



TASMANIAN
LAND
CONSERVANCY

SPRING 2019

NL 59



Swift parrot (*Lathamus discolor*). Photo: Andrew Browne

The protection of important places like Little Swanport is one of the great joys of being part of the Tasmanian Land Conservancy (TLC). On behalf of all of us at the TLC, I would like to sincerely thank everyone who contributed to the success of this campaign! Thanks to the generosity of so many, Little Swanport becomes the TLC's newest reserve, protecting over 150 hectares of critical swift parrot habitat as well as hosting other unique species.

As we celebrate this latest reserve acquisition, we reflect on another community-driven conservation win. This year marks ten years since the beginning of our bold and ambitious

management program at the TLC's Egg Islands Reserve. Read on to hear how the TLC, through its community of dedicated volunteers and staff, has tackled a once extensive infestation of Spanish heath.

The TLC team has also been busy at work in the Central Highlands through the winter months in response to last summer's fires. Our dedicated staff, along with some incredibly committed volunteers, battled the elements in sleet and snow to install a series of exclusion fences to protect one of our most iconic species, the cider gum, as the Five Rivers Reserve recovers after recent fires.

Our conservation programs continue to achieve great outcomes across the state; with Land for Wildlife, the Protected Areas Partnership with the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and the Environment, the Forest Conservation Fund Revolving Fund and Midlands Conservation Fund all demonstrating the incredible contribution that private landholders make to the conservation of Tasmania's unique natural values.

James Hattam
Chief Executive Officer

HIGHLIGHTS



Native cranberry (*Astroloma humifusum*). Photo: Andy Townsend

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Applause to the hundreds of supporters who enabled the protection of 150 ha of swift parrot habitat at Little Swanport, on Tasmania's east coast.



Weeding on Egg Islands. Photo: Phill Laroche

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We celebrate ten years controlling Spanish heath on the Egg Islands Reserve and thank the volunteers who've been part of this successful weeding program.



Installing fences at Five Rivers. Photo: Heath Holden

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At Five Rivers Reserve, cider gum seedlings are emerging following the summer fires, and we've been installing exclusion fences to manage grazing pressure.



LITTLE SWANPORT

Little Swanport Reserve. Photo: Rob Blakers



Common wombat (*Vombatus ursinus*). Photo: Andy Townsend

At a time when the environment is under increasing pressure, it is a salve to be able to announce the success of the campaign to protect 150 ha at Little Swanport.

Hundreds of people have generously contributed to this campaign since its launch in May 2018, enabling the TLC to secure the property. We extend heartfelt thanks to everyone who has supported the protection of Little Swanport, from our long-term donors to ticket buyers at Dark Mofo! We couldn't have done it without you!

The Little Swanport Reserve now safeguards three threatened forest communities, including old-growth blue gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*) forest which is essential for providing the critically endangered swift parrot (*Lathamus discolor*) with food, shelter and breeding hollows.

There is also a diversity of micro habitats on the property, including: open grassland with dense sedge cover, scattered fallen timber and heaped wood piles, light open forest, steep wooded gullies with rock piles, scree slopes and overhangs, various watering points, and around 1.2 km of river frontage.

Collectively, this rich mosaic provides an excellent food, shelter, breeding and nesting resource for most of Tasmania's small mammals, from the Tasmanian devil (*Sarcophilus harrisi*), Tasmanian bettong (*Bettongia gaimardi*), eastern quoll (*Dasyurus viverrinus*) and eastern barred bandicoot (*Perameles gunnii*), to the elusive spotted quail thrush (*Cinlosoma punctatum*) and a large complement of woodland birds, reptiles, and amphibian and invertebrate species.

However, buying the land, is only the first step. That's why our fundraising target of \$750,000 included a contribution to the TLC Foundation, in addition to the contracted sale price. Through the Foundation endowment, we can guarantee ongoing funding (generated by interest earned) to manage the important values at Little Swanport, in perpetuity. Ecological monitoring sites have been established across the property and our staff will be collecting data to inform management of the reserve.

The TLC's Science and Planning Team is putting the final touches on the Little Swanport Management Plan, and the first reserve management activities will be to map and treat priority weeds, and to remove derelict fences from bygone farming days on the property. In late September, the first working bee at Little Swanport Reserve will take place, when TLC staff and volunteers remove internal fences to facilitate the movement of wildlife across the property.

