, curious dog or deviating four-wheel drive comes the risk of destroying a bird’s entire breeding season. This is critical when taking into consideration the role Tasmania plays as a sanctuary for so many species. For example, the state is home to 50 per cent of the world’s sooty oystercatchers, pied oystercatchers, and hooded plovers – making it a place of monumental significance for them in their fight against extinction.

The presence and patterns of birds in the environment has long helped inform our understanding of the landscape. However, despite their remarkable adaptive abilities, a harsh reality lies in that many bird species have been unable to evolve quickly enough to contend with the rapid changes brought about by human activities. As a result, bird species globally are plummeting.

The TLC protects critical bird habitat via the establishment of reserves such as Egg Islands, Long Point, Lutregala Marsh, and The Big Punchbowl. However, reserves alone will not protect biodiversity, and targeted land management continually needs to be adapted and implemented. The Tasmanian Land Conservancy’s Bird Conservation Fund combines evidence-based research and ecological monitoring with direct management actions ensuring effective and long-term conservation of our birds for generations to come.

Already, the TLC’s Bird Conservation

Fund has helped pioneer innovative, scientifically robust, repeatable and cost-effective monitoring programs that will soon include acoustic monitoring. This type of specialised monitoring will help us collect more widespread data from some of our most isolated reserves and from our more cryptic bird species. The Fund will also help facilitate applied scientific research via an annual \$5,000 postgraduate scholarship, focusing on critical knowledge gaps in bird conservation across Tasmania. A University of Tasmania masters student has already been identified for this year’s project, and will be investigating the conservation of wedge-tailed eagles on private land within the state.

In the age of the Anthropocene, value is intrinsically and almost exclusively tied to economic value – a quantifiable utility to human beings. Yet we have taken so much from our birds, and our ability to do this should bear with it a mutual responsibility to protect them. Thanks to the generosity of so many supporters, we have raised over \$83,000 for our Bird Conservation Fund. However, with \$500,000 needed to ensure our birds are given the best chance of survival, we are a long way from our target.

Pledge your support for our birds by donating to our Bird Conservation Fund today – together we can safeguard our feathered friends into the future.

**GIVE** .....

*Please join us to safeguard our unique birds by making a donation at [tasland.org.au](http://tasland.org.au)*

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# REVOLVING FUND

Risdon Peppermint (*Eucalyptus risdonii*). Photo: Matthew Newton

## BLUEMANS RUN SUCCESS

**The TLC's Revolving Fund is pleased to announce that the final land title for the Bluemans Run property has now sold!**

The 1460 hectare east coast property hosts eight threatened vegetation communities and comprises critical habitat for a diversity of fauna, including some of our most beloved birds: the endangered wedge-tailed eagle, swift parrot and masked owl.

The TLC purchased Bluemans Run in 2014 and split the property into nine titles. These properties have been identified by the TLC's Science and Planning team as having highly significant natural values and were purchased to enable the TLC to register conservation covenants on the properties to ensure natural values are protected now and into the future.

By placing conservation covenants upon land with high ecological value before selling it on, the TLC's Revolving Fund allows people to own their own piece of paradise while making a significant contribution to nature conservation. Accordingly, one or more areas are excluded from the covenant conditions so that inside of these generously proportioned zones purchasers are able to build their dream home, plant vegetables or keep animals.

The TLC's Revolving Fund staff would like to thank the volunteers on the TLC property committee, as well as staff at the Department of Primary Industry, Parks, Water and Environment – without your ongoing support we would not have nine fantastic new conservation landholders.

## FOR SALE: RISDON PEPPERMINT

**Down a quiet country road adjoining an existing private reserve lies Risdon Peppermint – a 31 hectare forest and woodland sanctuary offering quintessential rural living only 20 minutes from Hobart's CBD.**

As per all Forest Conservation Fund Revolving Fund properties, the land holds significant conservation values, including an outlying population of its namesake: the rare Risdon Peppermint. A small area of vulnerable Tasmanian blue gum forest can also be found on the property; in addition to habitat for several threatened fauna species – including the swift parrot and eastern barred bandicoot.

Positioned between Dromedary and Bridgewater, Risdon Peppermint provides spectacular views of the Derwent River, Mt Dromedary and surrounding forested ridges. Although a conservation covenant has been placed upon the property to protect its ecological values, two areas are excluded to allow for potential development by future owners.

Four dams and two small sheds would also benefit any recreational or small-scale agricultural or pastoral pursuits.

Several vehicular tracks also provide good access to boundaries and have potential use as fire-breaks.

To find out more about the Revolving Fund, or arrange an inspection, contact Janine Waldron (0409 429 660) or Leigh Walters (0407 891 025).



TLC CEO Jane Hutchinson. Photo: Matthew Newton

## ILCN GLOBAL CONGRESS

**The TLC's excellence in private protected area management was showcased at the International Land Conservation Network's (ILCN) Global Congress in Santiago, Chile in January.**

TLC CEO Jane Hutchinson joined land conservationists from around the world, and spoke about the development of the Australian Land Conservation Alliance – of which TLC is an integral part – alongside Trust for Nature Victoria CEO Victoria Marles.

