

Kangaroo grass. Photo by James Hattam

FROM THE TEAM

Welcome to this first edition of the Midlands Conservation Partnership (MCP) newsletter. We want this newsletter, which will come out twice a year, to be useful for MCP participants, stakeholders and the Midlands community. We hope it will keep you connected to the program, give you the updates you need and inform you about the approaches to conservation and land-management that have worked on other properties. Through it, we hope to foster a sense of community among all those who work towards improved biodiversity in the Midlands.

The program celebrated its tenth anniversary late last year with a fantastic event in makala/Ross. Thank you to those of you who opened your property gates for visitors and joined us for the day. A short film, featuring some of the MCP landholders, was made to celebrate the anniversary, and you can watch it at vimeo.com/tasland/mcf10.

The tenth anniversary seemed like a good time to evaluate the program, and we felt the time was ripe for a small facelift. You might have noticed the change of name: the Midlands Conservation Fund is now the Midlands Conservation Partnership. This name is intended to move the focus away from the program model (the endowment fund) to better reflect the partnership between MCP landowners, Bush Heritage Australia, the Tasmanian Land Conservancy and others, working together to ensure the best conservation outcomes for the Midlands. Find out more about the new strategic direction for MCP on page 3.

MCP also welcomed Pierre Defourny as the new Coordinator. With a background as an economist and in conservation management, Pierre is passionate about achieving conservation in productive landscapes with multiple land-uses. Pierre has enjoyed meeting all of the MCP landholders over the last few months and looks forward to working with the Midlands community in coming years. Matt Appleby is one of the most familiar

faces of conservation in the region, and his ecological expertise continues to underpin the scientific integrity of MCP.

We also want to thank Heather Campbell for her fantastic contribution to the program over the last 4.5 years as Bush Heritage CEO and MCF Board Member. Heather has been appointed as the new CEO of Greening Australia and we wish her all the best continuing her environmental work in her new role.

The program evaluation also showed that satisfaction with MCP remained high or very high for all landowners who completed the survey. This has been shown through the recent renewal of eight conservation agreements. We are keen to ensure this program continues to meet your expectations and address your needs, so do not hesitate to get in touch with the team if you have questions or feedback. We hope you enjoy this first newsletter.

Pierre Defourny, MCP Coordinator Matt Appleby, MCP Ecologist

17
CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS

14 DUNERS

7,360 ha

OF HIGH-PRIORITY ECOSYSTEMS PROTECTED, INCLUDING

1,628 ha

OF CRITICALLY ENDANGERED LOWLAND NATIVE GRASSLANDS

\$336,640

IN STEWARDSHIP PAYMENTS
INVESTED FOR CONSERVATION IN

2023



Orchids caged to protect from browsing at Kingston, Photo by Pierre Defourny

Simon Cameron. Photo by Matt Newton

'I consider myself very

fortunate to have been invited

to participate in the MCP

and extend my thanks to the

donors who make it possible.

Yes, the funding is important

but perhaps equally is the

recognition from others that

managing our lands for their

natural values is what needs

to be done.'

- Simon Cameron

MCP COMMUNITY: **KINGSTON**

Set in the foothills of turupina/
Ben Lomond, Kingston has been
farmed by the Cameron family since
1905 and conservatively managed
primarily for wool production since
that time.

The property is highly significant for its extensive areas of critically endangered valley floor native grasslands and, in particular, its species-diverse lowlands kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*)

grasslands community. This community at Kingston makes up more than 10% of the remaining extent of that threatened ecosystem in lutruwita/Tasmania. Lying between 270 and 510m above sea level, Kingston is slightly higher in altitude than many other Midlands properties, a colder area perceived as less productive,

which might explain why the native grasslands here haven't historically been converted to exotic pastures or crops.

