



# Threatened Plants

TASMANIA

## Threatened Plants Tasmania Newsletter April 2021



*Prasophyllum crebriflorum* (crowded leek-orchid), image Kerren Smithies



# Threatened Plants

## TASMANIA

### Contents

<b>President's Report</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>TPT in the Field</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Milford, Sep 2020 and 14 Nov 2020 .....	4
Prosser River, 21-22 Nov 2020 .....	5
Possum Banks, 19-20 Nov 2020.....	6
Southport Island 11-12 Nov 2020 .....	7
Limekiln Gully, 12 Dec 2020 .....	8
Surrey Hills, 30 Jan 2021 .....	8
<b>Website Update</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Field Trips in 2021</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>TPT Committee</b> .....	<b>12</b>



# Threatened Plants

## TASMANIA

### President's Report

*By Geoff Curry*

2020 was a year of change for everybody, and TPT was faced with many challenges. My thanks go to the hard-working Committee who have been very busy in the background keeping TPT running and moving forward. Despite all the challenges in 2020, there have been some very exciting developments over the last 12 months that will dramatically improve the running of TPT.

Early last year the Committee held a planning session to discuss the future direction of TPT and begin developing a Strategic Plan. We discussed the possibility of changing our model to enable us to take more ownership over the type of projects and partners we work with. It was decided to undertake a call for projects and field trips from a range of partner organisations for the 2020/2021 field season. This resulted in a diverse and exciting field trip program, with interest from DPIPW, Forico, NRM South, Tasmanian Land Conservancy, Enviro-dynamics, and Glenorchy Council. You can read more about these trips in this newsletter.

With the assistance of a grant from the Federal Government's Communities Environment Program we have also been developing a new TPT website. Many thanks to Priscilla, who has been working hard to deliver this project. The new website will dramatically improve our administrative processes and will be more user friendly. It is in the final stages of development and should be launched in the near future. You can find an article all about the new website in this newsletter.

You may also recall that we sent out a survey to TPT members last year. Thanks to everyone for their feedback which is now being used to help improve the running of TPT. One of the important questions for us was whether members would be willing to pay a membership or make a financial contribution towards the administrative costs of TPT. The majority of respondents indicated that they would pay, which was very encouraging.

In order to receive membership payments or donations we need to register as an incorporated association. So, the Committee has been working towards registering TPT as an incorporated association, which involves developing a constitution. Huge thanks to Allison for taking on this complex task.

Those who attended field trips in 2020 would be aware that TPT had to put in place COVID-19 protocols in order to conduct our field trip program. Members who signed up for DPIPW trips were asked to complete COVID online training and volunteer induction. Other partner organisations had similar requirements. Thanks to everyone for following these new requirements.

I hope you enjoy this edition of our newsletter and I look forward to another great field trip program in 2021.



# Threatened Plants

## TASMANIA

### TPT in the Field

Milford, Sep 2020 and 14 Nov 2020

*By Geoff Curry*

In September, the first field trip for the year was a partnership between TPT and Milford Forest Landcare Group. With all COVID-19 protocols in place, 15 volunteers surveyed for the Critically Endangered *Caladenia saggicola* (sagg spider-orchid) in the privately owned Milford Forest. This orchid is only known from a single population so annual population counts are important to monitor population numbers and assess the various management practises being trailed by the owners. 2020 was a good year for orchid flowering across the state and very good numbers of *Caladenia saggicola* were recorded.



**Left:** *Caladenia saggicola* (sagg spider-orchid)



**Right:** *Prasophyllum milfordense* (milford leek-orchid)  
(Images: Geoff Curry)

TPT again partnered with Milford Forest Landcare Group in November to survey for critically endangered *Prasophyllum milfordense* (milford leek-orchid) The volunteer group surveyed a greater area than previously surveyed and extended the recorded range of the species, information that will aid in the ongoing management of the property.

The property owners thank all TPT members involved in surveying for both orchid species.



# Threatened Plants

## TASMANIA

### Prosser River, 21-22 Nov 2020

By Joe Quarmby

Prosser River Reserve is a 1500 ha property near Buckland recently acquired by the Tasmanian Land Conservancy (TLC). In November 2020 a group of eight TPT volunteers led by Joe Quarmby and Cath Dickson (TLC) undertook a two-day survey to search for threatened flora populations on the property.

