

SPRING 2018

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Course twine rush (*Ampodasmia brownii*) at Little Swanport. Photo: Andy Townsend

The cooler months for many are a quiet time, but here at the Tasmanian Land Conservancy (TLC) our team has remained incredibly active, continuing to achieve outstanding successes across the state as we ramp up for the field seasons ahead.

Our Little Swanport campaign continues to gather momentum, with generous donations received from near and far to protect this landscape's critical habitats. Thanks to those who have donated, we are now well on the way to securing our next reserve.

We are also thrilled to announce an extension to The Big Punchbowl

Reserve. With the generous support of a few key supporters, the TLC has acquired an additional 75 hectares of land adjoining the existing reserve.

One of our longest running and most successful programs, the Revolving Fund, continues to achieve lasting conservation outcomes across the state, with four properties sold over the last three months. Inspiring stories highlighting the commitment of individuals to secure their own private reserve can be read in this edition.

Looking after nature is fundamental to the TLC's conservation efforts and we would like to express

enormous gratitude for our dedicated volunteers who haven't let the winter season deter them. They have continued to achieve inspiring results controlling Spanish heath on the Egg Islands Reserve.

Lastly, I look forward to seeing many of you at our Annual General Meeting in November or at our end of year BBQ in December.

James Hattam
Chief Executive Officer

HIGHLIGHTS



River frontage of nearly 1.5 kilometres secures a unique ecotone for freshwater and estuarine species at Little Swanport. Photo: Andy Townsend

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Discover how close we are to securing our next permanent reserve at Little Swanport.



One of many TLC Revolving Fund properties for sale. Photo: Matthew Newton

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Explore the remarkable conservation successes that have occurred through the TLC's Revolving Fund.



Volunteers at Egg Islands Reserve. Photo: Rob Blakers

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We celebrate our volunteers who have helped achieve nine consecutive years of weeding at Egg Islands Reserve.

LITTLE SWANPORT

Aquatic and terrestrial habitats meet at Little Swanport. Photo: Rob Blakers

It's a grim assessment: scientists predict the swift parrot (*Lathamus discolor*) is destined for extinction within 15 years unless habitat is immediately protected.

Like so many other critically endangered species, the swift parrot's precarious status can be directly attributed to human impacts. Old-growth blue gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*) provides vital life-support for the bird yet extensive land clearing in Tasmania following European settlement has resulted in only half of the now threatened forest community to remain, while collision with human made structures and other anthropogenic changes continue to threaten the swift parrot's chance of survival.

Amidst devastating accounts of habitat loss, the TLC's current conservation campaign property at Little Swanport on the state's east coast offers 150 hectares of critical swift parrot habitat. The property's purchase and protection as a reserve will not only permanently secure prime swift parrot breeding and foraging habitat, but will also aid other declining woodland birds and mammals – including Tasmanian devils (*Sarcophilus harrisii*) which can be found thriving in Little Swanport's woodland terrain along with eastern quolls (*Dasyurus viverrinus*), bettongs (*Bettongia gaimardi*), and spotted quail thrush (*Cinclosoma punctatum*).

In a world of diminishing naturalness, Tasmania is receiving burgeoning interest across a variety of boutique industries that are overwhelmingly

driven by the state's plethora of rich and unique nature-based opportunities. Located on the Great Eastern Drive between the conservation icons of Wineglass Bay and Maria Island, Little Swanport epitomises the type of critical landscapes that are passed through while exploring Tasmania and that impact upon our experiences and understandings of the natural world.

Someone with a special understanding of the Little Swanport landscape is Mercia Bresnehan, whose family has lived and worked in the region for generations. From sharing insights into the nearby Muirlands homestead that was once the Little Swanport coach station and post office, to accounts of a neighbouring property once surveyed to become a large township, Mercia's knowledge of the land stems from a childhood rich in outdoor activity.

"Growing up, Little Swanport was part of our broader playground," she said, adding that it made for memorable times spent camping, bushwalking and fishing for bream along the much-loved Little Swanport River.

Mercia's stories of Little Swanport add to what makes the landscape special and go hand-in-hand with what science is telling us: there is still so much to learn about the unique Little Swanport property. Yet as a keen bird watcher, Mercia expressed her growing concern for the surrounding landscape.

"Much of the land around Little Swanport has now been cleared for farming or logging," she said.