A conservation covenant under the *Nature Conservation Act 2002* will now be registered over the property, stipulating that the land will be managed for its natural values. A survey for Aboriginal cultural sites is also planned.

More information on the values of the property can be found at tasland.org.au/reserves/little-swanport-reserve in the Little Swanport Reserve Background Report.

LAND FOR WILDLIFE

In February this year, the TLC began delivering the popular Land for Wildlife (LFW) Program in partnership with the Tasmanian Government's Private Land Conservation Program. As the point of contact for new LFW inquiries, the TLC's involvement includes undertaking ecological assessments of new properties. The program's steady progress continues, with 36 new conservation properties registered, protecting over 600 ha of native habitat.

Some important natural values occur on these newly-listed properties, including:

- Swift parrot habitat in the Huon, on Bruny and at Little Swanport
- Giant freshwater crayfish (*Astacopsis gouldi*) habitat near Lilydale
- Over 25 species of orchids on a property near Scamander.

A stream of expressions of interest in LFW has been received and a crack team of TLC staff has travelled the state, meeting landholders and identifying important conservation values.

Private landholders own and manage some significant areas, including critical habitat that is under-represented on public land. Land for Wildlife has enormous potential to foster a community of conservation landholders and the TLC looks forward to continuing to build this great program!

Matt Taylor
Conservation Ecologist

ACT

To find out more about Land for Wildlife, visit tasland.org.au/programs/land-for-wildlife/



REGULAR GIVING

The TLC's Long Point Reserve. Photo: Heath Holden

We did it! The last donation needed to purchase and protect an irreplaceable part of Tasmania's east coast has been secured, and after celebrating with the local community and supporters who gave generously to protect Little Swanport, we start to plan for our next acquisition.

But while the focus of the TLC's fundraising is so often on the purchase and protection of new conservation properties, there are ongoing costs that underpin our business and such essentials are fundamental for us to achieve our conservation targets.

Think insurance, rent and wages. Phones and phone bills. Vehicles and fuel. Computers and costs for IT. Printers and paperclips. Staff wages.

These are the everyday costs of running a for-purpose organisation and such expenses underpin our ability to operate strategically and effectively. Without a physical workplace, it would be very difficult to do business or to nourish the TLC's culture. Without insurance, reporting and administration, we wouldn't comply with regulatory bodies. Without investing in our staff to build capacity, we'd fall short on reaching our ambitious conservation goals. Without good governance, we wouldn't manage risk, be held to account by our board, or deliver our mission as effectively as possible. And all these elements have related expenses.

That's why we want to specially acknowledge the TLC's regular donors. There are around 200 supporters who have pledged an ongoing gift,

every month (or in some cases, every fortnight) to our General Fund. Their steadfast and dependable generosity helps us pay for our ordinary, everyday expenses, and this enables us to focus on other conservation goals.

Donations received from Tim could train up more helpful office volunteers, Patricia's monthly support may go towards a new photocopier for the Launceston office, and Alison's pledge could be directed to train a staff member with a gap in their skills.

From researching new properties for our suite of reserves to program planning, and from investing in new technologies to preparing board reports, this everyday work underpins our success, now and into the future.

Our regular donors are individuals, families and businesses from around Tasmania, and interstate, and they contribute a reliable and steady stream of donations. Not only are they providing consistent and accessible resources now, but they also pledge support for the future, helping us plan for the months and years ahead.

'The TLC's Regular Giving Program helps pay our day-to-day running costs, while also providing security to plan for the future.'

– James Hattam, TLC CEO and regular donor

Thank you so much to all our regular donors who help us achieve great things for nature conservation in Tasmania! Your support buoys our everyday activities, every day.

If you're interested in setting up a regular gift to the TLC, please visit our website. Though the intention is to make a long-term commitment to our work, your regular gift can be terminated or downsized at any time, if your circumstances change.

Some employers support workplace giving, by enabling a pre-tax gift to be made through payroll. This way, you can enjoy the tax benefit from your generosity in every pay period. Contact our office for more information.

GIVE

Please join the TLC's Regular Giving Program by signing up for a monthly gift via tasland.org.au/donate-monthly/

HIGH DISTINCTION

Congratulations to Erin Harris, the first recipient of the TLC's Bird Conservation Fund Research Scholarship, for receiving the highest result across all the Geography and Spatial Sciences Masters students at the University of Tasmania's recent mid-semester ceremony. Erin's thesis considered the effectiveness of conservation covenants in enhancing the breeding activity of eagles on private land in Tasmania.