Since the 1950s, the owners have recognised the importance of their native grasslands and woodlands in producing some of the highest quality superfine wool in the world and they have managed these areas to ensure their native integrity and

productive health is maintained. Current owner, Simon Cameron, joined the program in 2019. On his property, Simon protects 1,672 ha under Conservation Agreements. The MCP area on Kingston ensures that 1,000 ha of threatened lowland native grasslands, 583 ha of grassy woodlands, 46 ha of wetlands, 12 ha of lowland alluvial systems and 3 ha of upland riparian vegetation are protected and managed in a way to maximise biodiversity benefits. Twelve species of threatened flora and three species of threatened fauna have also been recorded on the property including

the EPBC-listed grassland cupflower, grassland flaxlily, clover glycine and Midlands greenhood orchid. Simon is actively managing for these threatened species, caging rare and threatened orchids to allow their seeds to be collected, fencing off areas of silky bushpea and actively controlling weeds. His farm now derives a significant portion

of its revenue from its conservation work, which is also a key part of Kingston's pioneering partnership with the national menswear retailer MJ Bale.

The MCP area on Kingston is directly adjacent to MCP areas on Buffalo Brook and Bonney Plains and other protected areas to the north, east and west, creating a very large, connected patch of high

conservation value landscape in the North-Eastern Midlands.

Some of the threatened species that occur on Kingston:



Silky bushpea (Pultenaea prostrata) TSP: vulnerable. Threats: native grassland clearing and inadequate management.



Eastern quoll (Dasyurus viverrinus) EPBC: Endangered. Threats: predation by cats, disease, climate change



Midlands greenhood (Pterostylis commutata).
EPBC: Critically
Endangered, fewer than 100 plants have been surveyed across 9 sites. Endemic to lutruwita/Tasmania.
Threats: native grassland clearing and inadequate management.



MCP Ten Year Celebration at Beaufront with Julian von Bibra. Photo by James Hattam

MCP STRATEGIC **PLAN TO 2027**

The Tasmanian Midlands have been designated as a priority place under Australia's Threatened Species Action Plan for 2022-2032.

Reflecting on the lessons learned from the ten-year program evaluation, and in order to harness the opportunities coming with this designation, MCP has refined its vision and developed a five-year strategic plan that outlines the program's approach going forward.

At the centre of this strategy is a desire to maximise the program's conservation impact while meeting MCP participants' needs through additional services to landowners, such as ecological advice and access to grants and projects. The focus on EPBClisted critically endangered lowland native grasslands of lutruwita/Tasmania

will also be

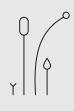
strengthened to ensure the conservation impact of every dollar invested in stewardship payment is maximised.

The capital fund model guarantees the long-term underwriting of the program, to give landowners confidence that MCP is by their side for the long-term.

However, in recent years the investment earnings have not been enough to cover the stewardship payments and the shortfall has generously been covered by Bush Heritage Australia. To ensure the sustainability of the program, a review of the organisation's investment policy is underway and a new push for fundraising will start shortly. Supporting this fundraising push is a new communication strategy, including the new program name, branding and logo, a dedicated brochure for events and donors, and refreshed web pages.

> Finally, at the centre of this partnership are the farmers who manage those important areas for conservation. We will aim to increase their sense of belonging to the MCP community through sharing tips about best practices that have been implemented to address certain issues, and showcasing the great work they do on their properties to protect precious natural values.

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS ARE:



By 2027, 75% of the current extent of the nationally critically endangered Lowland Native Grasslands and associated grassy woodlands and wetlands are protected in the Tasmanian Midlands



By 2025, MCP is recognised as the pre-eminent model that delivers conservation impact in the Midlands agricultural landscape



By 2027, the condition of Midlands Conservation Partnership target communities under stewardship has been maintained or improved since the date of agreement



VISION:

To promote and facilitate long-term community-based protection and management of threatened native grasslands and associated wetlands and woodlands in the Tasmanian Midlands.

