



Photo: Heath Holden

## Reserves bursting with new life

A juvenile wedge-tailed eagle

### Issue 44 Autumn 2015

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### Jane Hutchinson

Chief Executive Officer

**T**hank you again for making 2014 such a successful year for conservation in Tasmania. Given the busy months of work carried out on our reserves recently we trust you are ready for another action-packed year in 2015!

Summer highlights include researchers at the Vale of Belvoir investigating the interaction between cattle grazing and fire on that magnificent highland grassland ecosystem, and two very successful weed control weeks at Silver Plains and Five Rivers reserves. This work has resulted in further removal of ragwort and other weeds. Supporter and research trips to The Big Punchbowl, adjacent to the Ramsar-listed wetland Moulting Lagoon, have led to some fascinating observations.

On a recent trip to The Big Punchbowl we saw a white-bellied sea eagle chick in a nest and are thrilled the nesting efforts of its parents paid off. The gorgeous juvenile wedge-tailed eagle above, snapped by photographer Heath Holden, was just one of several chicks spotted on our properties recently.

It has also been a time to reflect on the months ahead and our important work in partnership with landowners. That

work, through partnership programs such as Protected Areas on Private Land (PAPL), and the national award winning Midlands Conservation Fund, is critical in helping us achieve a world class reserve system complemented by sustainable development.

In our feature article, Conservation Officer James Hattam explains the importance of private land conservation and how landowners contribute enormously to protecting and valuing nature on their land. We hope support for private land conservation continues to grow. After all, the more people who are part of the journey to protect nature, the better.

In the coming months we will also be workshopping the TLC's future focus on achieving our vision of Tasmania being a global leader in nature conservation and sustainability. Thank you so much to everyone who responded to the supporter survey on that topic, it's been inspiring reading your comments and ideas. Read on for more detail about how you can be involved in helping us craft a strategic plan for the next five years. The sky is the limit!

Without our wonderful supporters and volunteers we could not carry out the critical work we do. We look forward to a great year ahead.





James Hattam in the field with private landowner Andrew Lohrey

Photo: Peter Troode

## Feature: Protecting Tasmania's private lands

### James Hattam

Conservation Officer

The words 'conservation' and 'Tasmania' typically conjure up visions of rugged southwest mountain ranges, intricate alpine tarns on the Central Plateau, the east coast's pristine beaches or ancient rainforests in the Blue Tier. Iconic national parks such as Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair, Southwest Wilderness World Heritage Area and Freycinet are often in the forefront of our minds when we think of such landscapes.

And yet many people are completely unaware of the vast array of protected areas on private land that often fill the gaps between these national parks and conservation areas, providing vital links within the landscape and supporting critical habitats for a range of flora and fauna species, some of which are found only on private land.

Proportionally Tasmania's private reserves contain five times more threatened vegetation communities than our public reserves system. With species decline and the acceleration of threatening processes continuing globally, the efforts of private landholders and the value of private reserves to achieve effective and efficient conservation outcomes remain crucial in reversing this decline and maintaining biodiversity throughout our landscape.

The Tasmanian Land Conservancy, in partnership with the Tasmanian State Government's Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE), has been involved in the Protected Areas on Private Land program



TLC's protected land at Silver Plains

Photo: Matthew Newton

(PAPL) since our inception in 2001. The program is one of the longest running private land conservation partnerships in Australia and has provided landholders with the legal mechanism to protect their special patch of bush in perpetuity.

Over the years we have worked side-by-side with the Tasmanian Government and dedicated landholders to register more than 250 voluntary conservation covenants under the Nature Conservation Act 2002. A number of other federally funded programs including the Private Forest Reserves Program, Forest Conservation Fund and Non-forest Vegetation Project have also helped in the creation of conservation covenants on private land across Tasmania.

The past year has seen a shift in our involvement in the Protected Areas on Private Land program partnership.

Alongside DPIPWE staff we now work with all covenant landholders across Tasmania to provide stewardship support and ecological monitoring services on their land. We help with day-to-day management of their reserves, providing technical advice as well as access to new technologies to help better understand these reserves and the flora and fauna that relies on them. The Protected Areas on Private Land program also links landholders with the broader conservation community through relationships with other organisations and relevant programs as well as community groups that foster a collaborative approach to protected area management.

