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THE TASMANIAN CONSERVATIONIST

Number 314

September 2008

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THREATENED SPECIES



Tasmanian Conservation Trust



40th Anniversary Exhibition



MAATSUYKER ISLAND



LITTLE PENGUINS



MARINE RESERVES



ROAD KILL REDUCTION



The Tasmanian Conservationist is the regular newsletter of the
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Contributions: We encourage our readers to submit articles of interest for publication. Articles should preferably be short (up to 600 words) and well illustrated. Please forward copy on computer disk or by email if possible. Guidelines for contributors are available from the TCT office. We reserve the right to edit contributions.

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Contents

CEO's Report	3
40th Anniversary Bash	4
State Government's Approach to Cat Control	5
Review of the Tasmanian Planning System	6
Vale Veronica Throp	7
Cat Control & Management Forum	8
Coastcare Programs & Community Facilitation	9
Rally for Marine Protection	10
Time for a New Australian Coastal Policy	11
Minimising the Swift Parrot Collision Threat	12
Swift Parrot Breeding Season in Review	12
Myrtle Forest Facilities Upgraded	14
Changes to Tasmanian Threatened Species Protection Action Schedules	14
TCT Comments on Tasman National Park and Reserves Draft Management Plan 2008	15

North-West Branch

Tasmanian Conservation Trust

Meetings of the North-West Branch of the TCT are held on the first Wednesday of each month.

The venue for the meeting is the
Penguin Railway Station at 5pm

All members of the North-West Branch are invited to attend to discuss conservation issues in the area.

Editing

Proofreading

Specialising in conservation issues.
 Reports, management plans,
 newsletters and books.

Janice Bird

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CEO's Report

I started work as CEO of the TCT at the end of August 2007. The most important task given to me at the employment interview was to find new premises for the organisation, due to the uncertain tenure of existing arrangements. The previous office environment was in a very tired state after more than 30 years of continuous use. After much searching and negotiation, we managed to find an office at the same rent, still within the CBD, which is much more modern and has better facilities. I would like to thank Trish McKeown, John Forsyth and Phil Anstie, in particular, for their efforts regarding the office move.

Since my employment commenced there has been a considerable increase in the amount of media being generated by the TCT, and in contacts with other community organisations and the public service, including significant improvements in relationships with the Wilderness Society, Australian Conservation Foundation, Tasmanian National Parks Association and our interstate counterparts. The TCT has continued to maintain its existing strong relationships with WWF, Humane Society International, Sustainable Living Tasmania and Against Animal Cruelty Tasmania and has been working collaboratively with the Save Ralphs Bay committee, on marine reserves in particular.

The TCT has taken the lead on national issues in the last 12 months. Earlier this year it organised the first meeting of non-government organisations in Melbourne on the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas (NRSMPA), and was the only state-based organisation invited to participate in negotiations over the NRSMPA by the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts. Our marine campaigner, Jon Bryan, has led the national response of conservation organisations to a developing new threat to Australia's southeast fisheries: the deployment of new super-sized trawlers targeting smaller fish than have traditionally been taken. This certainly is a case of fishing down the food scale and would threaten a broad suite of marine species, should it proceed.

Early in 2008, the TCT took the lead among NGOs in opposing a new mining exploration licence for the Southwest Conservation Area. We have to continue to lobby the resources minister, David Llewellyn, not to issue an exploration licence. Already we are in a good position as a licence would normally be issued within a few weeks of the end of the public comment period. The fact that it has been more than six months since the application was made indicates that the government is unlikely to issue a licence.

The TCT is playing an active role in the management of feral species in the state. We expect to host a second forum on the management of feral cats in the latter half of this year, and will be undertaking a feral cat control project with Kingsborough Council. This extends the cat control work that Peter McGlone has coordinated on Bruny Island. The TCT has lodged a Coastcare application for a large project for the eradication of cats from Tasman Island and has prepared three other applications for Caring for Our Country Coastcare Round One and one more for the Open Grants.

The TCT continues to be involved in partnership programs such as the Derwent Estuary Program (DEP) and in cooperative ventures with business and government. Earlier this year, project officer Bianca Priest completed her contract on the Tasmanian Shorebirds Project, a venture the TCT is undertaking with Rio Tinto and Birds Australia. The TCT/DEP 'Community Action for Derwent Penguins' is well under way, with project officers Bianca Priest and Steve Locke. The Myrtle Forest facilities upgrade project, undertaken with the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, Glenorchy City Council and the Wellington Park Trust, was also completed (with funding secured from the Tasmanian Community Fund). We would like to thank the previous Director of the TCT, Craig Woodfield, for developing the project and donating the land on which the new car park for access to Myrtle Forest is situated.

At the end of June this year Alistair Graham finished his employment with the TCT to concentrate on international fisheries work with WWF. The TCT thanks Alistair for his outstanding contribution to the organisation. A celebratory dinner at the New Sydney Hotel in July marked his departure with a wonderful evening of reminiscences.

Peter McGlone was engaged by the TCT as its biodiversity campaigner, after his contract with the Threatened Species Network was completed. We are fortunate to secure his services, given his vast experience in threatened species matters within Tasmania.

