

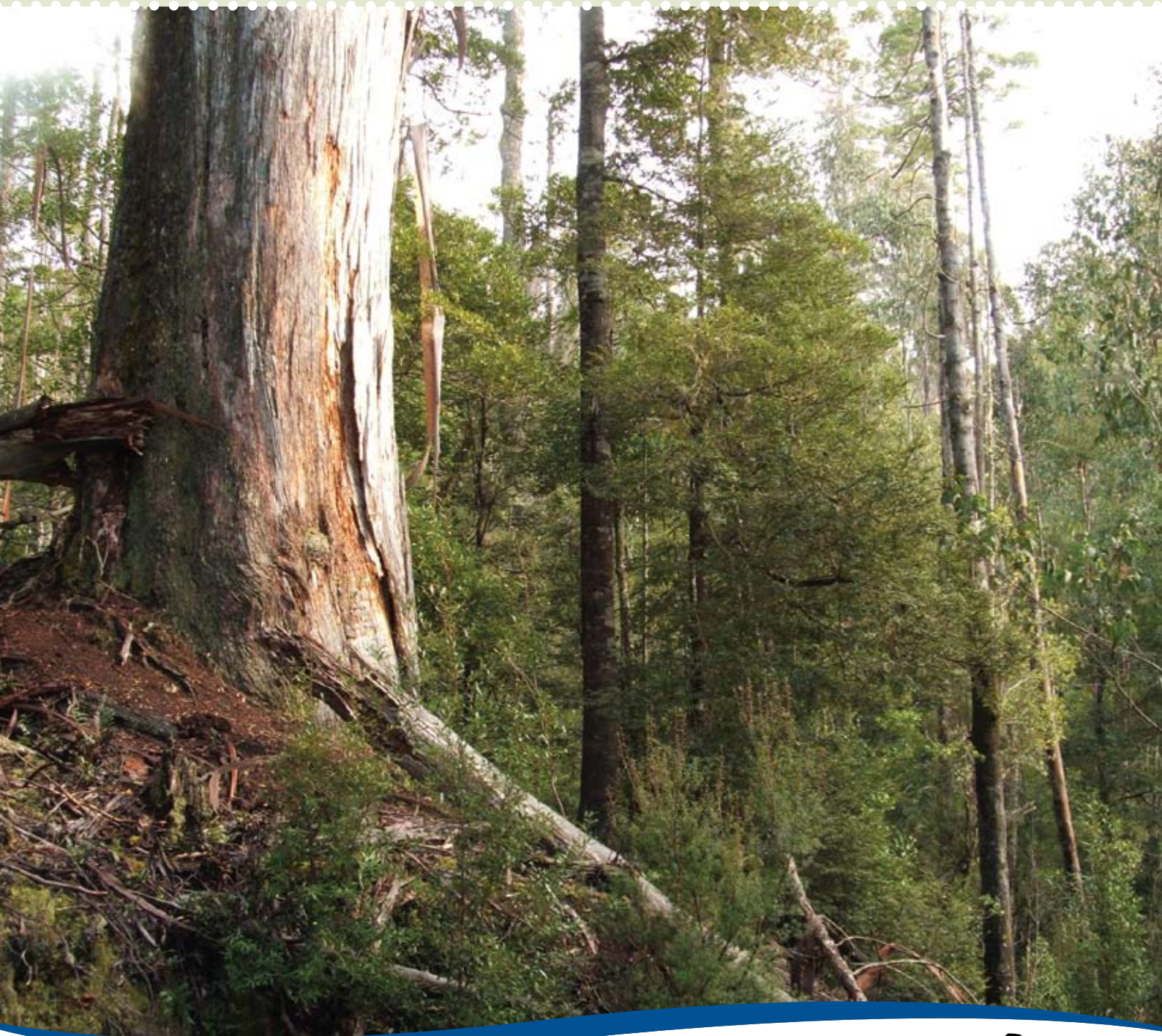


The **Running**Postman

Newsletter of the Private Land Conservation Program

August 2009
Issue 5
ISSN 1835-6141

*Building partnerships with landowners for the sustainable management
and conservation of natural values across the landscape.*





The Running Postman

Our newsletter is named after a small twining plant that is widespread in Tasmanian dry forests (*Kennedia prostrata*).