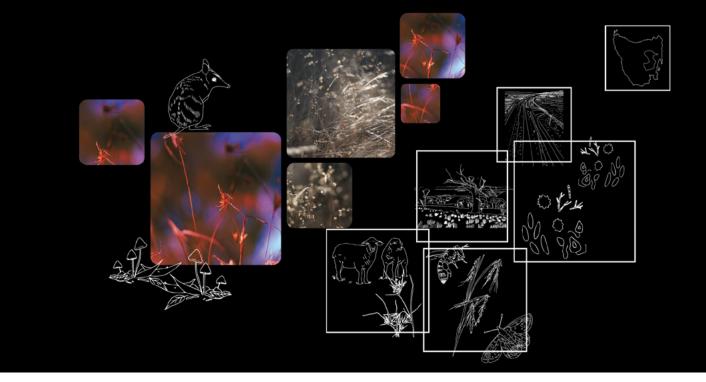


Illustration by Lily Proctor.

IMAGINE THE INVISIBLE: THE ROLE OF CURIOSITY AND DESIGN IN ECOLOGICAL CONSERVATION

UTAS design students have an ongoing interest in working with Midlands locals on conservation, previously building 'hotels' for local wildlife along the banks of tinamirakuna/the Macquarie River at makala/Ross. This year, they are exploring what a regenerative wool system could look like.

Lily Proctor, one of the students, explains the role of curiosity and arts in grassland conservation:

The native grasslands of Tasmania's Midlands are listed as a biodiversity hotspot; teeming with life, they are home to an abundance of our island's irreplaceable native species.

Yet these landscapes (and the lifeforms that live and thrive within them) are under threat of being lost forever due to their perceived lack of value as 'wild' spaces. Furthermore, their resulting degradation and fragmentation has made it difficult for most of us to experience their beauty.

This research project seeks to facilitate new perspectives of native grasslands ecosystems. Through ongoing conversation with ecologists, conservation managers and farmers striving for reciprocity with the land, three things became very clear: our grasslands are disappearing at a very

rapid rate; human connection with the land is imperative; and lastly, the driving-force of beauty and wonder should not be overlooked.

It asks: what if we could experience the grasslands as other species do? Would we feel differently about our own interactions with the land, as individuals and as a species?

You can see the results of this project, a collaboration with Rina Bernabei and Waverley Mills, at issuu.com/university-of-tasmania/docs/regenerative_wool_systems_2023 and see more of Lily's illustrations on Instagram at @lilalise_studio

WHAT'S ON

13-15 October Landcare Tasmania conference at Triabunna. Go to landcaretas.org.au/conference2023

16-18 October National Private Land Conservation Conference, 'PLC23: Unite For Nature', in Canberra. Find out more at alcaconference.org.au

10 November Save-the-date MCP landowners dinner, more info to follow.

November - December tri-annual vegetation monitoring surveys on Kingston, Maitland, Stewarton, Wanstead, and Wetmore.

1 March 2024 BHA's 'Celebrating Woman in Conservation' breakfast event. In Melbourne and on-line. Tickets released on bushheritage. org.au later this year. TLC also runs a Women in Conservation evening event in the same week: follow TLC on social media for more information.

We acknowledge the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians of the lands on which we work and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture.

Midlands Conservation Partnership

tasland.org.au/mcp bushheritage.org.au/places-we-protect/ tasmania/midlands

+614 0709 0547

mcp@tasland.org.au

- @tas_land | @BushHeritage
- @taslandconservancy | @bushheritageaustralia
- @tasland | @bushheritageaus

MCP Board

Phillip Cornwell (Chair) James Hattam David Rickards Ted Lefroy Robert Murphy

We gratefully acknowledge the support for the Midlands Conservation Partnership from the Sidney Myer Fund, the Myer Foundation, the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation, the John T Reid Charitable Trust, the Elsie Cameron Foundation, the Thomas Foundation and a number of private supporters.

Support MCP by donating at tasland.org.au/ donate-mcp