Last financial year the TCT posted an operational surplus. While the surplus was modest, given the costs of moving to a new office this was a good result. We look forward to a successful new period of development over the next 12 months and thank all our members and donors for their support.

Christian Bell

40th Anniversary Bash

travels down memory lane

The TCT has treated itself to a congratulatory 'pat on the back' to celebrate its 40th anniversary.

A retrospective exhibition highlighting some of the major issues tackled by the Trust during this 40-year period was held concurrently with the 2008 Annual General Meeting.

The Lord Mayor of Hobart and several senior public service bureaucrats joined TCT members to hear former



Lord Mayor Rob Valentine and Bob Graham, TCT President, at the 40th anniversary retrospective exhibition.

TCT President Dr Bruce Davis formally launch the exhibition on 29 August 2008.

In introducing Dr Davis, current TCT Chairman Bob Graham commented on the diversity of the issues represented within the display. 'We cannot boast 100% success in everything we do but we can be proud of the



Arnold Rowlands, TCT Life Member and committee member, cuts the celebratory cake.



Dr Bruce Davis, former TCT President, opening the exhibition at the Tasmanian Land Conservancy Gallery

commitment and achievements of so many people over such an extended time', he said.

Bruce Davis said the TCT had always believed that co-operation rather than confrontation was much more effective when arguing environment issues and he was pleased that this appeared to remain a part of the TCT's current approach.

The display tracks the history of the formation of the Tasmanian Conservation Trust and illustrates the diversity of the projects and campaigns undertaken over the years.

The TCT is now investigating potential venues throughout the state where the exhibition can continue to be on public display. ■

John Forsyth
'40th Bash' Organising Committee



Robyn McNicol at the opening of the 40th exhibition. Robyn very generously donated her time and talent to design the posters for the exhibition.

TCT Fundraiser

Launch of the new video 'Tasmania – Your Roadkill State'

State Cinema

Elizabeth Street, North Hobart

Friday 21 November 2008 at 7pm

The video will be introduced by
TCT Vice President Geoff King

*Come and meet the producers
Chloe Lucas & Tim Prior*

A brief presentation will be given on the latest roadkill research, which focuses on measures to reduce roadkill numbers.

Tasmania – Your Roadkill State will be shown in conjunction with *Wild Tasmania*, a film on the wedge-tailed eagle and the impact of the forestry industry on its habitat.

Purchase your tickets for \$20
through the TCT offices

Phone 03 6234 3552 or email tct6@bigpond.com

*TCT members can assist the fundraiser by inviting
friends and family to attend the launch.*

Help the TCT

Members of the TCT can help us in a variety of ways. Here are just a few:

- **Help us expand our membership**
Recommend the TCT to a friend, family member or colleague, give a gift subscription to somebody or distribute some membership forms for us.
- **Provide us with some recycled paper**
We are always looking for good-quality paper used on one side, to use in our printers. Help save us money and reduce our paper consumption.
- **Write a letter**
Contact us for suggestions or simply use any of the information in this newsletter as the basis of an inquiry to a politician, business or government agency. We'd love to see any replies that you receive.
- **Pass on a rumour**
We're always interested in hearing interesting rumours and stories about environmental issues, or just observations of what might be going on in your local area.

If you think you can help in any of these ways, please write to us (email is best) at tct6@bigpond.com or snail mail at 2nd Floor, 191-193 Liverpool Street, Hobart 7000, or phone 6234 3552.

State Government's approach to cat control should be supported

The Tasmanian Conservation Trust supports the general direction that the state government is taking on cat control and encourages members to make submissions on the recently released discussion paper. On 14 August 2008 the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, David Llewellyn, released a position paper for public comment titled *Cat Management In Tasmania: Taking the Initiative*. Submissions are due by Friday 26 September 2008. Copies are available from www.dpiw.tas.gov.au or by contacting the Department of Primary Industries and Water on 03 6234 3552 or via email to cat.enquiries@dpiw.tas.gov.au.

No other Tasmanian Government has produced a public policy statement on cat control and Minister Llewellyn must be congratulated for producing a position paper that has the potential to improve the welfare of our pet cats and help protect wildlife while not scaring cat owners or councils.

The position paper makes it clear that all compulsory measures will be phased in over a four-year period, giving cat owners time to prepare for desexing and microchipping becoming compulsory. The position paper recommends that owners of cats will have to take responsibility for their pets in the same way that dog owners currently do. Responsible cat owners have nothing to fear from these proposals.

The state government's position paper does not make recommendations that force new responsibilities on local councils. However, the position paper proposes measures for cat control that councils, farmers and other land owners may choose to use to help them control feral cats. The TCT supports this more facilitative approach and recommends that local councils support the position paper.

The TCT strongly urges the state government to improve its position on cat control by providing funding to help subsidise the cost of desexing and microchipping cats.

Peter McGlone, Biodiversity Campaigner

Review *of the* Tasmanian Planning System

The TCT supports the existing Tasmanian planning system, which it does not believe to be substantively flawed. We submitted our comments for the formal review of the planning system to the Tasmanian Government in June.

