



The **Running**Postman

Newsletter of the Private Land Conservation Program

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



Manager's **message** – June 2017

As a long time enthusiast for private land conservation, I am continually amazed to observe the positive advancement of our understanding of nature, and at the same time the eternal passion that so many people have for the protection of natural values. In this edition of the Running Postman, examples of both new knowledge and abiding passion are showcased.

The progression of ecosystem change due to global warming is daunting, but it is clear that our best responses come through observation and dialogue. The recent Conservation Landholders Tasmania forum on climate change highlighted the value of citizen science and sharing of knowledge in developing locally relevant responses and understanding for management of reserves in a changing environment. I congratulate the CLT for once again tackling an issue of relevance and focus for reserve managers.

The range of articles and topics covered in this issue I hope provide

the reader with some leads and ideas for advancing knowledge in areas of reserve management, and also provide topical insights to natural phenomena such as the recent fireblight beetle plagues.

On a very positive note, the recent registration of a large covenant in the Central Highlands has taken the total area of private land reserved in Tasmania to over 100,000 hectares. This incredible milestone has taken nearly 20 years to achieve since the first covenanting programs started up in 1998/99. Since that time there have been a number of covenanting programs, some with incentive payments, others without, with the result being private land covenants spread out across all regions of Tasmania, from coastal areas to high altitude terrains, and ranging in size from very small right up to the largest covenant (a Tasmanian Land Conservancy covenant) which is 8760ha.

The 100,000 ha milestone

represents a hugely significant, voluntary commitment to nature conservation by a wide cross section of the Tasmanian community and represents the protection of large areas of threatened and under-reserved vegetation types, populations of threatened species, geoconservation values and other significant natural values outside the public reserve system.

I am immensely proud to be the humble manager of a diverse team of conservation scientists and professionals who have achieved so much over the past 20 years. I consider their achievements, when aligned with the enormous voluntary contributions of land owners and our partner organisations to be world class. I hope you also feel some measure of satisfaction that your reserve and your efforts are part of a much larger national focus on nature conservation.

*Peter Voller,
Manager, Natural Values
Conservation Branch*

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On the cover: Wombat. Photo: Tourism Tasmania & Masaaki Aihara.
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Managing **dry sclerophyll** forest

Two years ago Conservation Landowners Tasmania (CLT) held a field weekend at Bruny Island which was so popular it was decided to hold another weekend get-together, this time at Cambridge, on the theme of managing dry sclerophyll forest.

After some early birds met for pizza and chat on the Friday evening, an eventual total of 38 members and professional colleagues gathered at Cambridge Hall early on Saturday 11th February for a close encounter with the dry sclerophyll landscape that most of us know well, even if only on the edges of our vision as we travel the southern and eastern parts of Tassie.

Botanist Fred Duncan and his wife, Mercedes, who live near Cambridge where they own a covenanted property close by, were responsible for organising much of the weekend for us; Fred also started the presentations with a clear overview of the distribution of dry forests and woodlands principally in the eastern half of Tasmania; and their interrelationship with climate, topography, land use and fire practices by aboriginal people, later settlement, and, of course, wildfire. This latter issue of wildfire, along with questions surrounding fuel reduction burns and the capacity to regenerate after fire and restore biodiversity, is of abiding interest to

all dry forest landowners. In fact it emerged as the main topic for discussion in the Q & A session chaired by John Thompson and supported by Fred, Phil Watson, and ecologists Phil Barker and Allison Woolley.

Phil Watson is the NRM Planner for Clarence City Council, and he was generous in sharing the model used by the Council for developing Bush and Coastal Activity Plans for the 200 km of coastline and the large reserves network in the municipality. The main aims of the Plans are to capture community knowledge and build shared responsibility, and Phil is passionate about developing strategies for achieving ongoing demonstrable results by involving the disparate stakeholders – Council staff, scientists, landowners and community groups. On Sunday morning we spent several hours with Phil in the beautiful *Allocasuarina* and white gum woodlands, heathlands and kangaroo grasslands of Waverley Park Nature Reserve on Mornington Hill.

