



the **Running**Postman

Newsletter of the Private Land Conservation Program

February 2008

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

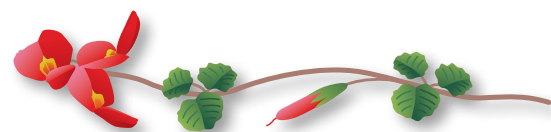




The Running Postman

Our newsletter is named after a small twining plant that is widespread in Tasmanian dry forests. This plant symbolises the tenacity of nature. It readily reinvades areas damaged by fire, helping to cover bare ground and paving the way for establishment of other plants. Running postman is an important food source for native insects, including many butterflies. Aborigines used the plant for twine and also sucked the nectar from the flowers. It is a plant that is now widely used in horticulture, and one that often provides a bright dash of spring and summer colour in native gardens or in the bush. It rarely grows much taller than 1 metre high and being a member of the pea family it has wavy trifoliate (three pronged) leaves. The flowers are brilliant red – the colour of an old postie's uniform - with a greenish yellow throat.

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On the cover: Wedge tail eagle's nest in an old growth Swamp Gum (Eucalyptus ovata) on a conservation reserve in the Saltwater River area on the Tasman Peninsula. Photo by Kerryr Herrman

Above: The Running Postman (Kennedia prostrata). Photo by Dr Greg Jordan, UTAS

Message from the Program Manager



DPIW's new Private Land Conservation Program (PLCP) has been specifically designed to provide Tasmania's landowners with a central contact point for assistance with voluntary nature conservation.

The Private Land Conservation Program is focussed on developing and maintaining strong and constructive partnerships with landowners.

To date, 391 Tasmanian landowners have committed to protect more than 41,000 hectares of important native bushland on their properties under perpetual conservation agreements with the State Government. A further 600 plus landowners have joined Tasmania's highly successful *Land for Wildlife* program, committing to care for a further 56,000 hectares outside the formal reserves system.

This commitment represents an enormous contribution to the protection of habitats for Tasmanian wildlife.

The protection of such large areas of land outside National Parks and World Heritage Areas, ensures that the overall effort into nature conservation across Tasmania is strengthened.

There is growing international evidence that voluntary participation in formal nature conservation programs provides a powerful opportunity for landowners to demonstrate environmental responsibility.

This in turn may provide market opportunities for the promotion of Tasmanian products as environmentally friendly.

PLCP provides its services to landholders in partnership with the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association and the Tasmanian Land Conservancy to ensure the program is practical and relevant for clients.

A team of over 20 officers works with PLCP to help landowners manage areas of native bush under voluntary or statutory protection. PLCP also works very closely with the three Tasmanian NRM Regions to support strategic investment into conservation programs of direct relevance to landowners.

PLCP has three main areas of activity-

- **Assisting landowners to protect wildlife habitats on their land.** Landowners wishing to enter into conservation agreements or to voluntarily protect nature on their land can get advice on the best ways to protect native wildlife including access to incentives and opportunities for community cost sharing for conservation.
- **Monitoring and Stewardship services.** Dedicated staff ensure covenant holders have access to management support, including monitoring of the condition of vegetation and habitat on their land.
- **Quality assurance** that ensures conservation agreements are legally sound and reliable sources of management advice for landowners.

The Program is now looking to form partnerships with landowners who can provide critical linkages across the landscape to 'link up' and expand on the existing protected patches. This will aim to ensure that the existing reserve system (and its resident fauna) is better protected against weed invasion and other threats that may increase with a changing climate. There are emerging opportunities through incentives and grants programs that may support this effort.

"Tasmania has fantastic opportunities for nature conservation on private land. We aim to work with you to make the most of them"

John Harkin

Land for Wildlife News now in a new package.

As you can see, the Land for Wildlife Newsletter volume sixteen has now been incorporated into the newsletter for the Private Land Conservation Program, of which Land for Wildlife is a part. To date there has been no regular newsletter sent out to landowners who have 'Private Forest Reserve' or 'Protected Areas on Private Land' conservation covenants or vegetation management agreements. Some of these landowners however are LFWers and so have been receiving the regular LFW newsletter, as have all other LFWers. This is the first volume of the combined newsletter that will be more widely distributed.