There have been numerous reviews of the system, such as the Edwards Review (1997), the Better Planning Outcomes Project (2005) and the Legislative Council Select Committee on Planning Schemes (2006). We have had enough reviews, and the time has come to actually implement features that will make the existing system work better.

Disappointingly, since the adoption of the new system in 1993, only three state policies have been put in place. Furthermore, the implementation of those policies has been beset by poor management and pandering to sectional interests. The latter is the very thing that was supposed to be avoided through the adoption of a state policy approach. What is required is a set of procedural reforms, including:

- a commitment from the whole of government to support and participate in the planning system – there should be no exemptions for any activity
- a commitment to more effective enforcement under the existing system
- clear specification and codification of state policies and requirements in a manner that makes them suitable for inclusion in local planning schemes
- substantially higher levels of resources to be committed by local government to the development and management of planning approval systems
- coordination of planning at state level, to the extent that no government or semi-government agency is able to make investment and resource development decisions that undermine good planning outcomes
- follow-up on previous commitments to make the planning appeal system less adversarial and to reduce the participation of legal practitioners in appeals
- better and more extensive use of information technology
- rapid introduction and adoption of consistent codes and formats for planning schemes across the state – there is no reason why there could not be a single planning document for all council areas, as there is in South Australia.

There has been inadequate support of the existing planning system from the Tasmanian Government. We do not see any benefit in reorganising the system in another fashion so that it, in turn, can be just as inadequately supported.

The present planning system is starved both of financial and political support. Both state and local government have failed to provide sufficient resources to meet their responsibilities under the system. Of all Australian states and territories, Tasmania has the lowest per-capita expenditure by both state and local government on land-use planning. The state government has actually reduced its resources since the introduction of the resource management and planning system in 1993.

The role of the RPDC (Resource Planning and Development Commission) remains unclear, despite legislative reform. A body that was supposedly to provide independent planning advice to government has been compromised through the actions of elected governments.

At the same time the commission has performed very poorly in the field of land-use planning. It has taken upwards of three years to renew and approve new planning schemes. It has caused widespread concern among local government and local communities by its often poorly documented, contradictory and inconsistent decisions and advice. The TCT can cite several cases in which different decisions have been made on the same issue in different areas.

Successive governments give the impression that they are not interested in independent planning advice and wish to make significant decisions on planning matters in-house as a direct adjunct to the process of executive government. We hope the Bartlett government will adopt a more enlightened approach to planning advice, and that the fact that the Premier is also the Planning Minister will raise the profile of planning to a key priority for the government.

With regard to RMPAT (the Resource Management and Planning Appeals Tribunal), when approvals by local government contravene existing planning schemes or state policies (such as the Coastal Policy) the state government should intervene by lodging appeals with RMPAT. Local government continues to make such decisions either by ignorance or by deliberate intent, knowing that, unless an individual or community group appeals to RMPAT, council approvals will slip through untested.

The failure of state agencies to participate actively in the appeal process means that many local government

decisions have adverse impacts that go unchecked. This is particularly so in coastal areas where councils have allowed developments that clearly do not comply with either the State Coastal Policy, the objectives of the planning system or, in many cases, the specific controls under planning schemes. This has resulted in the degradation of coastal resources and frustration on the part of councils, local planners and local communities. These agencies are part of the Tasmanian community and have responsibility to participate in the decision-making processes that affect local resources.

Previous reviews have recommended the appointment of a planning ombudsman, or the undertaking of regular audits of local government decisions. Neither of these matters has been properly addressed by government. It would give local communities and interest groups much more confidence in the system if they knew that the decisions of local councils were regularly reviewed by an independent body. Such systems are established in a number of jurisdictions overseas, and recently the Victorian Government has supported the appointment of planning enforcement officers.

The TCT does not see any case for the amalgamation of the RPDC and RMPAT. The RPDC has an investigative role and advises on substantive areas of government planning and policy. It seeks advice and submissions in a much more collaborative fashion than RMPAT, has very much a long-term view of policy and is user-friendly. RMPAT is a legal entity that arbitrates on matters under planning and resource management instruments. It is a

very legalistic entity and is now dominated by solicitors, making it a very difficult body for the average unre-presented community group or individual to engage with.

Tasmania has a good record in keeping the cost of planning appeals low, providing community groups and individuals with wide access to the appeals process, and in delivering timely decisions. The recent trend to increased legal representation threatens this record, and reduces the democratic nature of the planning system. Previous Labor ministers made strong commitments to reducing legal representation and delivered on those commitments. The current trend is undoing them.

The RPDC and RMPAT have very different roles. If the two bodies were merged then the conflict of these roles would be extremely unhealthy. Also, inevitably, the regulatory role would consume most of the available resources in staff and finances as, in any organisation, day-to-day crisis management always consumes a larger share of the pie than long-term planning.

If any substantive change is to occur the TCT would like to see those resource industries that currently operate outside the mainstream planning system being incorporated into the overall system. There should be an end to the operation of separate planning systems for mining, forestry and aquaculture. Other resources users (such as farmers) operate within the existing mainstream planning framework, so why maintain separate planning regimes that are an affront to genuine land- and marine-use integration?

Bob Graham & Christian Bell

Vale Veronica Thorp

The Tasmanian environmental movement has lost a prominent contributor with the recent passing of Veronica Thorp.