Allison Woolley and Phil Barker, who also gave morning presentations at the hall on Saturday, took us after lunch to their lovely property close by to walk (or drive!) up some stiff slopes and through eucalypt woodlands, to enjoy both wide views and intimate

encounters (including with some serrated tussock that they inherited and have nearly succeeded in eradicating) plus intriguing insights into their regeneration work and motivations for doing what they do.

Further along the scenic wine route between Cambridge and Richmond, our visit to the property owned by Fred and Mercedes offered similar steep slopes and impressive views through lovely open woodland, and prompted discussion about the roles of owners and the fire service on conservation land. The Duncans' home is not far along the road from the property and was where we were supposed to end up enjoying a meal in their olive grove. Not so; the weather defeated us and we retreated to the hall, nothing if not flexible!

Many thanks to Fred, Robin Garnett, John Thompson and Phil Collier for all their work, and to Phil Watson, Fred, Mercedes, Allison and Phil, who allowed us to enjoy their land and learn from it. Thanks also to the support from Magali Wright from NRM South and our other five partners: Cradle Coast NRM, NRM North, DPI/PWE, Landcare Tasmania and the Tasmanian Land Conservancy.

Kay Harman

Photos (L to R): Phil Barker with CLT members in his dry sclerophyll forest. Phil Watson entertains CLT members with memorable stories at the Waverley Flora Reserve. Photos: Robin Garnett



Mange outbreaks threaten wombats, but there ARE ways you can help

The Narawntapu National Park used to be a place where you could be guaranteed to see wombats all over the marsupial lawns, but now there are only a handful of wombats left, due to the ravages of sarcoptic mange that has killed approximately 94 percent of the local wombats. “Populations around the central north, particularly, as well as some other parts of the state, have been very badly affected”, says University of Tasmania researcher, Dr Scott Carver.

“This is a devastating infestation impacting on wombats, and we can’t allow them to suffer” says Oma Rodger, president of Tasmanian Wildlife Rehabilitation Council and state president for Wombat Protection Society of Australia, who has received increasing reports of mange from wildlife carers around the state.

As for the impact on the species overall, Dr Carver says that we simply do not have the data on wombat populations across the state to assess this, but he says that mange is having a significant impact

on wombats in some areas. In their research at Narawntapu National Park, his team of researchers has not found any wombats that survive mange infection and, thus, there is not any evidence at this time of resistance in the population. DPIPWE’s Tasmanian Spotlight Survey Program showed counts statewide actually increased between 1985 and 2015. There was a decrease in wombat counts in the West Tamar area during 2009-2015 but a stable overall population around the state over this period. Whether or not mange will affect the state population over time, there is no doubt that it is a cruel disease for individuals.

Mange disease is caused by microscopic mites, *Sarcoptes scabiei*, which burrow into the skin, leading to a thick, scaly crust on the skin and hair loss. It is intensely itchy for the wombat, and can lead to scabs and painful cracked skin, secondary infections, blindness, weight loss, changed behaviour and months of suffering that can ultimately lead to death. This is the same mite species that causes scabies in humans and domestic dogs, and

once it has entered a wombat population it appears they maintain its existence. Mange is widespread throughout the wombat’s range, but seems to have been increasing in presence lately in particular regions of Tasmania. Nationally, sarcoptic mange is the biggest disease threat to wombat populations.

Mange is thought to spread mainly as a result of sharing burrows. Wombats are usually solitary but will share burrows on occasion or use the same burrow, but on differing days. In the burrow, the mites may spread through direct contact and also indirectly, as mites can survive for short periods (up to three weeks) independently in the environment. Away from a host or a favourable environment, mites starve and desiccate quickly.

Fortunately, an ingenious and simple treatment has been developed by the Wombat Protection Society of Australia. Called the “burrow flap method”, it uses an ice cream box lid, a milk bottle cap, some wire and a treatment provided by the Tasmanian Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (TWRC). A measured



amount of chemical trickles onto a wombat's back as it enters or leaves the burrow. There is no need to disturb the wombat. Check it out at the Mange Management website <http://mangemanagement.org.au/treatment-methods/>

To obtain a kit and instructions, contact Oma Rodgers at the Tasmanian Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (twrc@taswildlife.org). It is necessary to go through them to ensure compliance with an off-label "minor use" permit for the chemical involved. They also have information on a sulphur-based organic treatment.