The Running Postman is published three times per year, and circulated to all the participants in the various Private Land Conservation Program (PLCP) initiatives, as well as other interested groups and individuals.

The PLCP Conservation Covenant partners, Land for Wildlife members, and signatories to Vegetation Management Agreements now extends to over 1000 people. These people range from graziers and farmers with extensive operations in the Midlands, through to people with two hectare bush blocks on the fringes of Hobart, with just about everything in between.

More information regarding the PLCP (and an electronic version of The Running Postman) can be found on the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment website:

www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/plcp

In this Issue



Message from the Program Manager	3
New look PLCP website	3
A sense of place	4
Conservation NGOs – an outstanding contribution to the private reserve system	5
The Forest Conservation Fund	6
Forest Conservation Fund – preliminary feedback	7
Fabulous fungi	8
Gardens for Wildlife – one year on	9
Conservation activities in the Midlands	10
Land for Wildlife – a successful nature conservation scheme	11
PFRP Review and Evaluation – progress with implementation	12
Photo competition: Show off your piece of paradise...	12
Selling Property	12

Private Land Conservation Program participants as at July 1 2009

Number of covenants	467
- hectares	50,106
Land for Wildlife members	706
- hectares	48,638
Gardens for Wildlife members	245

Please note that some landowners are registered with more than one program and there is some overlap in the hectares figures presented.

On the cover: Brown Mountain. Photo by Denna Kingdom, Tasmanian Land Conservancy.
Above: The Running Postman (*Kennedia prostrata*) Photo by Dr Greg Jordan, UTAS.
Design and layout: ILS Design Unit, DPIPWE.

Message from the Program Manager



In the financial year just finished, the PLCP finalised an additional 60 conservation covenants with landowners across the state.

This unprecedented growth of the Tasmanian private reserve system is likely to be matched in the next 12 months as we work our way through the remaining Forest Conservation Fund Program and Midlands Biodiversity Hotspots Tender proposals. These covenants are in addition to those achieved through the Protected Areas on Private Land Program and the Non-Forest Vegetation Program, both of which have also had impressive results in the last year.

These new covenants contributed an additional 7,217 hectares of privately owned and managed land to the National Reserve System.

To put this in the national context: during 2008-09 there were 240 conservation covenants registered on land titles, totaling 252,797 hectares of land for conservation nationwide. This brings the total of land covenanted in perpetuity for conservation purposes across Australia to 1,569,125 hectares, over 3,987 properties.

Of course this is really only the tip of the iceberg in terms of conservation activity on private land. Landowners' ongoing sustainable management of native bush and grasslands has a great additional benefit to these reservation totals, not to mention the various rehabilitation and restoration works around the state and country.

This edition of The Running

Postman features a number of articles that highlight the range of players in the covenanting programs run by the PLCP. The Australian Government, private landowners and Non-Government Organisations are all contributing to create this exciting and dynamic picture of conservation and sustainable land management across the landscape.

We also have an opportunity for you to provide photographic images of your own piece of paradise – our first competition.

I hope you enjoy the articles, and as always, feedback is encouraged.

John Harkin

New look PLCP website

The PLCP is very excited to announce the launch of its new look website. The website contains a large amount of new information, including:

- Information about our current and previous covenanting programs;
- Land for Wildlife and Gardens for Wildlife schemes;
- Monitoring and stewardship information;

- Access to electronic issues of The Running Postman and previous Land for Wildlife newsletters; and
- Access to fact sheets, informative websites and useful publications.

You can check out the website at www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/plcp

The website will continually evolve as content will be regularly added or updated, with a focus on the development of the monitoring and

stewardship and resources sections for landowners who would like further information on managing and enhancing the natural values on their land.

Please let us know what you think about the website, your feedback is important to us.



A sense of **place**

Sarah Lloyd and Ron Nagorcka live at the distant end of the ruttiest rockiest romp of a driveway a guest is ever likely to experience. The intrepid few who persist in its navigation will be rewarded with a taste of the couple's dedication to truly explore nature and find within it, a rich uncommon beauty.

