



# Naturally Yours

**The official newsletter of Tamar Natural Resource Management**

**May 2016**

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Photo: Coral fungi, *Clavulinopsis sulcata*, © Charlie Price.



**Tamar Valley Rural Biodiversity and Landscape Learning Project  
Seed Collecting for All Seasons Workshop  
Sunday 29th May 2016**



# Cat Management Plan article

Finally, the long awaited Draft Tasmanian Cat Management Plan (the Plan) has been completed by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment and released for public comment. The purpose is to improve the management of feral and domestic cats in Tasmania, and reduce the negative impacts they have on the environment, agriculture and human health. Importantly, the plan includes a number of proposed amendments to the Cat Management Act (2009).

As stated on the State Government website, "for the Tasmanian Cat Management Plan to succeed, all levels of Government as well as the community will need to work cooperatively". How exactly this is going to work seems to be lacking in the plan, in fact, the community seems to be largely left out. It is therefore important that we, as a community, get our submissions in. We have until the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2016 to comment to Biosecurity Tasmania on the draft.

## Quick overview:

The new plan takes a big step forward from the existing Cat Management Act (2009).

There is a move towards being "responsible for a cat" not just a "cat owner" with: compulsory de-sexing (at an earlier age) and microchipping of cats; confining cats to premises to prevent nuisance and roaming cats and limiting the number of cats allowed at a property (although Tamar NRM feels this number should be 2-3 not 3-5).

Arrangements supporting landholders to undertake cat management actions have been improved through: removing the "proximity to nearest residence" requirements for primary producers, managers of "prescribed land" and cat prohibited areas.

Tamar NRM and the Statewide Community Cat Eradication Taskforce (SCCET) have reviewed the plan and here are some suggested changes.

- Eradication should be the ultimate goal despite the difficulties and improbabilities of this being achieved. If we don't aim high, we will fall well short.
- Community, volunteer and NRM groups need to be involved in all aspects of the plan. This is something the State Government states is important, but it appears to be lacking within the draft plan.
- The language used in the performance indicators and actions is extremely vague. There needs to be measurable Key Performance Indicators and baselines in order for actions to be successful.
- Clarity in the roles played by state and local governments, land managers, community and other key stakeholders is vital, but also how this is going to be funded.
- There is already a lot of research of the impacts of cats. This should not be a reason to stop action and funding to cat management activities now.

Visit the DPIPWE website to obtain a copy of the Plan. If you would like further information on Tamar NRM's position on the Plan or would like assistance with putting in a submission please contact Tamar NRM's Gill Basnett.

## *Journey through Nature*

*Its Fungi time of the year and our cover photo reflects this change as we move from Autumn into Winter, from dry into wet. At last the damp conditions have arrived and will once again showcase the huge variety of fungi to be found in Tasmania.*

*Throughout natural history, even the less attractive of nature's plants and animals have had their champions who have enthusiastically educated others and promoted the benefits and beauty of their favourite species and in many cases lead to an appreciation and respect for what might have been neglected, forgotten and lost to us all.*

*When we talk about conserving individual species, inevitably the issue of interdependence of species, habitat loss and climate change are discussed and while keeping ecosystems intact is the wisest management approach, the big picture isn't always appreciated or understood by the mainstream.*

*Connecting with one single species at one single location, and being fascinated by it, will still remain a key motivator for most of us.*

*If you have seen an interesting bird that you have not noticed before, a weird looking insect or plant, then send us a photo and write to us about it. That way we can share your journey through nature in future newsletters.*

*Co-Editors Greg & Gill*

## Natural area bounce back - When cats are removed

Tamar NRM were delighted to receive an extremely well written letter from coastal community member Garry Mondon, about the effect of stray and feral cat reductions in his part of the world. Not only was the letter beautifully hand written, but in it he explains just what happens when cats are removed from the natural environment.

Garry talks of the Tamar NRM's Feral Cat Management Trapping Program run from 2009-2012 by Feral Management Solutions in the Weymouth and Bellingham areas. (The project trapped and euthanized about 50 feral cats.)