The first volume of the Tasmanian Land for Wildlife Newsletter came out in September 1999. Since then, fifteen volumes have been issued, the last issue posted early August 2007. For the last couple of years I have successfully maintained the production of three volumes a year as I felt it was important to provide a regular newsletter for LFWers. I have received very good feedback on the newsletters, which is good to hear and I thank those people who have contacted me. There will be three issues a year of the new newsletter. The intent is to always have a section for the 'Land for Wildlife' news and contributions, however it will no longer be as long as the former newsletter permitted.

*Iona Mitchell,
State Land for Wildlife Coordinator.*

Land For Wildlife

Land for Wildlife is a completely voluntary and non binding nature conservation scheme. It aims to encourage and support landholders who are taking a positive approach to nature conservation by providing access to information and support for conservation action. Land for Wildlife members are supplied with a sign for their front gate and they have access to information networks provided through the Coordinator, Iona Mitchell.

Property owners wishing to join the scheme can make application through an expression of interest form. A property visit is undertaken by a Land for Wildlife Assessor who can provide advice on weed control, habitat management, wildlife identification and other issues.

To find out more about Land for Wildlife, please contact Iona Mitchell on phone 03 6233 6427, or email Iona.Mitchell@dpiw.tas.gov.au

Land for Wildlife is a national movement that was first established in Victoria by Birds Australia members to support people willing and keen to maintain native vegetation and wildlife on their property. The scheme has been available in Tasmania since 1998 and to date has over 640 members.



Gardens for Wildlife

A new scheme is soon to be offered in Tasmania to promote wildlife friendly gardening and environmentally friendly practices in suburban areas. The 'Garden for Wildlife' scheme will provide people with small properties (under 10 ha) the opportunity to participate in a voluntary nature conservation scheme in their garden, and to be recognised for their contribution in doing so. Gardens for Wildlife members will be supplied with a beautiful property sign, as well as access to information and resources available to Land for Wildlife members.

This program is expected to be launched in the near future – so stay tuned, or contact Iona Mitchell on 03 6233 6427 for more information.



Tatana Private Nature Reserve – an island for conservation

Steve Cronin is a man passionate about nature conservation, and about his Private Nature Reserve – Tatana, near Exeter.

In the 24 years that Steve and Marlene Cronin have owned their property "Stokes Run" they have treated a large patch of nearly 20 hectares as a biodiversity reserve. "This patch of bush has been in my family for two generations and it has always been a really special place for us" says Steve, an ex National Parks Ranger and now an environmental consultant. "In 1983 we started to manage the area for biodiversity conservation and did our first formal management plan in 1986. When the opportunity came to formally protect the area in perpetuity as a Nature Reserve we jumped at it."

Steve works from his home office and every day walks the boundaries of his mostly swamp gum and black peppermint reserve. He regularly records wildlife sightings and revels in the beauty of this small patch of paradise. Over the years Steve

and Marlene have recorded 17 native animal species, 10 reptiles, 8 amphibians, 68 native birds and 66 species of native plants. The reserve protects habitat for a number of listed species such as the green and gold bell frog, the grey goshawk, swift parrot, the eastern barred bandicoot and the blue pincushion.

Of particular note to Steve is the presence of a small population of Tasmanian devils, which he sees regularly and appears free of the facial tumour disease. Steve says that Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD) has been through the devil population in the reserve three times that I am aware of but the population has always recovered possibly due to the isolation of the reserve, ensuring only occasional introduction of the disease from outside animals. A recent sighting of a devil was a healthy individual. Steve regularly sees signs of the population, especially scat latrines around the reserve boundary which give an indication of a fairly stable and healthy population.

In 2005 Tatana Private Nature Reserve was formally gazetted under the Nature Conservation Act 2002. This affords the reserve the highest possible protection for private land and represents a significant commitment from the Cronins to ensuring that Tatana remains stable habitat for biodiversity into the future. "We can't afford to keep losing these small but critical areas to development" Steve says, "Places like this are part of our heritage, they should be around for future generations of people and for wildlife to seek refuge."