Many people involved in Land for Wildlife will be aware of naturalist Sarah's inspiring fascination with plants, birds and fungi. While internationally renowned musical composer Ron, not surprisingly, has an innate talent for bird and frog recordings. Ron and Sarah make use of simple but effective monitoring tools to further bolster their love of the natural world. So when I heard that Sarah had recently completed a book about their property, I was curious to read it. *Life in the Shadows* turned out to be quite a discovery itself.

Developing a personal knowledge base of local flora and fauna can be a dry and even tedious experience for all but the most passionate naturalist. And if you are not regularly able to interact with the environment it can be even less than inspiring, kind of like the rote learning

we regurgitated in high school.

It is here that Sarah's work shines: this is no dry academic text. In mixing her own personal wonderment with a detailed description of the subject it's more like sneaking a look through your siblings diary while they're out. It is both enlightening and gripping, and somehow it stays with you.

Life in the Shadows is a naturalist's account of living and loving a Private Forest Reserve.

Within the book, Sarah walks us around her home, then out and up the garden path and into the forest. The pace is broken up with historical anecdotes (such as the culinary delights of wattle birds) and is kept light by Sarah's obvious awe of her subject.

Sarah and Ron have lived on Black Sugarloaf for over 20 years so you would expect them to be well familiar with their reserve. And yet the text is filled with the fresh delight of new discoveries, as if the couple just stepped on site.

Behind this enthusiasm is a dedication to some simple monitoring methods; techniques that serve to highlight trends and new findings.

In *Life in the Shadows* Sarah displays the bountiful results of monitoring. In doing so, she has captured and conveyed her joy of discovery. Monitoring can be as simple as keeping a written or photographic diary, perhaps enough in time to write your own book of discovery

Life in the Shadows is a welcome reminder of the stunning rewards for getting to know your reserve more intimately. The PLCP will soon begin to promote monitoring activities more broadly through fact sheets, workshops and articles such as this. Sarah's book, *Life in the Shadows* is available for \$50.00 per copy including postage from: Sarah Lloyd, 999 Denmans Road, Biralee TAS 7303.

Stuart King

Conservation NGOs – an **outstanding contribution** to the private reserve system

Conservation management of private land in Tasmania is at an all time high, with over 50,000 hectares now covered by 467 conservation covenants across the state.

The vast majority of these reserves contribute to the National Reserve System and as such, are given a classification according to a system devised by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The six IUCN protected area management categories are:

- Ia: Strict nature reserve
- Ib: Wilderness area
- II: National park
- III: Natural monument or feature
- IV: Habitat/species management area
- V: Protected landscape/seascape
- VI: Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources

Most of the private reserves in Tasmania are category IV or VI as they have been established to protect habitat for flora and fauna. These categories also both allow for many common management practices such as grazing of domestic stock, maintenance of tracks, and limited firewood gathering.

There are also a significant number of

category Ia reserves, that are "strictly protected areas set aside to protect biodiversity...where human visitation, use and impacts are strictly controlled and limited to ensure protection of conservation values..." (www.iucn.org).

Several of these reserves are owned by conservation Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) the Tasmanian Land Conservancy (TLC) and Bush Heritage Australia, who own and manage 14 properties in Tasmania with a total combined area of 2,173 hectares.

These properties have been purchased with funds from private donors, sometimes together with government programs (e.g the National Reserve System Program), and then covenanted. Ongoing management of the reserves is conducted by the organisations themselves, in accordance with agreed management plans. The PLCP also provides ongoing support through the Monitoring and Stewardship team, as necessary.

In several cases, the properties have been bought specifically to protect their natural values from clearing and development. In others, particularly high conservation values have been recognised by the owners who have assisted to ensure ongoing protection by offering the properties on

favourable terms to the NGOs.

TLC's recent purchase of the Egg Islands in the Huon River exemplifies these elements. The property contains a plethora of unusual conservation values and has a rich cultural history associated most recently with small scale farming. The diverse vegetation communities provide a range of habitats for many of Tasmania's iconic bird species, including the globally endangered Australasian bittern.