Swift parrot (*Lathamus discolor*). Photo: Chris Tzaros

As a long-time supporter of the TLC, Mercia was heartened to discover the TLC's efforts to protect land at Little Swanport while reading the previous edition of our newsletter and we thank her immensely for her generous donation.

"I have a deep connection to that part of the east coast and recognise its importance; for its stands of blue gums, plants, animals, so I was thrilled to see the TLC's campaign to protect Little Swanport," Mercia Bresnehan

Little Swanport is a vital conservation success story in the making. Securing the property will provide an important ecological link within a coastal fringe of private and public land and help to prevent further fragmentation of critical habitat that underpins the area's biodiversity significance.

So far, our campaign to purchase and protect Little Swanport has raised an impressive \$450,000. However, we need \$750,000 to ensure that this incredible landscape is looked after in perpetuity.

Will you help to protect this high priority landscape by donating to Little Swanport?

GIVE

Please join us to protect Little Swanport by making a donation via tasland.org.au

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REVOLVING FUND

Janice and Rolf decided to buy from the Revolving Fund to protect rapidly disappearing dry woodland and open grassy forest. Photo: supplied by Janice and Rolf



Eastern quoll (*Dasyurus viverrinus*). Photo: Craig Riddington

For those with a passion for conservation and for nurturing their own piece of paradise, the dream of one day owning land rich in natural values and protecting it is as good as it gets. For wildlife biologists Janice May and Rolf Lindholm, moving to Tasmania after 20 years living in Africa was just the start of their conservation journey to realise this dream.

Janice and Rolf had long decided that once they retired they would purchase land of conservation value in Tasmania and protect it somehow. Yet when the time came, both were at a loss as to what steps they would need to take.

“Although both of us are biologists, we have spent most of our working life in Africa and therefore had very little knowledge of the Tasmanian landscape and conservation priorities,” they said.

It wasn’t until the pair became aware of covenanted bushland properties for sale through the TLC’s Forest Conservation Fund Revolving Fund that things began to take shape.

“We slowly weaned ourselves off Africa, spending six months of the year there, the other six months adjusting to the Australian way of life,” they said.

The TLC gave Janice and Rolf an overview of Revolving Fund properties, which centred on purchasing and protecting under-reserved landscapes – a factor which suited them just fine.

“We are drawn to open woodlands and grassy plains with large vistas, reminiscent of the savanna,” they said.

By buying land with high ecological value and covenanting it before selling it on, the TLC is able to protect a property’s natural values forever.

Although excitement was initially high, it wasn’t always smooth sailing for Janice and Rolf, who made many trips to camp and explore land, “suffered the real estate agents”, and became hooked on various properties before having offers fall through.

With momentum dwindling, Janice and Rolf began to suspect they might never reach their goal, until the TLC notified them of property near Swansea that appeared on the market.

“The real estate agent told us that as far as he was concerned there was only one lot suitable for us, approximately 200 hectares take it or leave it [but] we didn’t want to buy an isolated block, surrounded by unprotected land,” they recalled.

Fortunately, the TLC discovered that the landowner was wanting to sell a much larger area of the property, situated inland of Great Oyster Bay on the foothills of the Eastern Tiers.

“We put it to the TLC to see if a better conservation outcome would be achieved if the TLC bought one lot to provide landscape connectivity,” they said, adding that conservation covenants and state reserves existed on neighbouring land.

The allure of gently undulating dry woodland and pockets of old-growth forest compelled the TLC to negotiate with the landowner about purchasing the land. Consequently, the TLC

committed to buy all that was on offer - 1600 hectares - if Rolf and Janice were prepared to purchase a larger area than was originally considered.

“Put your money on the table, we were told. We did!” they said.

“Two weeks later the landowner had accepted the TLC offer and in another three weeks we had signed a contract with the TLC for approximately 700 hectares,” they said.

Years have passed since Janice and Rolf embarked on their conservation journey, and they now have a home for themselves and a diversity of threatened species.

“Of the hundreds of properties the estate agents bombarded us with it was hard to judge their natural values. The TLC’s advice was invaluable. It was very important to us that the protected land was of a size to prosper and provide viable habitat for plants and animals. We live on the land and we see ourselves as caretakers. Over time we will get to visit more and more areas, in more seasons and discover and map the less obvious species and possibly learn what, if any, interventions are needed to promote the greatest biodiversity.”