The duo discussed the simple, cost effective and scientifically robust long term ecological monitoring program installed across TLC's entire reserve estate, and how it can be easily scaled and tied to an environmental accounting methodology that can track the change in condition over time. They also spoke about the link between this and an innovative conservation finance mechanism currently under development.

The conversation built upon the momentum, collaborations, and relationships that have emerged over the past several years surrounding a range of topics focused on how congress attendees may take specific actions in their home countries to advance private land conservation. The challenges and opportunities ahead for private land conservation were also addressed.

Inspired by the beautiful Chilean landscape, the Congress also included a field trip that featured several important Chilean conservation stories, allowing hosts to share their successes and participants to build relationships in an informal atmosphere.



# RESERVE IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Vale of Belvoir wetlands. Photo: Andy Townsend

**Tucked behind Tasmania’s renowned Cradle Mountain lies a lesser known icon, a hidden gem and ecological triumph: The Vale of Belvoir.**

Encapsulated by ancient myrtle rainforest and towering eucalyptus, the exposed terrain of The Vale lies starkly contrasted beside its neighbouring forest communities. Yet the landscape’s richness isn’t to be underestimated, as it runs far beyond the grasslands that carpet the valley’s floor.

With a comprehensive system of limestone caves forming underground streams and sinkholes, The Vale is the only subalpine valley of its kind in the state. Although similar valleys once existed, a warming climate has since caused lower altitude valleys to fill with poor quality peat and replace grasslands with buttongrass plains and forests. However at an altitude of 800mtrs, The Vale’s high elevation and cold climate has protected it from peat build-up, resulting in fertile soils fuelling an ecosystem abundant with life.

Native grasslands are a threatened ecological community in Tasmania due to land clearing and grazing. Therefore, it seems almost paradoxical that the Vale’s long history of cattle grazing has at times been a supporting factor in maintaining the reserve’s overall health and stability. Yet this is because for grasslands to be prevented from transitioning into forest, disturbances are in fact necessary – making occurrences like grazing or fire crucial for habitat sustainability. Subsequently, following the reserve’s acquisition by the TLC in 2008, cattle have continued to graze under a lease arrangement with

the previous owners while associated effects on biodiversity values are determined.

The karsts, grasslands, wetlands, and forests of the Vale of Belvoir collectively form unique foundations to house a variety of exceptional fauna. The shy ground parrot and threatened tussock skink are just some of the grassland specialist that thrive within the open valley itself, while many other animals seek refuge in the reserves forest fringes when not looking for food. For instance, spotted tailed quolls and Tasmanian devils benefit significantly from The Vales proximity between landscapes, with the reserve hosting one of the highest populations of marsupial carnivores in the world.

The Vale of Belvoir is widely recognised a one of the most important places for nature conservation in Australia, and the TLC thanks you for your support that allows us to monitor, manage and maintain its significance for generations to come.

## BENEFITS OF ECOLOGICAL BURNING

**After years of developing an expert fire management strategy and securing all the necessary permits, the Vale of Belvoir is now riding off the success of its third successful ecological burn, carried out in October 2017.**

Historically, The Vale has relied on disturbances such as cattle grazing to prevent the invasion and replacement of its grasslands by sedges, rushes,



TLC Reserves Officer Tim Devereux conducting an ecological burn at the Vale of Belvoir. Photo: Heath Holden.

shrubs and trees. Now, four years of ecological monitoring is helping shed new light on how alternate management techniques like burning can be tailored to benefit the reserves wetlands, which are susceptible to damage through grazing.

To maintain and enhance biodiversity values, ecological burns are required frequently enough to prevent species that are capable of vegetative recovery from forming dense stands, while also being planned with acute consideration for the needs of grassland creatures that call the reserve home.

Getting this balance right is critical for maintaining grassland diversity, and is something the TLC has had great success with, courtesy of expert planning and monitoring. For example, The Vale hosts one of the largest and most secure populations of the nationally endangered Ptunnara brown butterfly (*Oreixenica ptunnara*) that nest only in the Poa tussock grasslands of Tasmania. Prior to the TLC’s research, disturbance to the Ptunnara brown butterfly was largely unknown. Now, monitoring is revealing that butterflies remain present in the burnt areas in numbers that appear comparable to pre-burn populations, with management able to be adapted accordingly.

## EXPLORE

To watch a short video about our latest ecological burn visit <http://tasland.org.au/reserves/vale-of-belvoir-reserve/>

# ON THE RESERVES



Volunteer Rikke Jorgensen helps to detect changes at the Vale of Belvoir by documenting the landscape from a fixed photo point. Photo: Phill Roach



TLC Reserves Officer Tim Devereux. Photo: Chris Crerar

## **A flurry of activity across the TLC's reserves has resulted in some unique unions forming outstanding outcomes for nature conservation in recent months.**

Dedicated volunteer teams have contributed a phenomenal 450 plus days of work removing invasive weeds from the TLC's beautiful Five Rivers Reserve and New Leaf properties over the past six summers.