With a weekly refill for 8 weeks, the infection should be largely cured, and with fortnightly follow-up for another 8 weeks, the wombats should be safe from re-infection while the remaining mites in the burrow die off. Treatment should not be continued in an ongoing way for longer than this, to try and limit the chance of treatment resistance evolving in mites.

Dr Carver's team of researchers has recently completed a three month experiment, aiming to

treat the remaining population at Narawntapu National Park, using the burrow flap method. Treatment was very successful for individual wombats, but unfortunately they were not able to find and treat all wombats, so the aim of eliminating mange from the park altogether was not met.

A group called Wombat Rescue Tasmania (check out their facebook page) has formed at Kelso in the West Tamar area to address wombat mange, with development of a wombat hospital underway, creation of burrow flaps and trained volunteers committing to treat wombats on their property. People are working together in rosters to ensure that wombat flaps are kept primed weekly then fortnightly for the full treatment period. It may be that, together with friends, you can help your local wombat population.

You can also greatly help researchers by mapping wombats and wombat burrows, and recording their health, on your smartphone or online at WomSAT <http://womsat.org.au/womsat/map.aspx>, as part of a nationwide

community science project run by the University of Western Sydney.

The Tasmanian Government has recently committed \$100,000 to a joint effort program between the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, the University of Tasmania and volunteers from Conservation Volunteers Australia. Assistance to community groups and individuals is available to help with costs in treating mange-affected wombats. For an application form and for Mange Treatment Protocols, see <http://dpipwe.tas.gov.au/wildlife-management/animals-of-tasmania/mammals/possums-kangaroos-and-wombats/wombat>.

MANGE CAN BE CAUGHT BY CONTACT WITH INFECTED WOMBATS. CONTACT WITH WOMBATS SHOULD BE AVOIDED.

Anna Povey

(Contact Anna for more information about the content of this article)

Photos (L to R): Wombat burrow flap. Photo: Oma Rodgers. Mange infected wombat. Photo: Oma Rodgers. Healthy wombat on Maria Island. Photo: James Leggate. Non-infected wombat at Narawntapu National Park. Photo: James Leggate.



Land for **Wildfire?**

You've probably heard it. It's *one of those myths* that land managed for flora and fauna conservation is a 'wildfire' waiting to happen. In fact, under wildfire conditions almost any area of vegetation can carry a devastating wildfire. Even residential.

Visitors to Snug, in the state's south, might have a hard time imagining a wildfire roaring through those broad open spaces and penetrating the semi-rural township. We know it can happen, but it can be hard to picture. Regretfully, on the 7th of February 1967, when it did happen, not even the city of Hobart was spared. In that one day 64 lives were lost and over 1200 homes destroyed.

So "bushfires" don't just belong in the bush and forest fires don't stay in the forest. The thing is, many start there.

Most of those 1967 fires were deliberately started by landowners conducting their own burn offs. Unsurprisingly, burning off is a far less common practice these days, even under conditions that suit a safe undertaking.

Even those that know the value of fire in the landscape also know that fire is something to fear. And it's not necessarily the fire itself we are afraid of. It's being at fault. It's about being sure we've done *everything* right. It's about not being seen as reckless or irresponsible or dangerous or a bad

land manager. It's about permits and seasons and fines. It's forgotten knowledge and new approaches we're just not so sure about.

And for many of us, it's also our love for nature and concern for fire vulnerable flora and fauna. To begin with, we know not all vegetation is suitable. In the Fuel Reduction Unit of the Tasmania Fire Service we refer to these types as "untreatable". These are places where fire is not an ecologically viable treatment such as wet forests, rainforest and alpine vegetation assemblages for example.