At the time, we knew that this project had helped to increase the return of natural fauna to the area, and according to Garry, as the cat numbers reduced he witnessed the return of potoroos, possums and quails.

"In the year 2000, there were two types of wallaby, brush tail possums, ring tail possums, two types of bandicoots, one brown and one striped, potoroos and little quails, plus bettongs. By 2009 most of these small animals had gone, I knew the reason was cats, even the rabbits were few and far between. In 2011 just the wallabies remained . . ."

"One month ago I saw 30 quails in my garden, at first I thought the ground was moving as they ran together, I saw them again three days later"

What Garry's letter confirms is that we can make a big ecologically contribution by ensuring that cats are not present in places they do not belong.

## Draft Tasmanian Cat Management Plan

April 2016



Biosecurity Tasmania  
Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment



**Top:** Draft Tasmanian Cat Management Plan Community Comment Due 30<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

**Below:** Garry's letter to Tamar NRM regarding cats in his area.

30.3.2016

Dear Sir, or Madam, in the year 2000, I bought a block of land and started to build, in order to live there, my patch was surrounded by native wild life. There are two types of Wallaby, Brush tail possums, Ring tail possums, two types of Bandicoots, one brown one striped, Potoroos and little Quails, plus Bettongs. By 2009 most of these small animals had gone, I

the trap, dug and filled it  
ass, fish heads, sausages, all caught  
the trap 2012  
Potoroo (2015) on  
killed in this area  
and butcher birds  
I set the trap  
only native wild

**"In the year 2000, there were two types of wallaby, brush tail possums, ring tail possums, two types of bandicoots, one brown and one striped, potoroos and little quails, plus bettongs. By 2009 most of these small animals had gone, I knew the reason was cats, even the rabbits were few and far between In 2011 just the wallabies remained . . ."**

torticeshell, and one small  
The ginger cats weight, was 23 1/2 lbs, one grey 23 lbs, one grey 19 lbs, one grey 17 lbs, torticeshell 22 lbs, the black cats all around 10 lbs each.  
All of them ready to rip your arm off.



## AK Consultants supporting Tamar NRM's environmental education

With a view of expanding our schools program, Tamar NRM is approaching service clubs and businesses to sponsor the purchase of a number of Waterwatch "bug" session kits. These kits contain all the components, including viewers and identification resources, to enable a class of 30 to fully participate and learn about the amazing world of aquatic life. Tamar NRM will assist teachers with free training/instruction in safe collection and identification. Our staff will be available to run the sessions (for a fee), but the intention is to train the teachers to deliver the sessions.

In return for sponsorship, clubs and businesses will receive acknowledgement on the kit, in our newsletter and during the session.

We thank AK Consultants for being the first to sponsor and are pleased that bookings for the kit and macroinvertebrate sessions are starting to roll in.



Sponsor:

**AK Consultants**  
**Agricultural & Natural Resource**  
**Management Consultants**



**Above:** Tamar NRM Program Co-ordinator Greg Lundstrom and President Roger Tyshing take time out at Agfest to discuss the upcoming "Backyards to Broadacres" workshop series.

## Funding Success

### Backyards to Broadacres

Tamar NRM is on a roll with the hard work of writing grant applications paying off again. This time we will be receiving \$37,590.00 through the latest round of the National Landcare Programme – Sustainable Agriculture Small Grants Round 2015-16.

The project will be delivered over 2016 and 2017, across the City of Launceston, West Tamar and George Town council areas to present innovative and forward-looking solutions on the issues affecting agriculture in the Tamar Valley. Workshop topics will include soil biology and health, urban farming, composting large and small, soil and climate change, trees on farms and marketing your product.

Where possible and appropriate, the workshop information provided will be scalable, taking account of large and small scale operations and tailored to the participant profile.