We started by walking along the old convict road which follows the Prosser River towards Orford. Immediately, we encountered some *Carex longebrachiata* (drooping sedge) growing along the track. We then ventured through some stunning *Eucalyptus viminalis* grassy forest where we found a population of *Eryngium ovinum* (blue devil). This species is listed as Vulnerable in Tasmania, and this discovery is a significant infill of the species' range. As we continued to walk along the river flats, we found a population of *Thelymitra holmesii* (blue-star sun-orchid), another rare species that had not previously been recorded in the area. Further along, growing in riparian scrub on the banks of the Prosser River we recorded a large population of the rare *Pomaderris phyllicifolia* subsp. *phyllicifolia*.



**Left:** *Pomaderris phyllicifolia* (narrow-leaf dogwood)



**Right:** *Teucrium corymbosum* (forest germander)  
(Images: Joe Quarmby)

From here the convict track became harder to follow and we were forced to walk up into some steep rocky terrain. By this stage it was getting late in the day, and everyone was getting tired. So, Joe went back to retrieve a car to pick everyone up. The only catch was that everyone else had to cross the Prosser River to get out to the Tasman Highway to be picked up. Crossing the river turned out to be a bit of an adventure, but eventually everyone crossed safely and was then shuttled back to Brockley Homestead where we camped the night.





# Threatened Plants

## TASMANIA

The next morning, we drove back to where we finished the previous day and crossed over the Prosser River again. We headed up a rocky gorge before venturing onto an old track which led us into an area that had been recently burnt. Here we recorded numerous populations of the rare *Teucrium corymbosum* (forest germander) and *Poa mollis* (soft tussock-grass) on dry rocky slopes. The target species in this area were the fire-opportunists *Scaevola aemula* (fairy fan-flower) and *Gyrostemon thesioides* (broom wheel-fruit) but neither of these species could be found. After lunch we headed back down the hill, and on the way found a population of the rare endemic *Eucalyptus barberi* (barbers gum). We finished by crossing the river one last time before everyone departed, exhausted but happy.

### Possum Banks, 19-20 Nov 2020

*By Roy Skabo*

The objective of this trip was to visit several sites south of Arthur River on the West Coast to survey a number of threatened species that had been recorded in the area. Three of us were provided with accommodation in a very comfortable cottage managed by the rangers at the Parks and Wildlife office at Arthur River. One excursionist travelled from Deloraine for the day, local plant expert Don Ablitt joined us both days from his home near Marrawah and two Parks staff accompanied us on the first day.

The first day's survey began at Temma where Oberon Carter (DPIPWE) wanted to check on a known site for *Cullen microcephalum* and obtain an estimate of their abundance. A thorough search turned up more than 40 plants of this species and a dozen of the vulnerable *Veronica novae-hollandiae*. In the same area we found several other interesting species including the spectacular *Caladenia atrochila* and two species of *Calochilus*.

We continued south along an old track and stopped for lunch at a magnificent emerald-green coastal meadow, which is maintained by ground-water flowing over and through the rocks, between it and the heathland to the east. The meadow contains a diversity of interesting species, including the inconspicuous (unless in berry) and rarely seen *Nertera granadensis*, which was pointed out by Don, who knows this area very well.

The walk from the lunch spot towards Possum Banks followed the same track along the magnificent, rugged coastline until we deviated to cross a creek at the point where it entered the sea. A short climb brought us to the known site for *Vittadinia australis*, in an open grassy area reminiscent of a huge golf links. Here we saw large numbers of the beautiful paper daisy *Xerochrysum bicolor* and large patches of *Beyeria lechenaultii* which, in Tasmania, occurs only on the Bass Strait Islands, the northern part of the West Coast and at Waterhouse. Despite an intense search of the area only two plants of the *Vittadinia australis* were found, both of them sheltering under shrubs.

Next morning found us at Couta Rocks, heading on foot for Sarah Anne Rocks (with one of us taking a car to Sarah Anne Rocks). The short walk was very productive, turning up several threatened species including *Lotus australis* of an unusually dark pink colour, *Spyridium vexilliferum* with a very low-growing habit, *Stylidium beagleholei* and *Phyllangium distylis* along with patches of *Cullen microcephalum*. After lunch at Sarah Anne Rocks we drove north to Nelson Bay where both



# Threatened Plants

## TASMANIA

*Cullen microcephalum* and *Diuris lanceolata* had been recorded. This area contains large numbers of the Cullen; well over a hundred plants, and several individuals of *Diuris lanceolata*.

The spectacular scenery, the unusual flora and the sense of having participated in a useful excursion made for a very pleasant and satisfying couple of days.