Secondly, although our vegetation might be broadly "treatable" (resilient to fire of correct intensity, season, and frequency) there remain concerns about particular species of flora, fauna or specific areas within the larger parcel of land.

Most people managing land for conservation values are acutely aware of those values - what they are, where they are, and how they should be treated so that those values are maintained or enhanced.

That's exactly the point, because the actual act of burning is only a small fraction of overall fire management. The knowledge and understanding at the property scale are as vital to a successful burn as are the weather and fuel conditions. 'Success' is much more than reducing the fuel

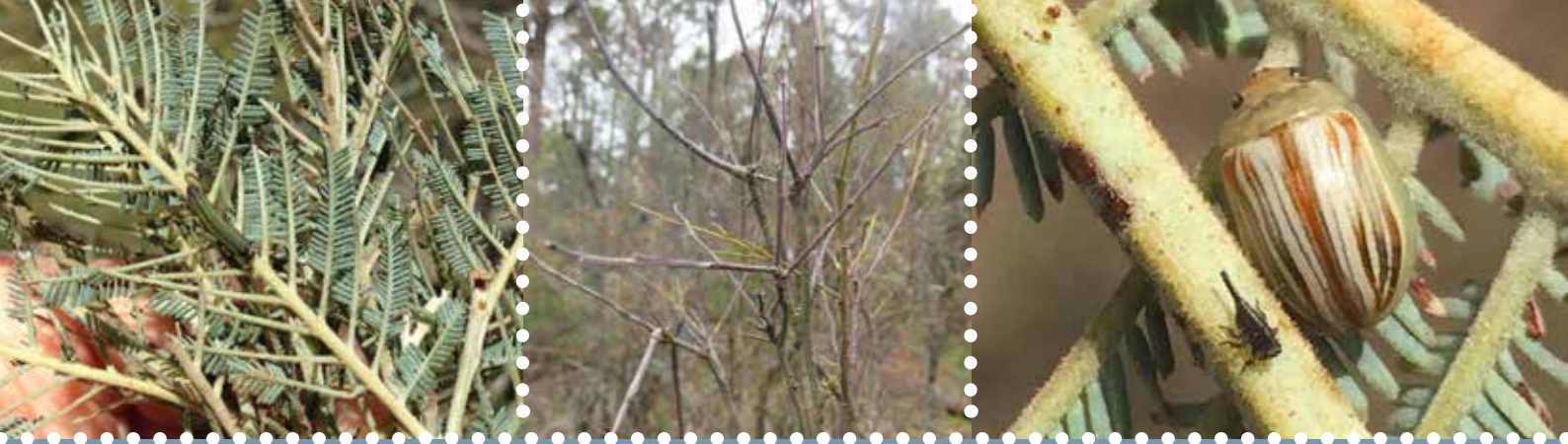
load, it's maintaining ecological integrity and species diversity.

To assist private landowners the Tasmania Fire Service recently launched a Planned Burning booklet titled '*Planned Burning for Landholders and Farmers*'. The booklet outlines typical ecological considerations and combines that information with detail on implementing a burn. The toolkit includes information about weather conditions, fire behaviour, and safety. It also includes resources such as the Beaufort wind scale, the single leaf test and useful phone numbers and websites. Paired with your own ecological and practical knowledge of the land it will help you assess for a prescribed burn.

The truth is that land managed for conservation is, in many cases, some of the more actively managed and/or understood areas of native vegetation. So if that's you, and you're thinking of undertaking a prescribed burn, far from being unprepared, it's just likely you are already ahead of the game.

*Stu King,
Community Engagement
Officer (North West),
Fuel Reduction Unit*

The SFMC '*Planned Burning for Farmers and Landholders*' booklet is available from the PLCP or by emailing sfmc@fire.tas.gov.au or the web site www.sfmc.tas.gov.au.