Australian Government

National  
Landcare  
Programme



"This project is supported by funding from the Australian Government"

# Reports from the Tamar Region Councils



## Reducing energy use at West Tamar Council

At a Councillor's request, West Tamar Council's offices and other facilities were audited for energy use and recommendations were made to reduce it. The environmental benefits of this are clear but the financial benefits are considerable too. Simple measures like more efficient use of the air conditioning, and installing insulation and LED lighting have now been done at the Riverside office. To make the largest impact (both environmentally and financially) the solar panels recommended for the Riverside office roof need to be installed. Solar power can be more effective in an office, where almost all the energy is used during the day when the sun shines.

Council is also investigating retrofitting of our street lights with LED lamps. Although not part of the audit, but in the same vein, Council's Riverside office now has two bike racks.

Now you have no excuse not to ride in and see us!



## Smart controllers and other efficiencies

Energy efficiency measures rolled out by the City of Launceston at Council-managed facilities have to date saved 1.3 million kilowatt hours of electricity worth \$236,000 a year.

Launceston Council has undertaken a number of energy-saving projects over the last four years, including the replacement of globes and fluorescent tubes with LED lights, and the installation of solar hot water systems and intelligent controllers which automatically turn equipment - including lighting - off when it's not in use.

LED lights have been installed in City Park, Aurora Stadium, Princess Square, QVMAG and parts of the First Basin. The Council has replaced the old 36-watt fluorescent tube lighting in the city's three multi-storey car parks with 22-watt LED tubes, saving more than 200,000 kilowatt hours per year and reducing total power consumption in our major car parks by 45 per cent.

Solar hot water systems have been installed in Town Hall, the Dame Marjorie Child Care Centre, the Churchill Park Sports Centre and even in the City Park monkey enclosure. A 20 kW solar photovoltaic system consisting of 80 panels has been installed on the roof of Town Hall, generating 28,000 kWh of electricity each year which powers the building.

Many of these new systems are activated when a pre-set natural level of lighting is reached. in 2016.



## George Town Community Coastal Action Plan

Since October last year, the George Town Coastal Community Management Group aided by Tamar NRM, have worked on updating the works schedule (the Action Plan) taking into account recent community concerns and observations and other identified coastal priorities. The key to success is having priorities developed in close consultation with the community and major stakeholders including the George Town Council and Parks and Wildlife Service.

The current process involves the George Town Council coastal communities of Low Head, Bellbouy; Beechford; Lulworth / Tam O'Shanter; Weymouth; Bellingham; and Hillwood, with a number of workshops and consultations run. The update of the Action Plan has gathered a substantial amount of information over the past 7 months and is about 80% completed.

The public consultation and stakeholder input is at a point where the actions can be collated into a draft for stakeholder sign off and to consider issues of resourcing to ensure effective implementation. These last few steps will determine if the process will be successful in continuing to deliver on the George Town Coastal Management Plan (2005). Building the capacity of the community to undertake a realistic and a manageable part of works is the long term goal.



# Trailers, Tools and On-ground Works



*Courtesy of Tasmanian Community Fund, Tamar NRM is now well placed to deliver even greater on ground works following delivery of its new tandem trailer. Soon to be filled with tools care of a South32 TEMCO Community Grant.*



Tamar NRM has now taken delivery of a tandem trailer funded through a Tasmanian Community Fund grant. The Tasmanian Community Fund is an independent fund that supports and strengthens Tasmanian communities.

Once the badging and signage is completed we will be well placed to implement on ground works with Work for the Dole teams or through loan to Landcare Groups.

Tamar NRM was also fortunate to receive a South32 TEMCO Community Grant of \$4,830.00 to purchase tools for works teams. The grant will enable us to purchase a variety of tools and safety equipment for the on ground works including tool boxes, wheel barrows. Brushcutter, a motor driven post driver, safety glasses and gloves.

Meanwhile the other trailer unit (our weed treatment spray trailer) fit out is almost completed with a community training and an induction session planned for July-August.

## Christopher Strong NRM Fellowship 2016 recipient announced!

The 2016 Christopher Strong Fellowship has been awarded to John and Katrina Kelly for their project "Poa for the Planet and Ponies". The funding of \$1,200 will be used to do research into the benefits of native poa grass as a feed stock for horses.