Well done Erin, and thanks to everyone who has supported the TLC's Bird Conservation Fund.



ON THE RESERVES

Denna Kingdom briefs a volunteer weeding team on the Egg Islands Reserve. Photo: Rob Blakers

Carol Hurst weeding on Egg Islands. Photo: Phill Laroche

The soft chatter of the endangered swift parrot is often heard overhead, as you traverse the sodden terrain of TLC's Egg Islands Reserve.

The forest provides critical foraging and nesting habitat for 87 native bird species including the endangered swift parrot, grey goshawk (*Accipiter novaehollandiae*) and Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle (*Aquila audax fleayi*) while surrounding vegetation offers refuge for the endangered Australasian bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*).

In addition to protecting susceptible fauna, pockets of endangered black gum (*Eucalyptus ovata*) swamp forest the last of its kind in the state's south east stand defiant among the reserve's mosaic of wetland and saline grassland communities.

The islands are home to one of the largest stands of black gum woodland in Tasmania. In July, this type of woodland was listed by the Australian Government as a critically endangered ecological community.

Through the generosity of our supporters, the TLC was able to purchase Egg Islands in 2007. For ten years now, our volunteers have worked tirelessly in an effort to eradicate Spanish heath (*Erica lusitanica*) from a five-hectare site on north Egg Island. When this population of weeds was first located in 2008, two-metre tall Spanish heath plants stretched as far as you could see with more than 100,000 individual plants estimated in the population.

The ground underneath was bare, with the heath plants outcompeting everything, and slowly spreading.

Several groups of International Student Volunteers pioneered the initial control method: using sheer bodily force to push over the towering heath plants and pull them from the moist ground. Six weeks of labour by groups of ten people over three years finally saw the removal of the last of those monster plants and then came the challenge of preventing them from re-establishing.

Each year since, groups of the TLC's volunteers have spent four to six days weeding on the island, meticulously combing through the increasingly dense native vegetation for Spanish heath seedlings that are often only five centimetres tall. In 2018, only 1,838 individual plants were found over four days of weeding, and even fewer are likely this year, so the effort is paying off.

After an astounding 700 days of labour by nearly 300 individual volunteers, we now have 100% native ground cover, including lots of black gum saplings, which will become a permanent source of food for swift parrots.

**Denna Kingdom
Reserve Manager**

EXPLORE.....

Read about Egg Islands Reserve at tasland.org.au/reserves/egg-islands-reserve

TLC PEOPLE

Each newsletter we like to introduce someone who is part of the TLC community – perhaps a reserve neighbour, volunteer, donor or a staff member.

Carol Hurst was among the first wave of supporters to establish a regular monthly gift with the TLC back in 2007, and she's been a supporter ever since! Carol also founded the Cathy Gibbons Fund, which sits within the TLC Foundation to honour her late mother (see tasland.org.au/cathy-gibbons-fund). Just recently, Carol joined the Land for Wildlife Program and she's also been out weeding Egg Islands Reserve. Carol is one of over 200 Natural Guardians who have confirmed a gift in their will to the TLC.

“With most people living in cities and towns, it is easy to forget that each one of us is an animal of nature. We think of nature as ‘other’ something to be utilised or appreciated from a place afar. While we have divorced ourselves from being in harmony with nature, for me, the TLC represents and acknowledges that we can still be custodians, promoting biodiversity and ecological balance. It is an astonishing feat that the TLC has continued to manage and establish new areas for nature conservation since it began in 2001. I am humbled and heartened to be one of the many contributors to this accomplishment.”

– Carol Hurst

Thank you Carol for your enduring and multi-dimensional support!



CIDER GUM RECOVERY

Volunteers David Butler and Wally Hermann erecting exclosures to protect regenerating cider gums from hungry herbivores. Photo: Heath Holden

The cider gum is a true Tasmanian. Like a hardy Tasmanian schoolchild refusing to change from shorts to long pants in the middle of winter, this endemic eucalypt is specially adapted to living in cold and wet conditions. Its sap has a very high sugar content, which acts as a natural antifreeze. This enables the tree to endure the frosty and often waterlogged margins of highland marshes on the Central Plateau which are uninhabitable to less specialised species. The sap also gives the species its name: it was once tapped and fermented into a cider-like drink by Tasmanian Aboriginal people and early European settlers.