As of December last year there were 760 conservation covenants registered in Tasmania, covering some 96,142 hectares





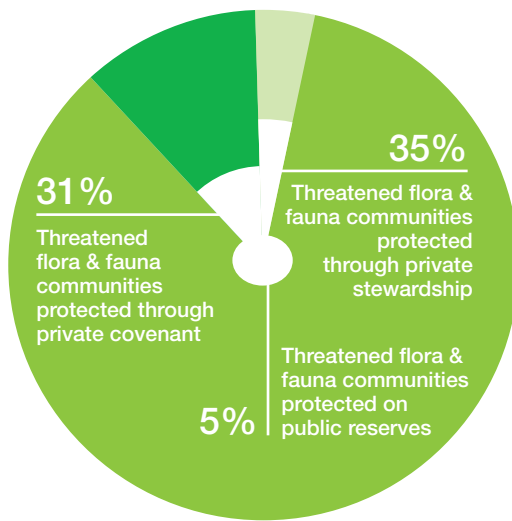
Photo: Matthew Newton

Private land conserved at Grass Tree Hill

(1.4% of Tasmania’s land mass), ranging from subalpine to coastal regions and involving around 500 individual landholders. Properties include active agricultural enterprises, eco-tourism operations, vineyards and wineries as well as rural lifestyle properties, all reflecting the diversity of the Tasmanian community. While the motivation to register a conservation covenant may vary between landholders, their commitment to ensuring the unique natural values of their properties are protected, now and for future generations, is shared.

As anyone who has worked on the PAPL program over the years will tell you, the passion and dedication of these landholders is evident from the moment they start talking about their properties. Whether it’s a conversation over a cup of tea in an historic homestead, or a quick browse of a map on the bonnet of a ute, our interactions with landholders reveal their intricate local knowledge and strong links to the history of Tasmania’s private land. Hearing stories of changes in Tasmanian devil numbers, shifts in the types of birds that frequent the forests, historic burning regimes and even cultural connections, emphasises the valuable information that can be lost between generations or as properties change hands. These stories are vital if we are to fully appreciate the worth of protected areas on private land and biodiversity conservation more broadly.

Once you enter a privately protected area it takes just a few minutes to gain an appreciation of the many natural values these special areas contain. Forests



- Land under private covenant
- Land under private stewardship
- Public reserves
- Threatened flora and fauna communities protected

In Tasmania, privately protected land covers a smaller area, but contains a higher percentage of threatened communities than public reserves.

dominated by old-growth eucalypts, with hollows of all shapes and sizes hosting animal life from migratory bird species to arboreal mammals would be the envy of any national park or conservation area in Australia. Many private reserves protect critical habitats for a range of threatened species, including the critically endangered forty-spotted pardalote and some of the lesser known species such as the Tasmanian giant freshwater lobster, which is listed as vulnerable in Tasmania.

With their origins dating back to the early 1880s in Europe the social, economic and environmental worth of protected areas on private land have long been known but not widely appreciated for the significant contribution they make to the global conservation effort. In

Tasmania the enthusiasm and appetite for conservation on private land has been significant and remains so today. While the tools of the trade may have changed since the program first started – from sketched mud maps and compasses to modern day GPS and remote-sensing technologies – the PAPL program, through the TLC and DPIPWE, continues to support and work with the dedicated Tasmanian landholders who are committed to ensuring that these sometimes forgotten special places are protected and given the recognition they deserve.

While iconic landscapes are recognisably valuable, the highly diverse ecosystems tucked away on private land are more difficult for the broader community to appreciate. Consider the stretch of the Tasman Highway between Swansea and Coles Bay on the east coast. Thousands of tourists and locals travel this route every year to experience and enjoy the natural attractions of the Freycinet Peninsula and surrounding environments. Many would have no idea that on either side of this small stretch of road are 30 individual private reserves managed by landholders to conserve the biodiversity of this iconic landscape. The PAPL program works to support the efforts of private landholders around Tasmania because without their commitment and dedication to the conservation of their property, effective conservation of Tasmania’s unique ecosystems would be unattainable.





Photo: Matthew Newton

Tree detail on Skullbone Plains

# A busy season on the reserves

## Leigh Walters

Reserves Services Manager

**W**e have had a great season for weed control and road maintenance. Spring kicked off with the team targeting Spanish heath at several northern properties. At the Flat Rock, Lutregala Marsh and Long Point reserves, and the Marakoopa Creek and Epping Forest Revolving Fund properties we have been treating a range of weeds including broom, blackberry, gorse and thistles.

We received a fantastic response from volunteers keen to work on the Central Highlands weeding project in January and enjoyed teaming up with supporters to reduce the weed threat across these properties. On a lighter note, we also spent a few hours around the fire enjoying good company and starry nights.