Past Christopher Strong Fellowship reports are available on the Tamar NRM website:  
<http://www.tamarnrm.com.au/media/reports/>

# Weeds, Weeds, Weeds

Tamar NRM's Weeds Working Group comprises Tamar NRM; 3 Councils - Launceston City, George Town and West Tamar; Community and industry representatives; NRM North; DPIPWE; DIER (Dept. State Growth) and Parks and Wildlife. The group met on 16th March to maximise the effectiveness of weed control programs. The group aims to coordinate the efforts of organisations and groups managing weed issues within the Tamar Region. As such, we are interested in furthering the conversation on areas of shared responsibility to maximise effort and minimise the use of resources for us all, with particular emphasis on cooperation across land tenures.

## Besom Heath

Tamar NRM staff are currently working with Biosecurity Tasmania to jointly facilitate a Besom Heath (*Erica scoparia*) Field Day and Workshop in the Bridgenorth area. The Besom Heath infestation is slowly but surely spreading into the West Tamar Council area. This emerging invasive woody weed threatens our agricultural lands and the natural environment.

Invitations will be extended to all affected landholders, relevant councils and key agencies that can assist with controlling the spread of this invasive weed which looks very similar to its cousin Spanish Heath (*Erica lusitanica*).

The Besom Heath workshop will be held on Friday 24th June 2016, 11.00am – 2.00pm.

Full details on our Website: [www.tamarnrm.com.au](http://www.tamarnrm.com.au)

## Roadside Management of Weeds Forum

The use of herbicide and how we manage our roadsides was a topic of discussion on 20th April at Riverside. About 20 people attended the Roadside Weed Management Forum to hear a presentation from Professor Chris Preston (Adelaide University and Australian Glyphosate Sustainability Working Group member). NRM North brought the professor to Tasmania for three workshops in Northern Tasmania and Tamar NRM collaborated on the Riverside session. Other presenters were Greg Stewart and Jesse Webster from NRM North and Herbert Staubmann. The workshop raised the questions: Do we need to use so much chemical? Is it necessary to have so much bare ground and what does that mean for issues such as: herbicide resistant weeds, road integrity, pollutants

and silt into waterways and Tasmania's "Clean Green" image and general amenity?

The presentation by local nursery owner Herbert Staubmann was well received as was his discussion paper which included chemical free solutions based on years of roadside management observations.

## Support for the General Community:

Staff continue to field calls and emails from the community and through councils to help identify weeds and plants and to gain advice on how to control the weed or to protect the plant if it is a native. We know this part of our role is valued, and involves engaging with community groups such as at a presentation on 22nd April to the School for Senior's Garden Group where we delivered a presentation entitled: "Garden plants going bush". Judging by the questions, the group of 30 really enjoyed the presentation and plan to ask us back.

Limit the spread of weeds, See: <http://dpiwwe.tas.gov.au/invasive-species/weeds/weed-hygiene/weed-management-and-hygiene-guidelines>.

General information on Weeds: <http://www.weeds.asn.au/>



Besom Heath Photos Courtesy  
Matt Baker, Tasmanian Herbarium





## Australian Forest Growers National Conference 2016

Private forest owners, farmers and land managers will be gathering in Launceston in October for Australia's major Biennial National-Conference run by Australian Forest Growers (AFG).

The Conference helps landholders manage their forests for wood and the wider environmental and social values the community demands.

Now in its 32nd year, the conference will feature a number of notable speakers from Tasmania, the mainland and overseas.

AFG have also arranged a State-wide pre-conference tour. This popular event adds to the Conference program of two days of presentations from speakers and farmers, one full day of field tours, plus two specialised half-day tours. In addition to presentations, farmers, through informal 'Grower Workshops', can share and discuss their experiences. The highlight is the Conference Dinner, at which finalists from each State showcase their tree growing enterprises and the National Award is presented.

Tamar NRM will organise and conduct a full day tour focusing on natural resource management, under the theme Sustainability & Environment. We are working in partnership with NRM North (the funding body for the bus tour) who will cover "whole of catchment" issues as an added dimension to the tour.