For more information in protecting land under Private Nature Refuge status, or other types of conservation agreements, please contact PLCP conservation officers – Oberon Carter in Hobart (6233 6099), Peter Voller in Prospect (6336 5293) or Helen Crawford (6233 2716).

*Photos (L to R):
• Steve and Marlene Cronin
• Their property "Stokes Run"*

The component programs under the Private Land Conservation Program (PLCP) have collectively helped to protect over 97,000ha of native vegetation in Tasmania. Large areas of core habitat for threatened wildlife such as swift parrots, native orchids and alpine flora are now being managed for conservation on private land in partnership with DPIW.

The PLCP provides services and support to participating landowners across Tasmania. The map below shows the spread of landowner participants in our component programs, and the coloured markers show examples of activities that the PLCP is involved with in partnership with landowners.

A PLCP monitoring sites have been established to track long-term change in vegetation condition. The detailed information gathered regularly on these sites is useful to guide long term strategies for management of conservation reserves. The information is shared with state, national and international research organisations, as well as landowners, to improve overall understanding and uptake of good conservation practices.

B Non Forest Vegetation program focuses specifically on the conservation of priority grasslands, shrublands, heathlands, wetlands and our special alpine cushionfields and heaths.

This program has worked with landowners to improve the conservation of these unique plant communities, while maintaining the productive use of the land where possible. Financial incentives,

information and property planning support have been important ingredients in the success of this program.

C Research and planning PLCP works with specialist scientific partners at the state and national level to develop strategies, policies and programs that will encourage better outcomes for long-term conservation on private land. This work includes developing strategies for dealing with climate change and the impacts of land degradation and habitat loss on biodiversity conservation.

D PLCP Stewardship Officers based in Hobart and Launceston, help landowners with ongoing management of their protected areas. These officers provide on farm advice and assistance to landowners with conservation agreements to ensure that the natural values on their land are managed in the best possible way to conserve biodiversity and maintain sustainable productivity. PLCP Stewardship officers also participate in field days and public awareness programs to help promote conservation.

E Land for Wildlife is a totally voluntary program that assists landowners to manage their land in a wildlife friendly way. The program is supported by volunteer field officers who do property visits to help and advise owners on biodiversity conservation.

Over 600 current members of Land for Wildlife are voluntarily protecting nature on their properties across 56,000 hectares of Tasmania.

F Private Forest Reserves protect priority native forests as part of the Regional Forests Agreement. This program ceased in mid-2006, but conservation agreements with DPIW that were formed under the program are continuing. This program targeted the conservation of important forest communities that are not well protected in state reserves.