On another positive note we have obtained a further grant to support this project through to 2016 as part of the Australian Government's 25th anniversary Landcare grants. Financial support for our weeding efforts is always gratefully accepted.

Continued grant funding through Landcare Tasmania for gorse removal at Long Point, and support for small projects at the Silver Peppermint, Egg Island and Lutregala Marsh reserves will lead to enhanced biodiversity across all of these properties. Landcare Tasmania continues to be a fantastic supporter of TLC projects.

After many iterations, we have updated



Photo: Grant Dixon

Skullbone Plains

our Fire Policy and Fire Action Plan. We are confident that should one of our properties be impacted by fire, we have a sound plan in place to allow us to work with the Tasmania Fire Service to ensure the incident results in minimal impact.

Following a risk assessment and fire plan prioritisation of all TLC landholdings, we are now part of the Tasmanian Government-funded Red Hot Tips Planned Burning project. Our prioritisation process identified several properties that needed fire management for hazard reduction. We have carried out the initial site assessment of the highest priority property with a professional fire consultant, and are keen to gain more knowledge of how we implement the recommendations.

Being on the ground with a highly

trained and skilled individual has boosted our reserve management team's knowledge and confidence in successfully carrying out planned burns for hazard reduction or ecological purposes on our properties.

As the TLC's land holdings grow, so too do the number of people visiting our properties, so to facilitate the enjoyment and safety of our visitors we focus on managing access to our reserves. Road and track maintenance is one of our biggest annual expenses and we are continually revising how we approach this task, including closing unnecessary tracks in many areas. Should you be on a TLC reserve and come across anything out of the ordinary please don't hesitate to contact us – early detection of issues usually results in efficient and effective maintenance.





A flame robin extracts a meal (left) and a Tasmanian devil captured by a camera trap (above)

Photos: Heath Holden

## Volunteer Profile: Heath Holden

### Stephenie Cahalan

Communications Officer

Photographer Heath Holden has captured Tasmania's most iconic living marsupial in some unusual contexts. Be they devils peering up the trunks of tree ferns, or sunning themselves in an industrial estate, Heath's images offer us an unusual perspective on the habits of these beloved and desperately threatened native animals.

His photos have featured in the TLC's newsletters, on our website, social media pages and in our annual report. His photograph of a flame robin caught in a struggle for life and dinner with a worm conveys colour and incredibly dynamic movement; something that requires great skill in still photography.

When reserves officer Shane McHugh discovered wedge-tailed eagle nests with chicks in them on two TLC properties Heath hurried off in an effort to catch a glimpse, and hopefully a rare shot, of the juvenile bird.

Photos of young birds on our reserves are few and far between, and for good reason. We adhere to a strict policy of preventing anyone from going near an occupied nest in the breeding and rearing season. Accompanied by a reserve officer, Heath sat in still silence for

hours until the chick popped its head above the rim of the nest, giving him the split-second moment he needed to capture the bird's fluffy head and huge black eyes. The photos were taken from the permitted distance to prevent any nest disturbance.

Following the motto 'start with what you know', Heath learnt the art of photography by taking photos of his mates on their many bike adventures in Tassie's north-west where he grew up and across the world where his passion for travel has led him. Chasing bikes honed his technique in framing and capturing moving targets.

Landing a job at Singapore Zoo photographing its 'residents' for archival and documentary purposes gave Heath the chance to get close to wild and exotic animals in unusual circumstances, including on the operating table during surgery. He worked his way through Asia, Europe and North America, building up a portfolio until he had the 500 captioned photographs required for inclusion in the Lonely Planet image library. Since then his photos have appeared in several *Lonely Planet* guides, *Australian Geographic* and *National Geographic*, often accompanied by the auspicious Getty Images tag.

Heath has recently used his high-end equipment and skills to catch Tassie night-dwellers going about their business.

'Setting up camera traps can be fairly complex but the way they work is kind of simple, once you get the mechanics of them,' he says. 'Due to wanting really high image quality they are a lot more

work than the simple black and white, infra-red stuff you usually see from scientists' camera traps. As devils are nocturnal I needed to use flashes, so the placement of these is very important in order to make nicely lit images.

'The setup starts by finding the location I like and composing the shot the way I would if I were actually taking the photo myself. There are several parts to the camera trap setups: the sensor unit, which is called an active infra-red monitor, is connected to the camera's remote control plug. I was using a Canon 20D and also a Canon 1000D. To fire the flashes I built a special cable that allowed me to use Nikon SB28 flashes – they have a really good sleep function and can sit for 1-2 months on 4 AA batteries.