In short, each of these reserves has outstanding natural values, and many of them have really interesting stories behind them. For more information, the TLC and Bush Heritage websites (www.tasland.org.au and www.bushheritage.org.au) feature profiles of each of their reserves - complete with some excellent photos.

These organisations' ability to identify conservation features around the state, organise support and funding, and then take on the management responsibility for these properties is a great tribute to the commitment of their employees, members and supporters. Their contribution to the Tasmanian private reserve system is outstanding.

John Harkin



The Forest **Conservation** Fund

The Forest Conservation Fund (FCF) has provided an opportunity for landowners to enter into conservation covenants over 28,000 hectares of forest on private lands across Tasmania, highlighting the vital role private landowners play in helping to conserve our forests.

Following on from the Private Forest Reserves Program, the FCF was established under the 2005 *Tasmanian Community Forests Agreement*, as an innovative, market-based initiative, designed to support private landowners to protect old-growth and other high conservation value forest, through covenants or assisted purchase.

Over 300 landowners from all over Tasmania participated in the program. From south of Hobart and the Tasman Peninsula to as far north as Cape Portland and King Island, landowners are now actively engaged in protecting one of our greatest assets – our forests.

A good outcome of the Program was the high proportion of proposals from the Midlands and eastern Tasmania, reflecting the importance of dryland forests in achieving conservation outcomes. While they may not be the iconic, tall wet forests of the Tasmanian World Heritage area, they can possess equally important habitat values.

Dry forest types often contain higher species diversity than their wet forest counterparts, and include old growth and other forest that may be rare or endangered and are under-represented in the Tasmanian reserve system. An additional conservation benefit is that these patches of forest often exist in areas that are predominantly cleared for other land uses.

Through the Program, landowners agreed to enter into 140 conservation covenants (mostly perpetual), over 27,000 hectares.

Approximately 10,700 hectares of this forest is considered old-growth. Funding approvals of \$37.7M have been allocated to these covenants.

Assisted land purchases added to the excellent overall result. Seven properties totalling 438 hectares were purchased through the Mole Creek Forest Karst Program; another 918 hectares were secured by the FCF Revolving Fund.

The Revolving Fund was recently extended until 2014. It will continue to acquire forested land for covenanting and resale, further contributing to success of the Program.



Forest Conservation Fund – preliminary feedback

Feedback from farmers and other landowners regarding the FCF has generally been very positive. Many landowners really appreciated the opportunity to receive financial support to pursue conservation outcomes on their land.

Another important aspect of the Program was the involvement of key stakeholder groups, such as the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association and Timber Communities Australia, who contributed to the development of the FCF through the Stakeholder Reference Group.

Implementation of the Program on the ground was assisted by the Tasmanian Land Conservancy and KPMG, with a team of field, technical and communications experts. DPIW's (now DPIPW) role has been to assist in the establishment of the necessary processes, frameworks and material to enable this work to go smoothly, as well as ensuring that the covenants are finalised and registered on title.

The FCF program used a range of mechanisms to engage with landowners, the main one being the FCF tender process which was launched in March 2007. Readers may recall the update on the FCF included in the July 2008 edition of *The Running Postman*, reporting on the completion of Round 1 of the competitive tender and the first set of successful covenant proposals.

After Round 1 it became clear that the competitive tender process alone was not going to yield the number of hectares needed to meet the Program's targets. Feedback from landowners who had been unsuccessful in the Round 1 tender also suggested that they had been very uncertain about how much to bid and the appropriate length of the covenant term.

As a response to this valuable feedback, the Program moved to make direct, fixed-price offers to landowners who were interested in revising their proposals to be more competitive. The direct offers approach was also used to explore new areas of the market, targeting large landholdings with high proportions of old growth forest.

Other important feedback from landowners was that they valued having a field officer work closely with them to develop covenant proposals. This gave many landowners the opportunity to learn more about the conservation values of the forest on their land and share information about the flora and fauna.