### Southport Island 11-12 Nov 2020

*By Maudie Brown*

This field trip was organised by NRM South to survey the population of *Epacris stuartii* (southport heath) on Southport Bluff and the translocated population on nearby Southport Island. This species is only known from a single wild population and is listed as Endangered under Commonwealth legislation. It was planted onto Southport Island in 2001 to provide a safeguard against extinction. The aim of the trip was to undertake a census of both populations and to assess weed and biosecurity (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*) threats to the populations. Access to the remote sites was via boat provided as in-kind support by PWS. Field crew included Maudie Brown (NRM South), Oberon Carter (DPIPWE) and three TPT volunteers.



**Left:** *Epacris stuartii* planted on Southport Island



**Right:** *Epacris stuartii* flowers (Images: Maudie Brown)

The population at the Bluff appears to be struggling with key threats being drought stress and browsing pressure. Browsing pressure may have been exacerbated by the ecological burn conducted by PWS in March 2020. There was limited evidence of post-fire recruitment, but it was probably too soon to assess this properly. Many small mirror bush seedlings were observed but no other significant weed threats were recorded.



# Threatened Plants

## TASMANIA

The translocated population on the island is looking healthy but competition from other native vegetation and weeds (mirror bush & blackberry) is significant and will only increase with time. It was initially thought that natural recruitment may be occurring as we found many seedlings adjacent to and outside the official translocation site, but it was later revealed following conversations with staff involved in the planting that excess seedlings were planted in these areas in 2001. The soil was tested for *Phytophthora cinnamomi* which produced negative results which was excellent news for the species.

### Limekiln Gully, 12 Dec 2020

By Richard White

The Glenorchy City Council is planning to conduct fuel reduction burns in the Limekiln area where the threatened *Olearia hookeri* occurs (listed as rare under the Tasmanian Threatened Species Protection Act 1995). Based on Threatened Plants Tasmania's (TPT) previous monitoring experience of this species post fire at East Risdon State Reserve (where it has fared very poorly), the council contacted TPT for insights as to how this species may respond to fire with a view to incorporating findings into future bushfire management programs. Three TPT volunteers and one representative from the council surveyed the area where the species is known to occur at Limekiln. We had clear skies and moderate temperatures; perfect weather to carry out the survey and for scaling the not-so-gentle slopes of Limekiln gully!



*Olearia hookeri* (Image Richard White)

All up, we gathered data (height, health etc.) on 157 plants; a notable increase from the 86 previous Natural Values Atlas records in the area. Most plants were healthy, and many were reproductive. No seedlings were observed in the area supporting the live plants (last burnt in December 2013), while in the area burnt in March 2020

only a single seedling was recorded and there were no resprouting plants. Given this result, and results of previous work at East Risdon, the potential for fire to impact *Olearia hookeri* negatively and significantly at Limekiln (and elsewhere) should not be underestimated.

### Surrey Hills, 30 Jan 2021

By Mark Wapstra

TPT has been monitoring *Prasophyllum crebriflorum* (crowded leek-orchid) on Surrey Hills for over a decade now. Phil Collier has prepared a summary of that work and an outcome was to downsize the formal monitoring to be more of a "watching brief". However, in 2019, Kerri Spicer and Mark





# Threatened Plants

## TASMANIA

Wapstra found the species in Gatcomb Plain South, a scrub-invaded grassland being subject to mulching and/or burning trials to restore the grassland habitat. The species was not known from this site prior to operations commencing so to find it was very exciting and we instantly thought we'd need more eyes to find more. And that is where we started on Saturday morning. We swept across the grassland until an excited cry caused all of us to radiate in from our positions and home in on what turned out to be a patch of the most spectacular *Prasophyllum crebriflorum* in full flower – tall spikes with well over 50 flowers on several. To say we were excited is a total understatement! Once complete, the survey revealed 79 individuals of *Prasophyllum crebriflorum* in Gatcomb South. This makes the grassland one of the “better” subpopulations and it has validated the land manager’s objective of restoring grassland to its former glory.

We also visited the Hatfield Plain “cricket pitch” transect. Phil Collier established this many years ago and we have decided to keep monitoring for as long as possible. This year we found just 4 *Prasophyllum crebriflorum* (down from 10 last year and 29 in 2013). This grassland has complex management issues with wombat and wallaby grazing pressure high, variable shrub invasion and complicated boundaries (plantations, forest, no firebreaks, powerlines, etc.). Noticeable to all was the short stature, short spikes and small flowers of those *Prasophyllum crebriflorum* that we did find (compare to what we saw at Gatcomb South). We think that perhaps the plants are expending much of their stored tuber energy in simply trying to get through a thicket of grass. We expanded the survey to see if there were plants in the burnt area (and some unburnt areas) and while scattered, they are certainly not abundant as they used to be.