'The camera is activated by the devil crossing through the infra-red beam, it tells the camera to fire and at the same time the camera fires the flashes, which wake up instantly from their sleep mode... haha! How's that?'

The TLC relies enormously on the talents and generosity of the photographers who provide images for our publications. Many allow us to use their photos for free, and it is through their efforts – and their willingness to get muddied or snow-dusted – that we convey the magnificence of our reserves and the importance of our conservation efforts.

Thank you to Heath and all the nature photographers who support us.

• Check out Heath's images, including the Tasmanian devil essay, at [www.heathholdenphotography.com](http://www.heathholdenphotography.com)





# Please help protect our home

Donate today to ensure iconic species and areas of high conservation value in Tasmania have a future

“The Big Punchbowl is a truly remarkable place. Seeing it in a dry phase enabled us to access the sharply defined, circular, flat ‘punchbowl’ and get a real sense of the scale of this habitat. I hope, though, to soon see it in wetland mode, and the native birds that will be protected through the TLC’s praiseworthy efforts.”

Prof Terry Stokes, former head of School of Government, University of Victoria, NZ and Australian Research Counsellor

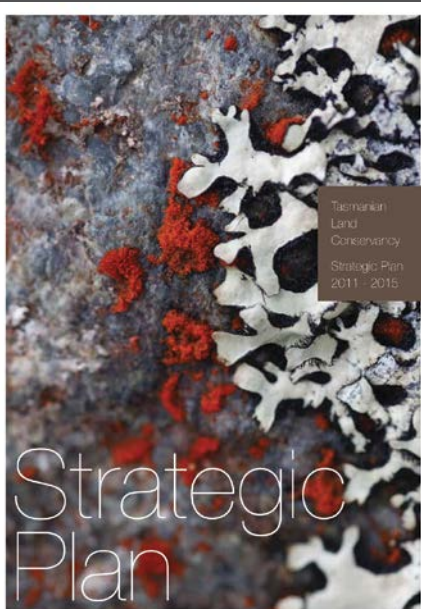
[www.tasland.org.au/donations](http://www.tasland.org.au/donations)

## Back page briefs

### Events

#### Blue Tier Field Day

The last Blue Tier field day was so successful, we are doing it again. On Sunday, 26 April we will host a field trip to Poimena (near our Blue Tier reserve) at the peak of the fungi season. Scientists will provide interpretation on mycology, threatened stag beetles and the temperate forest landscape. There will be children’s activities and an opportunity to join speakers and TLC staff at the Weldborough Hotel on Sunday night. Save the date and watch out for more information!



### Strategic Plan Review

In 2011 the TLC board, staff and supporters put forward our ambitious 2050 vision for Tasmania to be a global leader in nature conservation and sustainability. Underpinning the vision, we developed six strategic goals that have guided our work over the past five years. Each year we report major milestones in our annual reports. In September 2014 we invited all of our supporters to provide input into our strategic plan for 2016-2020 via a questionnaire.

We had a terrific response and thank everyone who took part. We are now analysing the results and this information will be used as part of the next phase in our development process.

A snapshot of input so far confirms that supporters endorse our current directions, and that future focus could further emphasise:

- Innovation
- Nature conservation and sustainability
- Ecosystems services

- Business partnerships, opportunities and mechanisms
- Monitoring at a landscape scale
- Community engagement with broad demographics, including young people.

#### Our next step is to hold two workshops in Tasmania:

- **Thursday 12 March**, 6-9 pm at the Launceston Environment Centre, 72 Tamar Street, Launceston (the same building as our Launceston offices).
- **Thursday 19 March**, 6-9 pm at The Sustainability Learning Centre, part of the Hobart College Campus at 50 Olinda Grove, Mt Nelson, Hobart.

Please register and read our current strategic plan, which you can download from [www.tasland.org.au](http://www.tasland.org.au). Supper will be provided.

#### Register online at:

- **Launceston:** [tlcstratplanninglst2015.eventbrite.com.au](http://tlcstratplanninglst2015.eventbrite.com.au)
- **Hobart:** [tlcstratplanninghbt2015.eventbrite.com.au](http://tlcstratplanninghbt2015.eventbrite.com.au)

Or call Community Engagement Officer Phill Roach on 0438 826 606 during business hours.

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



Australian Government