Veronica was a passionate and committed advocate for the environment and left an indelible mark in the area of environmental education.

In the late 1980s Veronica attended a Landcare for Teachers course organised by the Tasmanian Environment Centre. This helped stimulate her interest in the environment and, as her commitment to coastal and wetlands preservation developed, she became one of the major instigators of the Bellerive/Howrah Coastcare group.

She initiated a management plan for the Waverly Flora Park on Hobart's Eastern Shore and frequently conducted walks and talks on Tasmanian native flora in the area.

Veronica was also employed as a project officer for the Derwent Estuary Program penguin-habitat restoration

project, in which artificial burrows were provided in foreshore areas where natural nesting habitat had been degraded.

However, it is in the range of publications identifying how ordinary people can take practical steps to help restore and protect the environment that Veronica's most lasting legacy for the environment lies. To get a project off the ground it was often necessary for her to seek and obtain government funding before she could start.

Veronica's better-known publications include the *Derwent River Guide*, *Catchment to Coast* and the *Community Coastcare Handbook*. Many of her publications can be found in libraries and schools throughout Australia.

The TCT Committee and staff wish to extend its condolences to Veronica's family.

Cat control & Management forum

Over the past 12 months the Australian Government has funded five community cat-control projects in Tasmania and there appears to be a lot of interest in expanding this work to manage cat impacts in other important areas.

On 9 April, the Australian Government Natural Resource Management Team held a Cat Control and Management Forum in Launceston. It brought together people who are implementing existing projects with those who have expertise and experience in cat control. The purpose of the forum was to aid the success of current and future projects.

Twenty-three people attended the forum, including representatives from the five funded community cat-control projects, plus an unfunded project. Representatives from the Australian Government, the three Natural Resource Management regions, state government and the Tasmanian Conservation Trust were also present.

The forum learnt about the challenges of implementing community-based control programs from Bruny Island, King Island and Little Swanport groups, who have had programs running for between one and three years. These were the key comments.

- All groups found that young, sick or very old cats are relatively easy to trap, but people need help to catch the other cats.
- All groups found that trapping is only successful during the colder months.
- Groups have been encouraged to preserve cat carcasses but are unsure who to give them to or who will do gut and other analysis.
- While volunteers are enthusiastic about trapping cats, groups admit that volunteers need to be more thorough in recording key information, such as where cats are trapped.
- All are control programs rather than eradication projects and the groups recognised the need to develop a strategy to maintain trapping effort in the long term.
- Some farmers value feral cats as rodent controllers, and are therefore less enthusiastic about controlling cats.
- Some projects suspect that cat owners are not taking responsibility for desexing their cats, as they want to wait for a free service to be provided.



Additionally, Flinders Island, Cape Barren Island and Port Sorell groups discussed how they intend to implement the projects they are about to commence. Cape Barren Island is owned and managed by the Tasmanian Aboriginal community. Given the island's relatively small size, the low number of domestic cats and the community commitment, it is believed that eradication is feasible. To assist with this goal, a ban on bringing non-desexed cats to the island is being considered.

Representatives from the Department of Primary Industry and Water and the Parks and Wildlife Service provided invaluable feedback on how projects are being implemented and gave tips on increasing the success of cat trapping, which may be incorporated into a cat-trapping guide. They hope to provide greater support in the future by assisting with measuring trapping effectiveness, analysing gut contents to determine the impacts of cats, and assisting with the training of volunteers in trapping techniques.

Tips to increase effectiveness of trapping feral cats in cage traps:

- Wash the trap after a cat or other animal has been in it.
- Remove trapped cats quickly, to avoid other cats seeing them.
- Use bigger traps with larger openings for wily cats.
- Trap in winter and avoid trapping during wet weather.
- Ensure bait lasts longer by using containers to avoid it getting wet or contacting the ground.
- Provide free food before setting traps, or a small amount of food just outside the trap.
- Cover the base of the trap with soil or sand, so that it feels natural to a cat.
- Ensure the trap is stable – a cat will not enter a trap if it moves when they touch it.
- Place traps off the ground, to avoid some native animals getting caught.

Peter McGlone
Biodiversity Campaigner

Coastcare programs & Community facilitation

Coastcare was originally an initiative of the Hawke-Keating Labor government. While it survived in reasonable shape during the early years of the Howard government under the Natural Heritage Trust 1 (NHT) funding, the program suffered under NHT 2, which primarily focused on private land rather than on public land or the marine environment. While in later years there was some attempt to retrofit NHT 2 with some coastal and marine initiatives, this was not satisfactory. The TCT appreciates that the Rudd government, in its Caring for Our Country program, has speedily rolled out a new Coastcare grant round.

However, the TCT does not feel that sufficient emphasis has been put on providing for the facilitation needs of community groups within the current Coastcare arrangements. Most existing Coastcare groups require help when preparing grant applications, and active on-the-ground assistance from a dedicated facilitator network. While some of the Natural Resource Management (NRM) regions have placed a degree of emphasis on providing such support, others have not. The support on offer from NRM regions is in no way as extensive as the previous federal government's arrangements (instituted in the Hawke-Keating years).