Fireblight **leaf beetle**

Extensive scorched or dieback symptoms are sometimes seen in stands of Silver Wattle (*Acacia dealbata*) or Black Wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*) in the spring and early summer. In some years, stands of these trees can appear orange from a distance. This is due to defoliation by the so-called fireblight leaf beetle *Peltoschema orphana* which is locally abundant in regrowth stands of the bipinnate wattles in Tasmania and Victoria. Both the larvae and the adult beetle stages feed on the foliage of the host trees. The adults are glossy, dome-shaped beetles about 6mm long, green in colour and striped with cream and reddish brown. The sluggish grub-like larvae grow to 10mm in length, and are green in colour with a darker stripe along their sides and a dark head.

The fireblight leaf beetle has an annual lifecycle. Adult beetles emerge from their over-summering retreats in the autumn to feed on wattle foliage and find mates. Mating occurs on the trees and female beetles then lay their eggs in rows on the underside of the leaves over a period of weeks from April to June. The eggs hatch after about ten days, and the larvae feed and grow slowly through the winter. By early spring, the larvae are approaching full size and beginning to make an impact on the foliage

which appears increasingly ragged. When fully fed they leave the tree to pupate within earthen cells in the soil. After two or three weeks in the pupa, a new generation of adult beetles appears by late spring and can be very abundant on the trees in November. After feeding for a few weeks, the adults then retreat to cool refuges such as under bark or among ground litter to pass the hottest part of the summer in a dormant state. As the feeding pressure declines, the damaged wattles may re-sprout some new foliage over the summer months.

Although periodic defoliation is a natural occurrence, repeated leaf loss can cause trees to die, and is a challenge for establishing wattles in plantations or for habitat restoration. On rare occasions, even mature wattles can be killed over extensive areas. Even-aged dense stands, such as those recruited from seed after a fire, seem to be especially vulnerable.

In most years, fireblight beetle numbers are regulated by weather conditions and by a variety of natural predators which include spiders, soldier beetles (*Chauliognathus lugubris*), ladybirds (Coccinellidae) and parasitic flies (Tachinidae). However, the fireblight beetles' capacity to breed quickly means they can outpace

their natural controls in some years.

The environmental impacts of repeated defoliation can be severe as Black and Silver Wattles provide important habitat for various bird species. In native forests it is likely the periodic defoliation of these wattles may benefit other understorey shrubs which can exploit the reduced competition for resources.

Wattle foliage is especially nutritious and is therefore attractive to a variety of chewing and sucking insects. The community of acacia beetles in Tasmania is dominated by various leaf beetles (Chrysomelidae) and weevils (Curculionidae) with predatory ladybird beetles (Coccinellidae) also abundant on these trees. A close relative of the fireblight beetle, *Peltoschema hamadryas*, is widespread on wattles in Tasmania but is less abundant and the adult beetles mainly feed on the flower buds. Also related, but much less common, is the orange and black *Peltoschema oceanica* which mimics a ladybird beetle.

*Peter McQuillan,
University of Tasmania*



Managing private reserves in the new world of climate change

Managing your private reserve can be a challenge at the best of times, but for many the thought of the potential impacts of climate change can be very daunting and disheartening. It is certain there will be change but it is not clear what impacts these climatic changes will have. In this article we explore some of the practical actions you can do to help develop resilience in the nature on your property.

Resilience is the ability of a system to absorb impacts before a threshold is reached where the system changes and moves into another state. The bush as we know it will change as new species move in to fill the space where other species can no longer cope. Maybe the trees in your woodland have all died and now you have a grassland, or the wetland has dried out and has been invaded by scrub. However, you still will have a healthy functioning ecosystem – it will just be different. The new mix of species is potentially more climate-adapted and may prove to be more resilient.

First some definitions. You have probably heard about climate change adaptation, but what

does it mean? **Adaptation is the adjustment over time to a new or changing environment.** It can be anticipatory or reactive. Good land management practices are the best adaptation - mostly adaptation will be about doing what we should be doing anyway – minimizing current threats (weeds, pests) and using grazing and fire management as conservation tools. But maybe we need to change our current strategies to fit new conditions. In some cases you may actively use management to protect something you value. For example, more frequent fire regimes under climate change in a native grassland may prevent shrubs and trees from invading (one of the predictions under climate change).