Volunteers at Gatcomb Plain South (Image Kerri Spicer)



# Threatened Plants

## TASMANIA

The next stop was Hatfield Siding (a small narrow grassland between a creek and a plantation near the rail line). This site had not been surveyed for many years but had been burnt in 2017. So we thought we'd have a peek. As it turns out, we found 15 *Prasophyllum crebriflorum*, which is welcome news.

The last stop was Moory Mount, the grassland split by the Murchison Highway. Only burnt in late 2020, the western side was a new site for *Prasophyllum crebriflorum* in 2017 so we thought we'd have another look. We did think it could be too soon after the fire and this may explain the zero count (although last year in the absence of a burn, we also scored zero – so a bit hard to know what is going on). A good example of why monitoring multiple sites may prove insightful.

We'd like to acknowledge Forico Pty Limited for once again allowing us to collaborate with them on Surrey Hills. TPT is participating in some fantastic grassland restoration trials with the monitoring of threatened species a critical component of the formal program of adaptive management. TPT truly values this relationship and we see this going forwards in future years, hopefully with a combination of extension surveys (we have many unsurveyed grasslands that may have *Prasophyllum crebriflorum*) and ongoing subpopulation monitoring feeding into an ongoing program of grassland management.

## Website Update

*By Priscilla Richards*

A lot goes on behind the scenes to plan, advertise, run, and report on field trips, and to keep track of members. As TPT is administrated entirely by volunteers, it is important that our systems are efficient and cost-effective so that we can all focus on what TPT is really about - to conserve, learn and share knowledge about Tasmanian threatened plants.

TPT's current website and admin systems are around 10 years old and the TPT committee decided that they were ready for a re-vamp. In late 2019 TPT was awarded a grant from the Federal Government's Communities Environment Program that has helped to modernise the administration of Threatened Plants Tasmania. This funding has supported building the new website and an Event Coordinator to lead the transition to a new system for registering members, managing field trips, and communicating with you.

2020 saw an interim solution put in place, which you would have noticed with the new email format, and the opportunity to contribute to TPT's direction with the Member Survey.

After much research and consultation, the new website is nearly ready to be launched! We hired web developers Creative Freedom, whose specialty is creating beautiful websites for not-for-profits with limited budgets. We gave them a design brief that the new website needs to be easy for admins to update, simple to navigate, have a user-friendly Members area, and of course visually highlight Tasmania's beautiful, threatened flora. This article is a bit of a tease because we can't launch it until after TPT has become incorporated, as part of the system we will be using is free only to incorporated not-for-profits. However, I can say that the handful of people who have tested it out say it looks fabulous, and it's nice and simple to navigate.



# Threatened Plants

## TASMANIA

It is most important for you to know that the new website will require all users to re-register. Once you've registered as a member, you will become a member of the new incorporated TPT with voting rights at our general meetings. You will be able to easily sign up for trips, update your contact details and preferences, reset your password, and even make a donation. As is the case for most online accounts, one email address = one account. If you are one of the few members without your own email address, have no fear, we have a plan. If you are one of those who have reported that you never get TPT emails, this new system should help. More details to come!

We know there are several keen photographers amongst the TPT volunteers. If you would like some of your images featured on the new website, please get in touch with Priscilla Richards (p\_crumrine@hotmail.com). We would love to have the whole website feature TPT member images rather than stock images.

Here's a sneak preview:



## Field Trips in 2021

There are still a couple of trips remaining in the 2020/2021 Field Trip Calendar. These include *Eucalyptus gunnii* monitoring at St Patricks Plains, and *Eucalyptus morrisbyi* monitoring at Calverts Hill. Invitations to attend these trips will be sent out via email over the coming weeks. Please check the website for more information.

After this we will put out a call to our partners for projects and field trips for 2021/2022. A new field trip calendar will be released in August and posted on the TPT website. Details for each trip will also be sent to the TPT email list and will be available about 2 weeks in advance on [www.tpt.org.au](http://www.tpt.org.au) and [www.wildcaretas.org.au](http://www.wildcaretas.org.au). Please check the TPT website for the latest updates.



# Threatened Plants

## TASMANIA

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