The Tasmanian Government does not provide additional assistance to Coastcare groups through programs such as CoastAction (in Victoria) or CoastWest (in Western Australia). The lack of such assistance is a critical issue in Tasmania.

The TCT believes that the Australian Government should reinstate a stand-alone Coastcare facilitator network. Such facilitators can be hosted within existing NRM organisations, non-government organisations, local government or state agencies. While we acknowledge the commitment made by the Rudd government in rolling out its Coastcare grants program, if high-quality facilitation is not provided then there will be problems in generating projects worth submitting. Over the last 18 months, four facilitator positions dealing with marine and coastal facilitation have been lost across Tasmania. This has left a huge gap in terms of support, advice, information and networking for the Coastcare community in this state.

To help fill the gap, the TCT has applied recently to the Open Round of Caring for Our Country, to support a project entitled 'Coastwise'. This round does allow funding for some facilitator positions but it is only an interim funding program until the shape of the Caring for Our Country program is finalised.

If funded, the Coastwise project will provide a specialist coastal and marine facilitation role, operating statewide

to link regional and local groups and will address many strategic policies – a role that is not being performed by existing and proposed facilitators in local government, NRM regional groups or elsewhere. It will be implemented by the TCT in partnership with the following key regional and statewide community, NRM and government organisations that have a key interest in coastal management:

Birds Tasmania
Southern Coastcare Association of Tasmania
North-west Coastcare Association of Tasmania
Sustainable Living Tasmania (formally Tasmanian Environment Centre)
Launceston Environment Centre
North-west Environment Centre
Marine and Coastal Community Network
Coastal and Marine Branch, Department of Environment, Parks Heritage and the Arts

This is a time of great change and uncertainty for many Coastcare groups and coastal land managers, with major changes to the Australian Government funding regime, reduced funding and, in some cases, a new role for regional NRM groups. New demands are being placed on all sectors of the community to adopt practices that take into account the predicted impacts of climate change. With these new challenges and the removal of key facilitators from Tasmania, many Coastcare groups and coastal managers are likely to lose capacity or motivation. Community groups can suffer from fatigue and burnout, and experienced facilitators are needed to help these groups to maintain their momentum.

The Coastwise project would provide vital continuity for groups over the next 12 months and build the capacity of the Coastcare community to deliver on four of the Caring for Our Country priority areas:

- national reserve system
- biodiversity and natural icons (particularly regarding EPBC-listed threatened species and marine species)
- coastal environments and critical aquatic habitats
- community skills, knowledge and engagement.

The TCT notes that Labor's majority in the federal election was delivered in coastal seats around Australia, which the TCT believes is a ringing endorsement of the need to prioritise coastal and marine issues through the release of more resources to care for the state's coastline.

Christian Bell

Conservation organisations rally for marine protection

World Environment Day 2008

The TCT is lobbying the Tasmanian Government to secure new reserves for the Bruny Marine Bioregion. At the time of writing it is not clear what the outcome will be, but we are expecting the Bartlett government to announce shortly what form (if any) these reserves will take.

The TCT was one of the main organisers of a rally held on 5 June at the Hobart Town Hall, in support of new marine reserves in Tasmania's southeast. Over 250 people attended. This was *the first ever rally* focusing on the conservation of Tasmania's marine life. In past decades, environmental organisations have rallied against marine pollution or, in some cases, for the protection of a single group of species such as whales, but never to protect marine life in general.

It would be extraordinary if the Tasmanian Government chose to ignore the recommendations of the Resource Planning and Development Commission (RPDC) in relation to reserves in the Bruny Marine Bioregion. The inquiry was commissioned by the Tasmanian Government, lasted nearly three years and cost half a million dollars. Pressure applied to the RPDC by the Labor government is yet another example of our government going to extraordinary lengths to circumvent good planning process.

The TCT has been an extremely active participant in marine management for the state through its involvement in state fisheries advisory committees, Natural Resource Management and research advisory bodies. It is well placed to critique the Tasmanian Government's lack of commitment to achieving real benefits for marine conservation.

It is essential that a truly representative network of marine reserves be created in the Bruny Bioregion, which extends from Southport in the far south to Hell Fire Bluff in the east and includes marine waters surrounding Bruny Island and the Tasman Peninsula. This area hosts a range of threatened marine species and is regarded as the most ecologically significant of Tasmania's nine marine bioregions. The RPDC states:



World Environment Day rally for marine reserves held at Hobart Town Hall. From left: Christian Bell (TCT), Tom Baxter (University of Tasmania), Cassy O'Connor (Save Ralphs Bay) and Jon Bryan (TCT) at the podium addressing a crowd of over 250 people.

...the Bruny Bioregion stands out as being the most complex and diverse in terms of ecosystems and human activities and uses. This bioregion is unique within the Australian context with respect to the high number of species endemic in such a small area. The only other two Australian bioregions that might have a comparable level of endemism are not nearly as vulnerable to threatening processes.

Few other Tasmanian conservation issues are as significant; it is vital that we secure your support to have this region comprehensively reserved.