Given the uncertainty the use of low risk and “no regrets” actions is encouraged. Experiment in your reserve with varying some of your current management if you are concerned that it may not be having a favourable impact. For example with hotter conditions – let the grass stay a bit longer to provide a cooler microenvironment near the ground. On the south-facing slopes maybe maintain some deep areas

of leaf litter to act as a refuge.

Landscape connectivity is an emerging and important concept in adaptation thinking. Where there is connectivity species can move to allow them to respond to change. Trees, shrubs and understorey can all be planted to connect areas of native vegetation or to create all important shade along rivers and creeks. It will also be important to make space for nature to move – for example saltmarshes may expand into adjacent paddocks and low-lying areas where sea-level rise occurs, and rivers may change their course after big floods. In some places it will be beneficial to live with these changes, anticipate and facilitate them, rather than fighting them with engineering interventions and the like.

Protecting existing habitat and increasing the extent of habitat is one of the most important adaptation options. It will become increasingly important to restore degraded habitat, especially after extreme events. In the ACT and at Mt Panorama in NSW they are restoring habitat by adding large woody debris into woodland areas, with dramatic results.

Photos (L to R): Saltmarsh on Tasmania's East Coast has potential to move landwards into the adjacent paddocks as sea-levels rise. Photo: Vishnu Prahalad. Cool, moist, more humid and more fire-protected spaces can act as important habitat for creatures such as the velvet-worm. Photo: Jon Green.



Revegetation and restoration are best achieved by using “**climate-ready**” plants - species likely to survive in a new climate. A long-term experiment is already underway in Tasmania. A network of genetic trials, integrated into large-scale environmental tree plantings, is being used to study the genetic diversity and adaptive potential of native tree species. Researchers from UTas and Greening Australia will assess local versus non-local seed sources, and the role of tree genetics in shaping dependent biodiversity and other ecosystem services. Currently they are using two eucalypt species to see which genetic types are best adapted to future climates.

Identify and protect contemporary and future refuges for climate-affected species.

Refugia are places where some species are able to persist when most of the original geographic range becomes uninhabitable because of climate change. They reflect past environmental conditions and often contain endemic species found nowhere else. **Refuges** can also be areas where species can persist for

short periods during changed environmental conditions due to fire, flood or drought. These places can often reflect unusual **climatic spaces**, places that are unusually cool, wet, humid or protected from fire. The conservation of rare climatic spaces could become an important management goal on your property. These could include gorges and small ravines, frost hollows, caves, groves of trees casting deep shade, rock piles and logs, the deep accumulations of litter, the shaded southern sides of steep hills, and tree hollows.

Finally, an important role for private reserve managers is to become **citizen scientists**, actively noting and recording changes or unusual natural events. One useful site is <https://www.inaturalist.org/>

iNaturalist is a citizen science project and online social network of naturalists, citizen scientists, and biologists built on the concept of mapping and sharing observations of biodiversity across the globe. Observations may be added via the website or from a mobile application. The observations provide valuable open data to a variety of scientific research

projects, museums, botanic gardens, parks, and other organizations.

Louise Gilfedder

Useful materials:

1. Gilfedder L, Macgregor N, Bridle K, Carter O and Sprod D (2012) *Implementing Adaptation to Climate Change in Terrestrial and Freshwater Natural Environments in Tasmania*. Report on an expert workshop held in Hobart, Tasmania on 28th and 29th November, 2012. Report to the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water & Environment, Hobart.

http://dpipwe.tas.gov.au/Documents/Climate-Change-Workshop-Report_web.pdf

2. VicNature 2050 – People helping nature adapt to climate change.

This web site describes ten positive actions informed by science and inspired by nature we all can do to help natural areas adapt to a new climate.

<http://vicnature2050.org/>

Photos (L to R): Section of the Elizabeth River shaded by trees and overhanging vegetation is cooler than nearby unshaded riparian stretches. Photo: Michael Askey-Doran. White gum woodlands in the Midlands still have diverse grassy understoreys with high conservation values. Photo: Louise Gilfedder. Caves, cliffs, rocky gorges, ravines and cool, shaded south-facing slopes can act as important refuges. Photo: Iona Mitchell.