Janice and Rolf acknowledge and dearly thank Jim Mulcahy, the TLC’s Conservation Programs Officer at the time, who “guided us in our land search, taught us about significant natural values and dragged us back on the path when we lost momentum.”

The TLC’s Revolving Fund is supported by the Australian Government’s Forest Conservation Fund, the King Island Natural Resource Management Group, and the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment.



RUBICON SANCTUARY

Phil Collier and Robin Garnett. Photo: Phill Roach

Mountain Bluebell (*Wahlenbergia saxicola*). Photo: Andy Townsend

Unassumingly positioned beside a main road and surrounded by farmland, the plant-rich oasis of Rubicon exemplifies one of the many forms nature conservation can take when passion and persistence pay off.

A decade ago Phil Collier and Robin Garnett were the first to invest in TLC’s Revolving Fund when they purchased Rubicon Sanctuary, then called Dorothy Reeves Reserve. What followed set a remarkable example of backyard nature conservation globally. Now, after years of dedication, Phil and Robin have moved to care for ageing parents in England and have made the exceptionally powerful decision to act on what was already in their will and gift their beloved Rubicon back to the TLC.

Despite departing Tasmania, Robin and Phil’s legacy to the state’s ecological landscape will continue through their decision to gift Rubicon to the TLC, with their generosity exemplifying their profound understanding of nature conservation.

“Rubicon’s biological assets are much more important than its financial value, and we are confident that TLC has the expertise to care for these,” Robin said.

Robin and Phil have maintained Rubicon in accordance with covenant arrangements by securing boundaries, creating firebreaks, mowing management tracks and carrying out ecological burns. Impressively, the pair have also created one of Tasmania’s biodiversity hotspots, with 50 different orchid species found in

18 hectares of coastal bush, including one orchid species found nowhere else on earth: the marsh leek orchid (*Prasophyllum limnetes*). Robin and Phil have also documented numerous other species and set an unprecedented example of how Revolving Fund property purchasers can embark on a long-term relationship of information sharing with the TLC.

All gifts of land to the TLC undergo a rigorous screening process to ensure the TLC can look after the property’s natural values. Rubicon is unique in that it was first highlighted by the TLC for its significant values, of which Robin and Phil have only added to.

“Robin and Phil epitomise the commitment and dedication of landholders working to protect some of the most ecologically important sites for Tasmania’s unique plants and animals,” James Hattam, TLC CEO

We can’t thank Robin and Phil enough for their incredible gift to the TLC and look forward to discovering new opportunities that best conserve and showcase Rubicon’s ecological value. For now, the TLC’s Reserve Manager Denna Kingdom, and Conservation Ecologist Rowena Hamer are working alongside Robin and Phil to ensure the best ecological outcomes are reached.

EXPLORE

To explore all our Revolving Fund properties for sale, visit tasland.org.au/properties-for-sale/

NATURAL GUARDIANS

Supporters joined TLC staff, board members and experts in the financial field at the TLC’s third annual bequest information evening to learn more about this effective and enduring way to give.

The event took place at Launceston’s Design Centre, where topics discussed included; why bequests are critical to the operations of the organisation into the future, what happens when we receive a bequest, the TLC Foundation and JBWere’s role in managing investments within the TLC Foundation (including ethical investment) and an overview of philanthropy and giving trends in Australia.

Unless otherwise specified, bequests received currently help grow the TLC Foundation – an endowment fund which uses its capital to ensure the reliable coverage of the TLC’s annual reserve management costs, in perpetuity. The generous contributions made by many (including those with the foresight to leave a bequest) have meant that since its inception in 2009, the TLC Foundation has grown to reach over \$11 million, which currently covers 70 percent of our reserve management.

Thank you to those who joined us in Launceston. If you would like further information on our bequest program, or how you can contribute to the Foundation in your lifetime, please contact Sophie via smarshall@tasland.org.au or 0419 389 390.



Volunteers commute to the TLC's Egg Islands Reserve during the recent weeding trip. Photo: Rob Blakers

The Big Punchbowl Reserve. Photo: Rob Blakers

Human legacies linger amidst a thriving sanctuary for threatened plant and animal species at the TLC's Egg Islands Reserve, located midstream in the Huon River between Franklin and Cradoc.