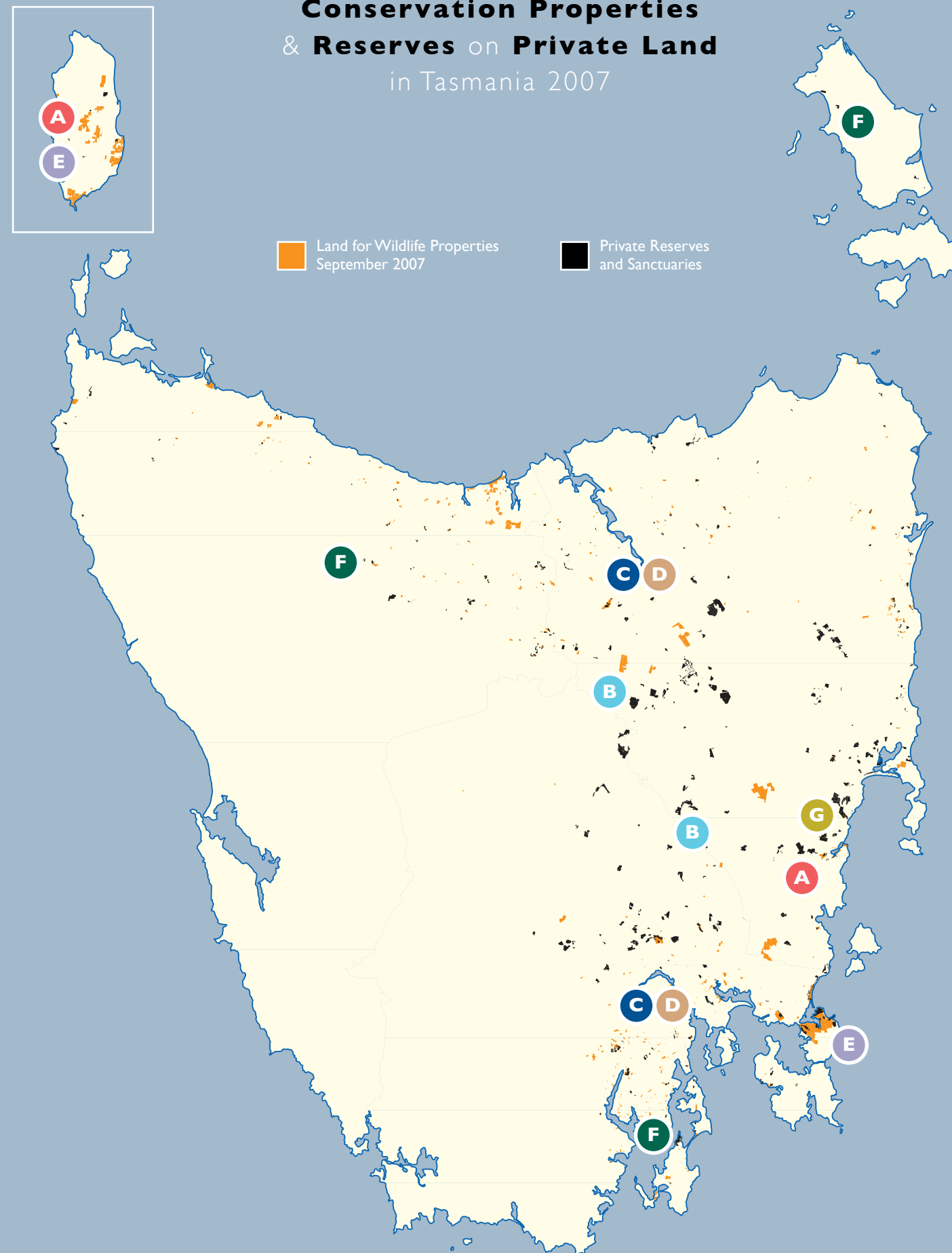


G Protected Areas on Private Land or PAPL, is a joint initiative between the Australian Government's *National Reserve System Program*, the Department of Primary Industries and Water, the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association and the Tasmanian Land Conservancy.

The aim of PAPL is to encourage and support landowners who wish to enter into voluntary conservation agreements with the Tasmanian Government to protect important natural values on their land. The program contributes to the Tasmanian and Australian *Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) Reserve System* by protecting under-reserved vegetation communities, freshwater values, threatened species and areas containing other significant natural values.



Conservation Properties & Reserves on Private Land in Tasmania 2007





Reporting **Sick** or **Injured** Wildlife

Wildlife diseases of significance are increasing in Tasmania, and some have the potential to significantly impact biodiversity. Effective reporting of wildlife health events from 'front line' individuals working with or observing wildlife is very important. It forms the basis of an early warning system for new disease outbreaks and helps DPIW monitor existing diseases as well. Reporting not only helps us

monitor disease at a species scale; it also means individual animals requiring attention can be assisted. Injured and orphaned wildlife will receive veterinary and husbandry care as needed, and the Wildlife Health Officer will follow up disease incidents.

To report any sick or injured wildlife, please phone DPIW Wildlife Enquiries on (03) 6233 6556

Native **grasslands** – worth conserving



Native dominated grasslands occur on at least 120,000 ha of private land in Tasmania, and bush runs cover another 240,000 ha. These areas are particularly valued by graziers for fine wool production due to their lower nutritional value and more even growth through the year compared to sown pastures.

Due in large part to the conservative use of these areas over generations of property management, there are still significant areas of highly diverse and stable native pasture providing important habitat for native wildlife.

Despite these large areas of native grasslands, some particular types of grassland community have been heavily modified to the extent that they are threatened with disappearing.