Christian Bell



**Caring for Tasmania
since 1968**

Tasmanian Conservation Trust inc.
191-193 Liverpool St, Hobart Ph:(03) 6234 35 52

Display your Support

Purchase a TCT car sticker
Tasmanian Conservation Trust
Caring for Tasmania since 1968
stickers available
from TCT offices @ \$2 each
(yellow and green design)

Time for a new Australian Coastal Policy

The TCT has written to Peter Garrett outlining issues that should be addressed in a new Australian Coastal Policy. Minister Garrett has the main responsibility for developing a new policy for the Commonwealth, outlined as an election commitment by the Rudd government, but so far few details are available about what is actively being considered. In our letter to the minister, the TCT made comments on coastal issues relevant to the government's 'Caring for our Coasts' election policy. The list of issues in the TCT's letter is not exhaustive but it contains our initial thoughts on where we believe Australian coastal policy should be heading.

It was apparent that the former (Howard) government had a waning interest in coastal policy. It appeared to have abandoned any interest in a policy that locked both state and local government into a formal pact (as the 1995 Coastal Policy had, in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding). Its National Cooperative Approach to Integrated Coastal Zone Management: Framework and Implementation Plan (commonly called the Coastal Framework) is, in the main, not a very ambitious document.

Progress has been made on some components brought under the umbrella of the Coastal Framework, having been identified as issues of national significance. These include: work being done through the Australian Greenhouse Office on climate change; progress on coastal acid sulphate soils, through the National Committee for Acid Sulphate Soils; introduced marine pests, through the National Introduced Marine Pest Coordinating Group; and a number of Natural Resource Management (NRM)-related activities. However, the Coastal Framework did not receive any additional budget allocation, only using existing resources, and it has struggled for profile against other activities of the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council. Like other NRM matters, the Coastal Framework did not include local government as a signatory and has failed to adequately address coastal planning issues, despite the engagement of the Sea Change Task Force on some actions.

Whilst the Coastal Framework has a time horizon to 2010, and actions continue to be addressed, it is far from being a national policy and, unlike the original 1995 Commonwealth Coastal Policy, it includes no agreed principles and objectives for coastal planning and management.

A national coastal policy needs to identify and agree comprehensive planning and management measures to achieve sustainable development of our coastal and marine areas. It should address the following issues:

- coastal development, including coastal urban sprawl
- setting limits to growth in many areas
- population-growth planning
- sea-level rise and other consequences of global warming, including principles for adaptation, retreat and infrastructure
- maintenance of biodiversity
- support for protected-area management on coastal public and private land
- estuarine and coastal water quality
- introduced weeds and pests on land and in the marine environment.

A new coastal policy should have strategies for building resilience, for biological and social diversity, and a strong commitment to ongoing education, training and capacity-building. Much of the former Resource Assessment Commission (Coastal Zone Inquiry 1993) report is still valid and should be reviewed in light of the progress, failures and emerging pressures over the past 15 years, thus providing up-to-date recommendations for action.

Some thought should be given to considering a national coastal act as in the USA, with funding to states tied to their meeting agreed planning and management criteria. The Commonwealth Government should establish a National Coastal Council to champion and oversee an Integrated Coastal Zone Management. The Council would develop principles and criteria (the policy) to be included in a National Coastal Act, with reciprocal legislation in the states or amendments to existing planning legislation. The EPBC Act and all other legislation would also be aligned. Funding to states should be contingent on meeting the criteria. A ministerial council would approve National Coastal Council recommendations. The Council would also develop national programs for delivery under NRM requirements.

Christian Bell

The Tasmanian Conservationist via email

The newsletter is now available in PDF format for members who would prefer an electronic version.

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Minimising the swift

While habitat loss is the major threat to the nationally endangered swift parrot, collision with human-made structures, particularly windows and chain-link fences, is a significant additional threat that could be largely mitigated with appropriate action. With increasing habitat loss, swift parrots may be becoming more reliant on urban trees for food and this may exacerbate the collision risk.

Although the swift parrot recovery plan recognises this risk as a significant threat, there is little information available on this problem or ways to minimise it. As a result, the Threatened Species Network in Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales has recently undertaken a project to investigate this issue and potential solutions. The project involved background research on the issue of bird collisions, both within Australia and internationally, and then holding a workshop in Hobart, aimed at planners, architects and landscape designers, to seek their input into design solutions appropriate for the Australian situation.

A detailed report, 'Minimising the swift parrot collision threat', is available. For further information contact the TCT on 03 6234 3552 or tct6@bigpond.com.

Key findings from the report

Scale of the problem

Since 1987 there have been 173 records of swift parrot collisions, resulting in 145 known deaths. In any given year, the total number of mortalities can be high, such as the 34 collisions and 23 deaths recorded during the 1997 breeding season. The recovery plan notes that, on average, 19 adult birds are recovered after collisions each year in



Glass bricks not only mute reflectivity, but create a matrix visible to birds.

Photo: Stephanie Pfennigwerth

Tasmania, with just four returned to the wild. Given that many incidents go unreported, the actual number of collisions is probably much higher. It is estimated that around 1.5 to 2 percent of the entire swift parrot breeding population is killed every year as a result of collisions.