Stretching nearly 10 kilometres long, the islands are characterised by wetlands and Eucalypt forest, which provide habitat for threatened bird species including the Australasian bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*), swift parrot (*Lathamus discolor*) and white-bellied sea eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*).

Parts of the islands were farmed for produce - including carrots and apple saplings - from the late 1800s to mid-1900s, with the ease of boat access a drawcard for the agricultural community whose primary mode of transport was water-based. During this time, it's likely that weeds were brought onto the farmed areas of the islands with machinery and, when island farming became economically unviable in the 1960s, these species rapidly spread throughout the disturbed areas.

TLC Reserves Manager Denna Kingdom has been working with volunteers to manage the weeds at the Egg Islands Reserve since its purchase in 2007, when the invasive species Spanish heath (*Erica lusitanica*) was first identified.

"In one area it was almost the only plant species that you could see. It grew in thickets so dense that it was difficult to see a few metres into the distance, and in many places was

around two metres tall. Luckily, it was limited to a five hectare area, but I left the islands feeling disheartened, thinking that controlling an area of weeds this dense would be nearly impossible," she recalled.

Ten years on, TLC has run volunteer weeding working bees annually, with more than 280 individuals contributing 700 days to the task. This exceptional persistence has resulted in amazing outcomes, with the density of Spanish heath now estimated to be at less than one percent of the density it was in 2007.

This winter, 19 dedicated volunteers have contributed 27 days of effort, with the entire five hectare area of weeds methodically searched twice.

"The average plant height now is only five centimetres tall - a strong indication that we're well on the way to eradicating this species on TLC's reserve for good," Denna explained.

"The native vegetation is responding well to the removal of the Spanish heath monoculture, too, with black gums, wattles and heathy shrubs all now far more common in the former weedy area than weeds. And the birds are seemingly appreciative of our work, with numerous species being observed foraging and heard calling on each of the volunteer working bees."

The TLC thanks our incredible volunteers for their outstanding efforts which have contributed actively to the lasting protection of the Egg Islands Reserve.

THE BIG PUNCHBOWL EXTENSION

The remarkable generosity of a select handful of individuals and innovators has enabled the TLC to extend The Big Punchbowl Reserve!

Donations from the International Living Future Institute, an anonymous donor, the David and Jennie Sutherland Foundation, and Joan Masterman have allowed the TLC to purchase 75 hectares of land to add to the existing reserve, meaning more plants and animals are now protected in perpetuity.

Located on the Freycinet Peninsula and dominated by a freshwater wetland adjacent to the internationally significant Moulting Lagoon Ramsar site, The Big Punchbowl was first protected by the TLC following a successful public fundraising campaign in 2015. During the reserve's initial acquisition an additional private property directly adjoining the wetland was highlighted as a significant area for protection to ensure the ecosystems overall values were maintained. Yet the landholder hadn't been in a position to sell the property, until now.

We can't thank those who donated to The Big Punchbowl extension enough for ensuring that the wetlands, coast and woodlands - which support species such as the Australasian bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*) and green and gold bell frog (*Litoria aurea*) - remain protected for generations to come.



WHAT'S ON

Volunteers methodically scouring for weeds at Egg Islands Reserve. Photo: Rob Blakers

SAVE THE DATE: TLC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Sunday 18 November 2018
2:30pm – 4:00pm

Following the general business meeting we invite you to join us to celebrate the tenth anniversary of our iconic Vale of Belvoir Reserve.

More information closer to the date.

SAVE THE DATE: TLC END OF YEAR CELEBRATION BBQ

Thursday 14 December 2018
1:00pm – 4:00pm

We're only three quarters of the way through but it's already been one almighty year for private land conservation in Tasmania! Join us when we get together in December to celebrate our collective achievements.

More information closer to the date.

TLC NEW DATABASE TRANSITION

As a supporter of the TLC, your commitment to nature conservation provides reliable ongoing support to protect Tasmania's unique native plants and animals.

To ensure that your generous donations go even further for conservation, the TLC is in the process of moving to a new and improved data management system.

Despite our best efforts to have a streamlined transition, we do apologise for any inconvenience that may have been experienced during this transition period.

We can't thank you enough for your steadfast support, and for your patience as we settle into our new system.



Endemic *Richea scoparia* at Skullbone Plains. Photo: Matthew Newton

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