Of course, some landowners were already very knowledgeable about the forest on their land and had a real connection with the natural landscape on their properties. The idea of an ongoing conservation covenant for their forest as a viable business and land management option was a very attractive prospect for many landowners.

Private landowner involvement has been the key element of the Program.

Without landowners making the decision to enter into a conservation covenant, especially in-perpetuity, these significant results could not have been achieved. Landowners have made a commitment to managing the conservation values of their covenanted forest into the future.

They will be supported in this by the Private Land Conservation Program's Monitoring and Stewardship team.

Officially, the FCF Program concluded on 30 June 2009, however the PLCP will finalise and register all of the proposals approved. This work is likely to take until at least March 2010.

A major review of the Program has been contracted to an independent consultant. This work will critically analyse the effectiveness of the FCF in achieving biodiversity conservation outcomes and feed the experience and lessons learnt from the FCF into other conservation incentive programs in Tasmania and across Australia.

Nathan Harris

Assistant Director

Forest Policy Section

Department of the Environment,
Water, Heritage and the Arts



Fabulous fungi

Early this autumn, a period of heavy rain and still warm soil temperature resulted in a proliferation of interesting forms popping up from the soil and leaf litter. These are the fruiting bodies of fungi and are only a very small part of the fungus – the rest of the fungus is hidden in the ground or in rotting organic matter, logs, or branches.

Fungi play a key role in plant ecology and are a vital component of natural ecosystems. These roles include mycorrhizal associations and detritivorous and parasitic relationships.

Mycorrhiza refers to the symbiotic association between plant roots and fungi, with the fungus growing in or on the cells of roots. The association is closest with the young finely branched feeder roots of plants. Nearly all terrestrial plants, including trees, have a mycorrhizal zone around their roots. Mycorrhizal fungi obtain organic material for their growth from the plant and in return provide minerals and nutrients which plants are more readily able to absorb, particularly in nutrient deficient soils. The underground fruiting

body of mycorrhizal fungi many will be familiar with are truffles, some of which are regarded as gourmet delicacies. These are a valuable food source for many native mammals, such as bettongs and bandicoots that sniff them out. In fact,

the eating of truffles by native animals aids dispersion of the spores of truffles which are distributed elsewhere in the droppings.

The presence or absence of mycorrhizal fungi can greatly influence plant health. One of the many factors associated with tree dieback is thought to be soil compaction of the root zone, greatly reducing the survival and functioning of the mycorrhiza.

The majority of fungi observed are detritivorous, breaking down organic matter and recycling nutrients. Detritivorous fungi are commonly found growing on fallen logs, leaf litter and other dead plant material. They can be vibrantly coloured or have incredibly beautiful shapes and forms. Many have also been given

great common names because of their appearance, such as dog vomit slime mould, orange ping pong bats, lawyer's wig or pancake stack!

Parasitic fungi gain their nutrients from living organisms without giving anything in return. Such fungi can cause disease and even death of the host plant.

It's worth remembering to always be cautious as many fungi are poisonous to humans and wildlife) - sometimes fatally so, and it can be difficult to identify edible species. The best approach is "if in doubt, don't".

Few people know the value and beauty of the variety of fungi species we have in Tasmania. To learn more about fungi, their shapes and forms go to the 'Fungi Down Under' website (www.rbg.vic.gov.au/fungimap).

Next time you are out walking in the bush, or in your garden, if you see an unusual splash of colour of a sprouting fungal fruiting body – take a closer look, you may be surprised by the beauty of these often overlooked living organisms.

Iona Mitchell

Gardens for Wildlife

– one year on

It is nearly one year since the official launch of the 'Gardens for Wildlife' scheme and it is gradually gaining momentum. Already there are over 245 members scattered across the State from St Helens, Burnie, Zeehan, Launceston and Hobart and many places in between. Interest in the scheme continues to grow.

On the membership form, we ask people how they found out about the scheme. The greatest sources have been friends, neighbours, Land for Wildlife and increasingly from people seeing the sign. Indeed, many members have stated they hope that by displaying the sign, they may increase awareness and encourage others to provide wildlife-friendly spaces and environment-friendly practices in their neighbourhood.