Nature of the problem

The collation of records indicates two main types of collision: with windows and with chain-mesh fences. Two characteristics of glass are particularly problematic: high reflectiveness and transparency. Reflective glass can mirror the sky and surrounding vegetation, which birds perceive as a continuation of their habitat; transparent glass that provides an unobstructed view of habitat or sky on the other side of a building is not recognised by birds as a solid barrier. Similarly, it seems that the birds find wire-mesh fences impossible to see.

Swift parrot breeding

The 2007–2008 swift parrot breeding season has come to an end and so has the field-based component of the Swift Parrot Nest Site Identification Project funded by the Threatened Species Network Community Grants. This has been a collaborative project of the Tasmanian Conservation Trust (TCT), Threatened Species Network (TSN), Birds Tasmania, the Department of Primary Industries and Water (DPIW) and numerous volunteers around the state.

For the past four seasons, Matthew Webb from DPIW has been surveying swift parrots in Tasmania, identifying breeding and foraging habitat. This task is made more difficult by the fact that the birds breed in different areas each year, with very little overlap during this four-year period. My job has been to attract and train volunteers to assist DPIW with its survey work for this season and, we hope, in the future, as well as tracking down nests myself.

This season the majority of nest sites found were in wet forest in an area between Huonville and Dover, south of Hobart, where there were no previous records. Until now, the importance of wet forests as suitable foraging and nesting habitat for the endangered swift parrot has been underestimated; however, this season has shown it may be critical to the species' survival.

From the surveys gathered during this breeding season, we have a range of new information. Locations of foraging records, heavy blue-gum flowering, breeding activity and nest sites have been forwarded to DPIW to contribute to the ongoing monitoring and management of the species. All new information is currently being incorporated into a new management plan for swift parrots in the southern region by DPIW, the Forest Practices Authority and Forestry Tasmania.

parrot collision threat



*What is real?
What is a
reflection? Swift
parrot habitat
reflected in a
house window.
Photo: Stephanie
Pfennigwerth*

Options to improve visibility include:

- avoiding thoroughways that give false impression of an unobstructed passageway
- angling windows to reduce reflections of adjacent habitat and the sky
- creating 'visual noise' through differentiations of material, texture, colour, opacity or other features that help fragment window reflections and reduce overall transparency
- muting reflections, such as by extended rooflines to close off the angle of reflection of the sky.

Solutions for minimising the collision risk

The major principles behind minimising the risk of collisions for swift parrots are to minimise glass reflectivity and transparency and create visual noise so that the birds recognise windows and fences as a barrier in their flight path.

In the planning stage, potential solutions include consideration of the positioning of new buildings in the landscape, particularly in relation to potential swift parrot flight paths, so as to minimise the proximity of swift parrots to structures that could pose a risk. In the design of the building itself, in areas where bird collisions might be predicted, glazing and other potentially hazardous structures should be limited, or designed to improve their visibility to the parrots.



*Dead adult
swift parrot,
Oakleigh Golf
Course,
Melbourne,
May 2002.
Photo:
Chris Tzaros*

Many of these options are also relevant to retrofitting existing buildings to minimise the risk of swift parrot collisions.

Peter McGlone

season in review

About 50 people attended training sessions during the project and 20 volunteers from this group have helped over



*The new swift parrot logo.
Design: TCT and Ingraphic Design.*

the breeding season and now have new-found knowledge of different swift parrot calls and breeding behaviour.

With funding from the TSN, we are completing a Swift Parrot Information and Identification Kit that will include a DVD and other information to help volunteers to recognise swift parrots' behaviour while they forage for

food and congregate near their nests. The DVD will include the most important calls to identify the species, including the first known recording of the very distinctive female begging call – a clear indication that nesting is occurring. The kits will be available from the TCT, DPIW and Birds Tasmania.

Thank you to all the people who helped throughout the season. Next swift parrot season we will contact everyone who has been involved to ask them look for swift parrots and report sightings again.

Janneke Webb
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Myrtle Forest Facilities Upgraded

On 4 June 2008, about 40 people, including representatives from the Collinsvale community, the Wellington Park Management Trust, Hobart City Council, Parks and Wildlife Service, Glenorchy City Council, the Tasmanian Conservation Trust and the Tasmanian Community Fund, attended a morning tea to celebrate the restoration of facilities at the Myrtle Forest picnic area – the completion of years of efforts to improve the site.

The works include an upgrade of the walking track to a new observation deck at the falls on Myrtle Creek, a new toilet, improvements to the picnic shelter and a new car park.

Wellington Park Management Trust chairperson Christine Mucha told the gathering that it was a celebration of a great facility that has had a lot of troubled times. She said that improvements to the area had taken a few years: the site plan was produced in 2004 and improvements had progressed since then, with in-kind contributions from various community, local government and State Government organisations.

The Mayor of Glenorchy, Alderman Adriana Taylor, told the gathering that there were three groups to thank: the Collinsvale community, Glenorchy City Council, and the Wellington Park Management Trust along with the Parks and Wildlife Service.

Alderman Taylor said that, although people have been coming to visit the Myrtle Forest as a bush setting for more than 100 years, the site had seen major changes in the past 20 years.