Lowland grasslands dominated by either silver tussock (*Poa labillardierei*) or kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) are not well represented in large good condition patches in Tasmania. These native vegetation types are an important

part of our heritage, providing the last links to our landscape as it once was.

In the last 18 months the PLCP, through the Non Forest Vegetation (NFV) Program, has been working with graziers to develop conservation agreements that protect important natural values in grassland ecosystems. So far 15 conservation agreements with landowners over 924 ha of native grasslands have been signed with a further 29 agreements in negotiation. These agreements are designed to recognise existing good management of these areas and to reward landowners through associated incentive payments. In many cases grazing remains an important conservation management practice under these agreements, recognising that past management practices have effectively protected the variety of flora and fauna that live among the grasses.

Senior Scientist with PLCP Louise Gilfedder said "the people who own these properties are really keen to ensure that there

is a balance between nature conservation and production on their land and that that balance is maintained in perpetuity. These grasslands are home to hundreds of species of plants, dozens of mammals and countless invertebrates – all of which are vital to maintaining balance in the environment.

The NFV program has been terrific in that for the first time in Tasmania, we have been able to reward these people's commitment and work with them to try to get market advantages as well as nature conservation outcomes on their productive native pastures".

An important aspect of the program is that it has aimed to establish reasonable and practical management regimes for the areas under agreement, with a primary focus of maintaining or improving the condition of the grasslands.

Funding for this program has been provided through the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust.

A **Helping Hand** for Private Protected Land

The Private Land Conservation Program has a strong focus on working with owners of covenanted areas as the "stewards" of protected land. For the reserve system to be successful, these people must be supported in practical and meaningful ways. The PLCP employs two staff who offer stewardship assistance solely to the covenant holders across Tasmania. Their roles are diverse, and include activities such as:

- General property visits to share management information
- Reviewing management prescriptions to ensure that meet the needs of the landowner and achieve conservation outcomes;
- Identification of plants and animals of interest;
- Mapping of high threat weeds;
- Assistance with fire and weed management generally;
- Finding relevant scientific or

technical information that may help landowners manage their reserves;

- Supporting landowners in negotiations with third party stakeholders such as public agencies and private companies;
- Investigating possible breaches of covenants, such as illegal activities that compromise reserve values.

Stu King offers support to northern Tasmanian properties out of his office at DPIW in Launceston. He is enthusiastic about his role. "In many cases, good management is based on good working relationships between players, the sharing of ideas and information amongst the team. With almost 400 covenants across the state, we have a huge team - and as you can imagine, an absolute wealth of valuable information resides within. I feel a key role of mine is to bond this network and pass on ideas and solutions. These people have made a strong commitment to conservation, I want

to demonstrate our commitment to them wherever possible."

Commencing her role in Feb 08, Lyn Pullen provides the same level of service to southern Tasmania. Lyn is experienced in nature conservation on private land in both Australia and Africa. With a strong commitment to workable solutions, Lyn is a practical thinker. "Just as management needs to be very specific to the natural environment, the support we offer must be tailored to landowners' resources and also the conditions they are facing. Flexibility is a key, but so are plain simple actions."

Stu can be contacted on (03) 6336 5427 or email stuart.king@dpiw.tas.gov.au

Lyn can be contacted on (03) 6233 3117 or email lynette.pullen@dpiw.tas.gov.au

Photos (L to R):

• *A Devil with Facial Tumour Disease.*

Photo by Charlotte McKenzie

• *Themeda grassland*

Council **Support** for Covenants

Across Tasmania, a number of Municipal Councils offer rate rebates to landowners who have conservation covenants through PLCP programs. Currently, 15 of the 29 Councils in Tasmania offer such rebates.

The *State of the Environment Report 2003* recommended that all councils provide rate incentives to encourage conservation covenants

on private property. It stated that rate and land tax rebates should be "*applied consistently and transparently for private land held for conservation benefits*".

Councils leading the way with this very positive program include Waratah Wynyard, Kingborough, Dorset, Meander Valley, West Tamar and Huon

Valley. Other Councils will be approached again soon by PLCP to encourage their participation in this important program that recognises contributions to nature conservation at the local scale.