Under the guidance of Reserve's Manager Denna Kingdom and Reserves Officer Tim Devereux, this year's cohort of contributors again worked tirelessly to reach impressive conservation milestones while getting to enjoy the benefits associated with experiencing some of our protected areas up close.

"It was our biggest year ever in terms of people on the ground – 27 people put in 149 days of work over seven days, working across 16,000 hectares of the TLC's land," Denna said, adding that this was the shortest amount of time ever taken to complete the planned work, making it one of the most successful trips to date.

"We've definitely noticed a decrease in the populations of weeds over time, and we'll be collating and analysing the data collected to assess the impact that we're having on the health of the landscape," she said.

For the staff and volunteers involved, this year's trips were significant on a personal level too. Hearing the individual stories shared by our volunteers is just another part of what makes nurturing our stunning protected areas so much fun. From die-hard naturalists to unlikely

conservationists – the diversity and passion of our volunteer community always ensures lasting memories are made.

Tasmanian deer hunter Ricky Markham has been traipsing and gaming the Highlands for 40 years, and has even helped to manage fallow deer on the TLC's New Leaf properties. The beautiful highlands landscape has gifted him so many incredible experiences, and his desire to sustain the land continues through ongoing volunteering.

"I've seen the positive impact of the weeding over the years and I've watched the bush regenerate since the TLC took over stewardship. I love this place and I'm proud to do my bit," Ricky said.

In addition to our annual weeding adventure, a string of ecological monitoring trips have also run concurrently across the Highlands. Monitoring kicked off at Daisy Dell Reserve, before our fifth year of intensive data collection got underway at the Vale of Belvoir and Five Rivers Reserves. These trips were complimented by the unwavering support and presence of Dr Jane Keble-Williams, Dr Peter McQuillan, and passionate and skilled members from the Central North Field Naturalists club.

Impressively, the combined effort of so many dedicated specialists enabled us to initiate invertebrate monitoring on at Daisy Dell and the Vale of Belvoir. Invertebrates make up a remarkable 97 per cent of all animal species, and gaining a more

comprehensive snapshot of the reserve's minute marvels will assist us in maintaining the overall health and functionality of the ecosystems into the future.

The inclusion of recently-protected Daisy Dell into our ecological monitoring database means that all 18 of the TLC's permanent reserves are now being adaptively managed based on reliable information gathered from flora surveys and remote wildlife cameras. Prolonged ecological monitoring of this kind – particularly in Tasmania's humble highland habitat – is unprecedented, and is enabling phenomenal insight into some of the most susceptible ecosystems on the planet to climate change. It is also providing us with early warning signs of any invasive threats, so that we can act quickly and efficiently in preserving a reserves habitat. For example, information from our most recent monitoring at the Vale of Belvoir is helping us prepare a Feral Animal Management Plan so we can reduce populations of cats, deer, rabbits and European wasps.

Collecting data, reporting findings and incorporating adaptive management techniques (such ecological burning or pest control) into our reserve management keeps the TLC at the top of the game, but we couldn't do it without the help of so many committed supporters. Accordingly, we thank all our supporters for the various ways in which they allow us to better manage the reserves and landscapes we seek to protect.

While collecting data has been a job complimented by warmer weather and longer days, analysing the data is a task best carried out during the quieter and colder months – and we look forward to reporting our findings from all our activities later in the year.



# WHAT'S ON

One of many creatures that call Daisy Dell home. Photo: Heath Holden

## DEVIL EXHIBITION

A short film featuring th TLC's Five Rivers Reserve is now showing at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery's exhibition The Remarkable Tasmanian Devil. The film - produced by Crows Nest Media - details TLC's Carnivore Monitoring Project, which saw dozens of volunteers work alongside our scientists to install 46 camera traps within the Five Rivers Reserve, where devils have been monitored for the last four years. The film will run until May 6 2018. Admission is free.

## SOAPBOX BILLBOARDS

Soapbox billboard installations aim to give a voice to Hobart by showcasing local writers and artists from the community. The new installations present a collaboration between nine poets and nine painters who visited the TLC's Big Punchbowl Reserve, and ensure that we city dwellers are reminded of our unique relationship with nature. Keep an eye out for the billboards, located at Mathers Place in Criterion Lane; on the rear wall of the State Library; and the side of the Playhouse Theatre.

## CONSERVATION FORUM

Staff from the TLC and conservation landholders will share insights into effective ways of buying and selling conservation land at a Conservation Landholders Tasmania forum on Thursday May 17 at The Grange, Campbell Town.

Selling conservation land: preserving the legacy we have created, is the topic that has been requested by CLT members who are looking ahead and wondering how best they can ensure that the conservation values of their properties are upheld into the future.

For more information visit: <http://www.clt.asn.au/>

## GIVE

The TLC's Bird Conservation Fund combines evidence-based research and ecological monitoring with direct management actions to ensure effective and long-term conservation of our birds for generations to come. Please join us to safeguard our unique birds by making a donation at [TASLAND.ORG.AU/](http://TASLAND.ORG.AU/)



Volunteers at the Vale of Belvoir reserve. Photo: Matthew Newton

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