The overwhelming message for why people wished to register is because people love to see wildlife in their garden, native birds in particular, but many welcome bandicoots, lizards, frogs, wallabies and yes, possums! Many have used native plant species to provide habitat and to attract wildlife to their gardens. There is also a strong desire to encourage others to do likewise. Encouragingly,

many people have found that growing native species has attracted a greater variety of wildlife, especially native birds, into their garden which they delight in seeing.

So far there are three schools registered, keen to convey the broader message of biodiversity conservation and protecting wildlife species and habitat starting with their school grounds. Several memberships have been given as presents for children who have shown an interest in gardening and wildlife with the desire to nurture and foster this interest.

Another aspect the scheme wishes to encourage and promote is the use of sustainable and environment-friendly practices, such as reduced water use, chemical-free gardening and growing fruit and vegetables. A number of members have planted their garden as a blend of wildlife habitat as well as a food garden.

In one West Hobart garden the owner, Lucia Ikin, is slowly replacing many of the exotics with local native species, to establish a low maintenance and water wise garden. She has quickly grown an

appreciation of local native species and "values Australian flora for its own beauty". Lucia's desire is to attract more native birds to her garden and already she has recorded over 13 species visiting her garden.

Lucia joined the scheme because to her, it emphasised where she was. Coming from Holland over 20 years ago, the scheme and the message it conveys remind her that she lives in Tasmania, Australia and not in a European countryside.

For more information about wildlife or advice on creating and maintaining suitable wildlife habitat visit the Gardens for Wildlife website (www.gardensforwildlife.dpipwe.tas.gov.au) or contact the Gardens for Wildlife Coordinator, Iona Mitchell on 6233 6427.

Iona Mitchell





Land for Wildlife – a **successful** nature conservation scheme



Conservation activities in the **Midlands**

Making the news in the last month or so was the listing of *Lowland Native Grasslands of Tasmania* as a Critically Endangered Ecological Community under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)*. This was the second listing of a Tasmanian ecological community this year; the first being *Alpine Sphagnum Bogs and Associated Fens*.

The grasslands listing process has been conducted over the last two years following the nomination of the community - in recognition of the fact that very little of it remains. The listing has a range of implications for landowners who have lowland grasslands on their properties, but it does not prevent them from continuing with the sustainable grazing management that has effectively conserved those areas to date.

A number of those landowners already have conservation agreements in place, and the PLCP is working with several others, with the aim of ensuring that their conservation management is recognised, rewarded and may ultimately be considered a profitable part of their enterprise.

Several million dollars of Commonwealth funds have already been allocated to these agreements through a number of PLCP programs, including the Non-Forest Vegetation Program, the Midlands Biodiversity Program, the Protected Areas on Private Land Program and the Midlands Biodiversity Hotspots Tender. These funds will hopefully assist those landowners to manage those areas in a way that allows the native values to persist, without acting as a handicap to a profitable farming enterprise.

Unfortunately our recent Caring for Our Country proposal for the Midlands was not successful, but there are other possibilities that we continue to work on with our various partners.

The most promising of these is the work of Bush Heritage Australia, Tasmanian Land Conservancy and PLCP to establish a fund to support conservation management in the Midlands.

Through Bush Heritage Australia the partners have secured philanthropic support from the Sidney Myer Fund (\$2M) that will provide the basis for a Conservation Investment Fund. A recent visit to the Midlands by Fund members was very positive, indicating that there may be real potential to generate additional interest in the conservation fund over time.

Ultimately, this is likely to provide landowners with a useful income stream for sustainable management and conservation activities in the Midlands; hopefully ensuring that the grasslands, woodlands, wetlands and forests of the Midlands will flourish into the future.

Further information regarding the Commonwealth EPBC Act and the listing itself is at www.environment.gov.au

John Harkin

through the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

LFW is a voluntary, non-binding nature conservation scheme designed to support and recognise landowners who wish to protect wildlife species and habitat on their land. The Scheme considers the property as a whole even though part of the property may be under protection for nature conservation. The Scheme supports and encourages the integration of nature conservation with other land use activities.