For a full list of Councils who currently offer rate or other assistance please contact your PLCP Stewardship Officer.

Snakes on the Move



Increasing day length and warmer temperatures in late spring tempt Tasmania's snakes out of winter torpor. All three Tasmanian species (Copperhead *Austrelaps superbus*, tiger snake *Notechis scutatus* and white-lipped snake *Drysdalia coronoides*) are now on the move. While all are venomous, only tiger snakes have claimed human lives, mainly before the development of antivenom in the 1930's. While Tasmania's snakes have a reputation for aggression, most behaviour that people find threatening is largely bluff. This is borne out by a very simple fact; in most rural areas snakes are present in very high densities, but bites to people are very rare.

Snakes will always retreat if given the opportunity to do so and even in very rare cases when tiger snakes feel sufficiently threatened to advance towards a person, they will not bite but veer away. Most snake bites occur when people are attempting to capture or kill snakes. If you see a snake at a safe distance simply walk away or around it. If a snake is disturbed very close to you, the best thing to do (but also the hardest for many people) is to stay completely still. With poor eyesight limited to about 1 metre, if you are not moving the snake will crawl past you without being aware of your presence.

While the potential negative side of having snakes in your environment

often receives plenty of press, the positives rarely do. Tiger snakes have a very broad diet which includes introduced rodents such as mice, rats and juvenile rabbits. These rodents are responsible for a lot of agricultural damage and few landowners appreciate the enormous numbers of these pests that snakes consume every year. Copperheads also consume rats and mice but tend to specialise on frogs. The ecological health of your dams, creeks and lagoons can be very quickly gauged by the presence or absence of healthy copperhead populations. Without exception, high copperhead densities reflect high frog densities and high frog densities reflect a healthy ecosystem on your property.

While many land holders are not overly concerned by snakes away from homesteads and stock yards, there are a number of things you can do to deter snakes from choosing to take up residence close to human dwellings. Most reptiles are very good at conserving water, mostly by absorbing moisture from prey and having a slow metabolism and scaly skin. During dry weather, snakes often move closer to homesteads and urban areas in pursuit of prey such as frogs and rodents. While snakes may not need lots of water in hot weather, their prey generally does. Snakes can be discouraged by reducing cover for them as well as their

prey. Keep grass very short, stack timber; roofing iron etc well off the ground and away from residences and above all, eradicate rodent populations quickly. Nothing will encourage a large tiger snake around your house like an outbreak of rats.

While all Tasmanian snakes are protected, they can be destroyed if deemed a threat to people or livestock. Given the many positives of having these animals on your property, an alternative response should be considered. There are a range of people around the state who will relocate the snake to a more remote part of your property without any of the risks of trying to kill the animal yourself.

North West Coast:
Contact Michael Thow on 0418 170 952 - Insured (public liability) for catch and release.

For information visit www.allaboutreptiles.com.au download the 'Living with snakes' flyer. Or email: enquiries@allaboutreptiles.com.au

Alistair Ross (Central North Wildlife Care & Rescue Inc) - Insured (public liability) for catch and release.

Statewide: DPIW Wildlife Management Branch 1300 368 550
Office hours only 6233 6556

By Simon Fearn,
Michael and Jacqui Thow



Monitoring for better Conservation Outcomes

While looking after the people behind conservation covenants is important so too is looking after the plants, animal and communities themselves.

Monitoring change in the condition of vegetation and habitats is critical to inform good management decisions over long (perpetual) periods.

Louise Mendel and Kerri Spicer manage the PLCP monitoring program and take a keen interest in the health and vitality of covenanted lands. They work closely with the Stewardship staff, landowners of private reserves, other DPIW staff and the wider community to build and maintain a monitoring framework for conserved land.

"Many private reserves have been set up without a lot of information about what is actually in the bush that is protected" Dr Mendel says "our team is presently gathering critical data for ongoing monitoring of conservation improvement on private land".