Unfortunately for the cider gum (*Eucalyptus gunnii*), its impressive and highly specialised adaptations leave it vulnerable to a changing climate. A preference for wet feet means it has a very low drought tolerance, and adaptations to cold and frosty conditions also leave it vulnerable to heat stress in a warming and drying climate. The sugary sap makes it a delicious source of energy for insects and animals, and high levels of herbivory contribute to the dieback of stressed or damaged stands. The Miena cider gum subspecies (*Eucalyptus gunnii* subsp *divaricata*) is listed as endangered under state and federal legislation, following widespread dieback across its range.

Approximately 5,000 ha of the TLC's Five Rivers Reserve was affected by the 2019 bushfires. Across much of the reserve, the fire was patchy and relatively low intensity, often not reaching the canopy and skirting around marshes and grasslands. Encouraging

signs of regrowth and regeneration were already apparent during our post-fire surveys in April and May. However, in the south-eastern corner of the reserve, near Bellevue Tier, the fire was much hotter and burned right through the Top Marshes, which support fringing stands of the endangered Miena cider gum.

Our post-fire surveys showed that although many of the older, mature cider gums had been killed by the fire, many of the younger trees and saplings were starting to resprout. There were also intact seed capsules on some of the fallen and burned mature trees, suggesting that new seedlings may be able to germinate in the nutrient-rich ash. Unfortunately, these surveys also indicated that any tasty young cider gum regeneration is being eaten faster than it can grow.

To give the cider gums the best chance of recovery, TLC staff and volunteers have been braving the wintery weather to cage some of the young regrowth. Despite flurries of snow, drizzle and occasional Antarctic winds, approximately half of the 50 cages have already been installed and the rest will be completed in the coming weeks. These cages will allow the regrowth to survive its most vulnerable (and tasty!) young stages, without constant browsing by herbivores.

For more images on the cider gum fencing, and a map of the extent and severity of the summer fires, see tasland.org.au/blog/from-the-field-cider-gum-recovery.

Rowena Hamer
Conservation Ecologist

ALCA CONFERENCE

'Rising to the Challenge'- that's the theme of the 2019 Private Land Conservation Conference, to be held in Adelaide from 8-10 October. Delivered by the Australian Land Conservation Alliance (ALCA), the event will be hosted by Nature Foundation SA.

Each year, the national conference gathers more momentum, as does ALCA itself.

As a founding member, back in 2011, the TLC (along with various other private land conservation organisations) saw the need for a national voice to promote private land conservation. ALCA's mission is to ensure that private land conservation communities make the greatest possible contribution to the achievement of local, national and international nature conservation goals.

The annual conference provides a forum for conservation professionals, landholders, government, business and the community to share information, ideas, successes and challenges on private land conservation.

In 2019, presenters and delegates are asked to consider how we can work smarter and faster together to make a significant, positive and enduring difference to nature conservation.

Four TLC staff members will give presentations in Adelaide to add our voices to the mix.

ACT
Find out more about ALCA and the Private Land Conservation Conference at alca.org.au/
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WHAT'S ON

Panatana Reserve. Photo: Heath Holden

SAVE THE DATE: NATURAL GUARDIANS ANNUAL RESERVE VISIT

Saturday 19 October

This year the Natural Guardians Reserve trip will take us to the north of the state to explore the rich diversity of Rubicon Sanctuary (gifted in 2018) and the sheltered estuarine shores of the TLC's Panatana Reserve (protected in 2016).

Detailed invitations will be sent to our Natural Guardians community. Find out more about the Natural Guardians program and watch the new clip at tasland.org.au/bequests-to-the-tlc.

SAVE THE DATE: TLC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Sunday 24 November 2:30pm – 4:00pm

Following the general business meeting we invite you to join us to learn more about the TLC's nature conservation efforts.

More information closer to the date.

SAVE THE DATE: TLC END OF YEAR BBQ 2019

Thursday 12 December 12:30pm – 4:30pm

Pop this one in your diary and join us at our Hobart office to celebrate 2019 and the holiday season.

More information closer to the date.



Banksia (*Banksia marginata*). Photo: Chris Crerar

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**Chief Executive Officer
James Hattam**