The Scheme is strongly supported by trained volunteer assessors who assist with undertaking property assessments in their regions. The contribution of the volunteer assessors is highly valued and they are to be commended for the sharing of their time and knowledge.

As at 30th June, the Tasmanian LFW Scheme included 706 properties, covering approximately 48,638 hectares. Between 2005 and 2008 on average 60-70 Expressions of Interest (EOI) were received each year, with approximately the same number of property assessments and registrations were achieved. So far this year there have been 33 EOI's and 38 properties registered.

Most members are keen to receive and display their sign as a means of recognition and clear demonstration of their support to protecting wildlife species and habitat on their land. LFWers continue to make a valuable contribution and demonstrate their commitment to biodiversity conservation in Tasmania.

Iona Mitchell

PFRP **Review and Evaluation** – progress with implementation

Almost two years has passed since the PFRP Review and Evaluation was conducted by Brian Gilligan and Syneca Consulting.

The report provided us with two sets of recommendations; the first set relating to actions proposed in relation to reserves established under the PFRP and the second focussing on improvements to the design of future programs.

Many of the recommendations have been implemented over the last

eighteen months or so, particularly those associated with staffing, communications and data management.

A few significant developments include:

- Revamp of the PLCP website (launching in 2009);
- Coordinated approach to contacting new owners of conservation covenants;
- Awareness raising with real estate agents and property brokers;

- Overhaul of the PLCP database;
- An ongoing review schedule for property Operations and Nature Conservation Plans;
- Implementation of a staff training schedule, including property visits.

We continue to implement these improvements to the way we work – any further suggestions that you have would be appreciated.

John Harkin

Photo competition: **Show off** your piece of paradise...

Do you have a special corner of your conservation area that you would like to share with the rest of Tasmania? Perhaps there's something in flower; birds in a nest, some colourful fungi or a lovely landscape that really captures the essence of your place.

If so, we would love to see it

We are looking for images that capture the variety and values of covenanted, LFW and GFW areas on private land in Tasmania.

Entry is open to all covenant, LFW and GFW landowners, their family and friends.

All entries* must be provided in a digital format at a sufficiently high enough resolution to allow the image to be reproduced at A4 size or above. Preferably images should be provided as a JPEG file between 1 Mb and 3 Mb in size.

Prize packs will be awarded for the winning and runner-up images. The winning image will be showcased on the cover of the December 2009 issue of The Running Postman newsletter; and a selection of the entries received will be displayed on the new look Private Land Conservation Program website (www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/plcp).

Images should be emailed along with your current contact details to Annika Everaardt (annika.everaardt@dpipwe.tas.gov.au) by no later than 30 October 2009.

Images on CD can be posted to:

**Annika Everaardt
PLCP
DPIPWE
GPO Box 44
Hobart TAS 7001**

**Images must be the work of the entrant. It is a condition of entry that the photographer authorises their image(s) to be displayed in promotional work of the DPIPWE Private Land Conservation Program (PLCP), including The Running Postman newsletter and the PLCP website. Any images used will be credited as the work of the photographer. Please note that we require written consent to publish images in which people can be identified. Please contact Annika Everaardt for a consent form if required.*

Selling Property?

If you have a conservation covenant over your property and are thinking of selling, you should keep in mind that anyone involved in the sale process (e.g. agents, lawyers) need to be informed of the covenant and its implications.

Prospective buyers and new owners must also be informed of the covenant on the property title so that they can factor this into their decisions.

A covenant may appeal to particular purchasers and should be promoted as a valuable aspect of the property. The PLCP Stewardship Officers (Stu King and Lyn Pullen) are happy to talk to prospective buyers regarding the natural values and how to manage them in accordance with your agreement.

We often find that buyers of Land for Wildlife (LFW) properties are keen to enter the program so that they can get involved in more active conservation management. We therefore also ask LFW owners who are selling to notify us so that we can make contact with the new owners and see if they would like to keep the property in the program.

PLCP Contacts

Stewardship

North: Stu King 6336 5427

South: Lyn Pullen 6233 3117

General

Annika Everaardt 6233 3654

Land For Wildlife

Iona Mitchell 6233 6427