Protecting wildlife species and their habitats



At times we are asked 'What is Land for Wildlife all about? Land for Wildlife (LFW) is the only national free non-binding voluntary nature conservation scheme that operates across Australia. It is implemented in all States and Territories, except South Australia.

LFW originated in Victoria in 1981 when the Bird Observers Club of Australia (BOCA) recommended a scheme be implemented to support and recognize landowners who were maintaining and protecting areas of natural bushland on their properties as "land for wildlife". Thus giving rise to the 'Land for Wildlife' scheme. It began as a cooperative initiative between BOCA and the Victorian nature conservation agency of that time. Landowners who registered their properties received a LFW sign following a property visit.

The scheme was gradually developed more formally with regional LFW extension officers employed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) (now Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)) throughout Victoria. Other states showed interest in adopting the scheme and national protocols were developed to provide for a standard mode of operating the scheme with Tasmania, NSW and Western Australia signing a Memorandum of Understanding agreement "Arrangement to Co-ordinate Land for Wildlife schemes" with Victoria.

This MOU was signed in 1997 and LFW commenced in Tasmania in 1998. The scheme also commenced in Queensland in 1998 followed by the Northern Territory (Darwin and Alice Springs) in 2001 and 2002 respectively following the signing of the MOU with Victoria. In recent times it now includes the ACT.

Victoria owns the copyright and trademark of the LFW sign/logo, with the size, colour and text of the diamond shaped sign being uniformly and consistently used by the other state and territory LFW schemes. Each state has the option of using additional features in their sign and for Tasmania the platypus and banksia cone were added to convey the message that wildlife includes both flora and fauna.

LFW promotes and supports community participation in biodiversity conservation and contributes to the continuity of habitats across landscapes. The beauty of the scheme is that landowners approach us to have their properties registered as a means of being recognized for their contribution to protecting wildlife species and their habitat. By displaying the LFW sign they are also increasing community awareness of this. It is lovely to see how thrilled landowners are to receive their sign which they display with pride. The LFW sign is firmly established and LFW is recognized nationally as a strong brand.

LFW contributes to the broader conservation and protection of wildlife species and their habitats outside of formal public reserves, with a large proportion of Tasmania's wildlife species and habitat types occurring mainly or solely on privately owned land. Protection of natural habitats on private land is therefore critical to complement the species and communities protected in our National Parks and Reserves.

Properties that qualify for LFW registration are generally 2ha or greater with at least 1 ha of natural bush. The scheme is about the integration of nature conservation with other land uses, it does not just solely apply to entire bush blocks. There are vineyards, farms, nurseries, ecotourism ventures and a variety of other properties which undertake other activities on their land outside of the area that the landowner considers is their 'land for wildlife'.

Credit for the success of the scheme in Tasmania and nationally is due to those landowners who have registered to show their support and commitment to protecting our wildlife species and their habitat. This is such a valuable contribution to biodiversity conservation nationally and wonderful to see.

Iona Mitchell

Flashes of **iridescent blue** in the garden



Join the 'Recent **Ecological Change** in Australia' Survey!

A familiar and well recognised visitor to many gardens across south-eastern Australia is the superb fairy wren, also known as the blue wren or fairy wren. These are active little birds that hop about erratically searching for insects and other invertebrates to eat – so they are good pest controllers in the garden.

Male breeding fairy wrens are highly visible as they develop a bright iridescent blue plumage on their forehead, ear coverts, mantle and tail with a black mask and deep blue chest. Females and non-breeding males are not so vibrant in colour, with grey-brown plumage, but they are equally delightful birds to watch. Two species have been identified, Tasmania having the larger and darker form (*Malurus cyaneus*) and the smaller more pale form found on the mainland (*M cyanochlamys*).