With over 41,000 hectares in

private conservation reserves in Tasmania, it is a huge task. To date over 350 Vegetation Condition Assessments have been completed by PLCP staff. This has revealed new occurrences of endangered, vulnerable and rare plants and animals including the rare Forth River Peppermint (*Eucalyptus radiata*) found at Lorinna, and large populations of the threatened species Spiny Bossia (*Bossiaea obcordata*) found at Fingal. In total over 170 new threatened plant species locations have been recording during monitoring activities.

"Much of the information we are discovering is very positive for our understanding of the critical importance of private nature conservation at the local, regional and national scales" Dr Mendel says. "The information helps us to understand what is in the reserves, and design management guidelines that will protect these things. We also put together a report for the landowner that includes photos and information. Feedback from

landowners gives us the sense that these reports are really important to them, and help to build their knowledge about what is on their property".

Always with the future in mind, the monitoring team is currently forming links with external organisations, such as the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR), for opportunities to conduct detailed research into how we best manage private reserves. Such research will expand our understanding of the interactions between management prescriptions and activities, such as stock grazing rates, the needs of landowners and achieving good conservation outcomes.

If you would like to know more about the natural values on your land, contact the PLCP biological monitoring team - Louise Mendel on 6233 2400 or Kerri Spicer on 6233 6561

Photos (L to R):
• A tiger snake rears up
• Monitoring grazing effects at Bangor Private Forest Reserve, Dunally
• PLCP Biological Monitoring Officer, Kerri Spicer

Can we **help?**

Landowners interested in conservation on their land need not feel alone in managing their special places. There are a large number of grants and assistance programs available: Don Defenderfer, the State Landcare Coordinator maintains a database of incentives and assistance schemes for Tasmanian landowners.

For regular updates of what schemes are on offer; or to see the full listing please contact Don by phone on **1800 154 111** or email – don.defenderfer@bigpond.com

Some examples from Don's database include:

Funding for on ground works

NRM regional bodies offer programs to support good land management.

NRM South Incentives Project: provides funds for works that improve sustainability of soil water and biodiversity. For more information – contact **Greening Australia 6223 6377** or **ARM on 6244 3666** for more information.

NRM North through Private Forestry Tasmania offer funds for the management and enhancement of high priority native vegetation - contact PFT on **6336 5412** for more information.

NRM Cradle Coast Rivers and Bush Projects provides funds to

protect and enhance high quality native vegetation, streamside land and wetlands. Phone **6432 1405** for more information.

Tamar NRM provide on ground assistance to conserve and manage native vegetation and increase production – phone **6323 3310** for more information.

Your PLCP stewardship officer can also help in identifying options for funding activities that suit your property, please contact **6336 5427 (northern Tasmania)** and **6233 3117 (southern Tasmania)** for more information.

Funding for covenants and agreements

The **Forest Conservation Fund** targets old growth and under reserved forest communities on private land. FCF supports private landowners to manage their forest for conservation using voluntary stewardship arrangements; development of conservation management plans and provision of ongoing advice and assistance to manage protected areas. Contact KPMG (Tasmania) via **1300 854 456** or email fcf@deh.gov.au or go to: <http://www.environment.gov.au/land/forestpolicy/fcf/index.html>

Midlands Biodiversity Hotspot Tender

A new tender based biodiversity stewardship program is available for the Midlands. This project

covers the lowland country (below 700m) extending from just south of Launceston to just north of Hobart. The tender offers income support to manage biodiversity, making it complementary to other farm enterprises. There is potential to take grazing pressure off natural areas, allowing them to regenerate, or source money to fence or combat weeds.

Phone Southern Midlands Council Municipal Offices at Oatlands on **6254 5047** or **0422 936 027**; email ggreen@southernmidlands.tas.gov.au

Non-Forest Vegetation

Management Program offers property-based vegetation management agreements, conservation covenants, and on-ground incentives for landowners to manage and protect threatened non-forest native vegetation, including grasslands, wetlands, heaths and scrubs.

On-going assistance available from this major initiative. Phone **6233 8538** for more information.

Protected Areas on Private Land Program

Voluntary Conservation on Private Land in Tasmania (conservation covenants, management agreements and private reserves).

On-going assistance available. Benefits include exemptions from land tax, rate rebates, expert advice, and on-ground assistance. Phone **6233 6210** or **6332 1800**.