Gwendolyn Pridmore and Glen Rowalik at the opening.
Photo:
Liz Wren,
Manager Media and Communications,
Parks and Wildlife Service

The upgrade of the picnic area was undertaken by the Parks and Wildlife Service and funded by a grant of \$48,200 from the Tasmanian Community Fund. The Glenorchy City Council developed the new entry-point car park. The grant was facilitated by the Tasmanian Conservation Trust.

Parks and Wildlife Service acting Parks and Reserves Manager, Grant Hall, said restricting general vehicle access to the site through the installation of a boom gate at the car park, a 10-minute walk from the picnic area, has been the key to the restoration of the site's facilities.

Provision has been made for people with special access needs to reach the picnic site. Subject to satisfying disability or limited mobility criteria, visitors can obtain a permit and key to the gate at the Collinsvale shop en route to the picnic area.

Liz Wren
Parks and Wildlife Service

Unfortunately, within a few days of the opening there was a reoccurrence of the vandalism that has plagued the site in recent years. The new toilet and parts of the shelter and platform were also damaged. However, all parties remain committed to fixing the recent damage and keeping Myrtle Forest in good order.

Christian Bell

Changes to Tasmanian Threatened

The Tasmanian Threatened Species Scientific Advisory Committee has completed its statutory five-yearly review of species listed in the Threatened Species Protection Act's schedules.

Notification of the intended changes to the schedules was placed in Tasmanian newspapers on 5 April 2008 and on 14 May 2008 the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, David Llewellyn, made an order under the Act amending the schedules of the Act. In summary:

- 51 species were up-listed (increased risk category e.g. rare to vulnerable)
- 7 species were down-listed

- 12 species were de-listed
- 1 previously extinct species, the Miena jewel beetle, was rediscovered during the last five years and is to be listed as endangered
- 2 additional species were subject to name changes only.

There has been significant research into hydrobiid snails in recent years but, sadly, this has resulted in only one species being de-listed and 17 species being up-listed. Orchids and ferns dominated the up-listed plant species. Among the up-listed plant species, *Wurmbea latifolia* (previously rare) and *Hibbertia obtusifolia* and *Thynniorchis huntiana* (previously endangered) are to be recognised as extinct. Notable changes among the

TCT comments on Tasman National Park and Reserves Draft Management Plan 2008

The TCT has maintained a significant interest in the protection and presentation of the natural values of the Tasman Peninsula, in particular by supporting and encouraging the work of Peter and Shirley Storey and the Peninsula Environment Network in promoting the recreational use of public land in the area. We provided the following comments in our submission to the Tasman National Park and Reserves Draft Management Plan, emphasising our previous contributions and inputs.

In 1996, the TCT published *Peninsula Tracks*, a walking guide to old and new tracks (an update of *Tasman Tracks*) on the Tasman and Forestier Peninsulas, written by Peter and Shirley Storey. Twelve years later, it is in its third edition and has sold approximately 4,500 copies.

In 1997, the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement significantly expanded the Tasman National Park, mainly by changing the status of existing reserves and including some small areas of State Forest (this was the basis for the 2001 management plan).

It remains a profound frustration and disappointment to the TCT that the Three Capes Walk proposal is driving amendments of the management plan, in explicit disregard for much of the good work done by and for the community on the peninsula to develop the recreational potential of the area – for residents and visitors alike, and for the benefit of local businesses.

The TCT is further concerned that this proposal is being promoted by the Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS), and that it is intended that PWS should pay for construction

and maintenance not only of the walkways but also of the envisaged accommodation. Most extraordinary of all, it is intended that the PWS should be the commercial operator of such accommodation. It is entirely inappropriate that PWS should be spending its time on such speculative commercial developments without a commercial proponent. This is no job for a park management agency. It is hard to imagine a greater conflict of interest or a better recipe for commercial disaster. Existing providers of accommodation on the peninsula deserve an explanation for the allocation of millions of dollars of PWS money to divert visitors away from their facilities.

The TCT is utterly frustrated by the massive extent to which the PWS staff resources have been diverted into facilitating, servicing, promoting and operating tourism ventures at the expense of its core business of park management. Now that the tourism-promotion and park-management functions of government have been separated into different departments, we trust that PWS resources will no longer be wasted on promoting, planning and operating tourism ventures.

In conclusion, our submission reiterated the need to listen to those with experience of encouraging and facilitating recreational activity on the peninsula. Improved services and experiences for many more visitors could be provided at a fraction of the estimated cost of the ill-conceived Three Capes Walk – with much greater benefit to the local community.

Christian Bell

Species Protection Act Schedules



Hibbertia basaltica – changed status from rare to endangered (flower is bright yellow).
Photo: Richard Schahinger.

vertebrates include the up-listing of the Tasmanian devil from vulnerable to endangered, and fairy tern and great crested grebe from rare to vulnerable.

There have been fewer changes proposed during this review compared with the last review in 2001. However, a similar number of species were up-listed (45 in 2001 and 51 in 2008) and down-listed (13 in 2001 and 7 in 2008). The big change has been with species proposed for de-listing, with 53 de-listed in 2001 and only 12 in 2008. While 68 species were added to the schedules in 2001, no new listings were proposed in 2008.

Peter McGlone
Biodiversity Campaigner

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