Fairy wrens can be found in a wide range of habitats from open forest and woodland to scrub where suitable dense understorey occurs. They are common birds in urban parks and gardens. They tend to stay in the one area and can be very territorial – for a small bird, they can be quite vocal, especially when in full song. They tend to occur in small social groups consisting of one breeding male and several adult females or young birds. Often they can be seen as a group out feeding, 'chattering' amongst themselves while they hop along the ground. Generally they feed in bursts throughout the day, resting in the

safety of shrubbery in between times.

The breeding season is from September to March and in a good season two or three broods may be successfully raised with help from other members of the group. They nest rather low to the ground, approximately 1 – 1.5 m off the ground, building a domed structure with a side entrance. The nests are usually made of woven grass, fine twigs and moss and held together using spider webs – quite often dog or other soft animal hair is used to make a very cosy lining.

You can welcome fairy wrens into your garden by planting prickly native shrubs in a dense cluster so that they have a safe place to shelter and build a nest out of harm's way of predators, such as cats or dogs. You will be rewarded by the benefits of having these natural insect pest controllers as well as having the pleasure of watching these beautiful little birds.

Iona Mitchell



Photo: Female and male fairy wren.
Photo: 10 yr old Tom Davies.

Over the past century, average land surface temperatures have risen by almost 1° C across the Australian continent. Models suggest this may have already had significant impacts on Australia's ecosystems and biodiversity, but these impacts have not been systematically investigated.

CSIRO Land and Water and the Department of the Environment and Energy will soon be launching an exciting project to collect stories and anecdotes that will help to build a national picture of the kinds of ecological changes that have been occurring across the country over the past 10-20 years, or more. We are looking for people with strong links to Australian environments (e.g. farmers, natural resource managers, ecologists, naturalists) to share their perceptions of recent ecological change in an area they know well, and how this might link with climate or other change.

The survey will take about 30-40 minutes and will be released by the end of May 2017. It will be distributed via a range of NRM networks, and you will soon find a link to the survey on the project web page below. We'd greatly welcome your participation.

<https://research.csiro.au/biodiversity-knowledge/projects/recent-history-climate-driven-ecological-change-australia/>

For further information please contact Suzanne.Prober@csiro.au

Photo: *Eucalyptus gunni* mortality Central Plateau.
Photo: Suzanne Prober.



Future events

Conservation Landholders Tasmania

Conservation landholders are welcome to participate in the following events:

Saturday 25 November 2017, *Managing riverside vegetation in conservation areas*

Conservation Landholders Tasmania is teaming up with Mount Roland Rivercare group to jointly host a field day in the Cradle Coast NRM region on the topic of maintaining healthy riparian zones. We will hear from scientists and visit an area of exemplary river bank restoration that proved resilient in the June 2016 floods.

Saturday 17 March 2018, *A Devil of a Day*

Learn from experts about some of the work being carried out to save Tasmanian Devils and visit Scott Bell's property near Bridport, which is home to a captive population of Devils.

To join the CLT email contact list, email Robin Garnett robin@rubicon.org.au or John Thompson thompsonjohn@gmail.com. Invitations are sent out to those on the list a month before each event.

2017 National Private Land Conservation Conference

The 2017 National Private Land Conservation Conference will be held in Hobart from 18-20 October at the Hobart Function and Conference Centre, 1 Elizabeth Street Pier, Hobart.

The theme will be 'Valuing Nature' and there will be a diverse and engaging spread of expert speakers. The full program will be released soon. Registration opens 21 August 2017.

For more information visit the conference website at <http://plc-conference.org.au/>

Private Land Conservation Program participants as at June 2017

Number of covenants	840	107,054 hectares
Land for Wildlife members	949	57,615 hectares
Gardens for Wildlife members	581	2,830 hectares

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

Post or email

Just a reminder that if you would prefer to receive your copy of *The Running Postman* by email please contact the PLCP on 6165 4409 or iona.mitchell@dipwe.tas.gov.au

Natural and Cultural Heritage
Private Land Conservation Program
134 Macquarie Street Hobart
GPO Box 44 Hobart TAS 7001
www.dipwe.tas.gov.au/plcp

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. Stewardship Officers 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.

Contacts

Stewardship

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Land For Wildlife

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Tasmanian
Government