You're invited to be part of our **Tamar Valley Rural Biodiversity and Landscape Learning Project** putting in 20,000 trees and 8,000 understory plants

...and it all starts with seed collection!!



**Seed collection for all seasons workshop**

**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2016**  
**10.30am – 3.00pm**  
*Morning Tea and Lunch provided*

Come along and learn more about the how, when and why of seed collection with Tamar's own Anna Povey.

You will experience "hands-on" collection techniques while contributing as a volunteer to the Tamar Valley Rural Biodiversity and Landscape Learning Project (20 million trees).

**This is a free event**

at "Springland", 377 Old Bangor Tram Road, Mount Direction

*RSVP by 25<sup>th</sup> May to Gill or Greg on 6323 3310*

*or email [Gill.Basnett@launceston.tas.gov.au](mailto:Gill.Basnett@launceston.tas.gov.au)*

Please bring secateurs if you have them and sensible all weather bush clothes with full length pants/sleeves and covered shoes.

## Australian Forest Growers Biennial National Conference 2016

*'Making the Right Choice'*

**Sunday 23 October to Wednesday 26 October 2016**

**Hotel Grand Chancellor, 29 Cameron Street**

**LAUNCESTON Tasmania**

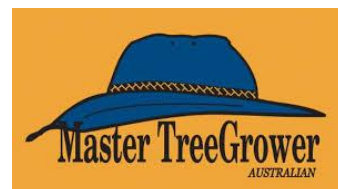
More details are available from the Conference website at <http://www.afg.asn.au/news/afg-2016-biennial-national-conference>



# Woody Yaloak & Otways catchments

## 2 day study tour, Victoria

6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2016



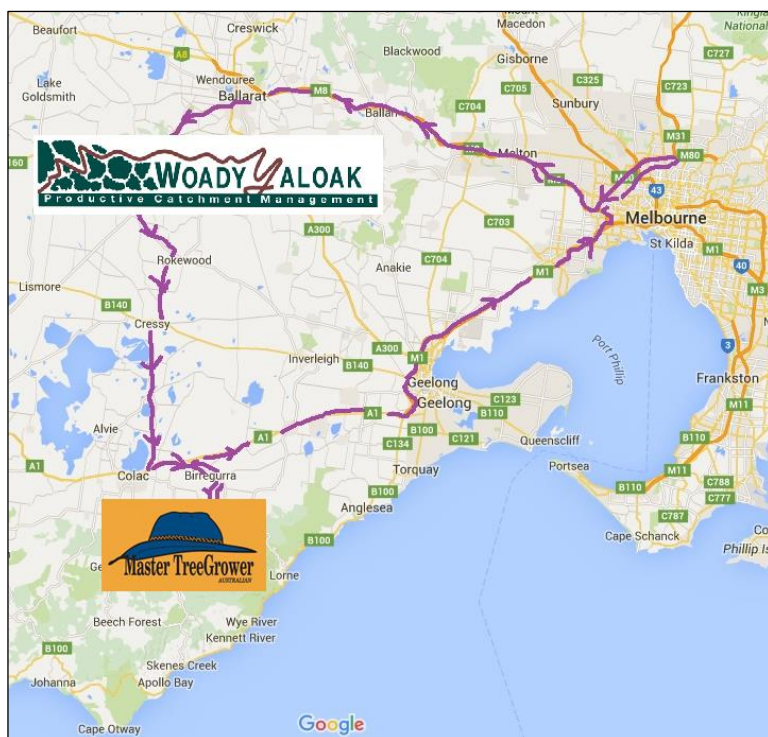
Tamar NRM is organising a field trip to Victoria involving our long time Landcare sister group, Woody Yaloak Catchment Group (day one) and "Bambra" Agroforestry Farm/Yan Yan Gurt West Farm (day two). During the evening at Colac, we will be joined by the Coorangamite CMA for dinner.

The study tour will show examples of sustainable farming. At Woody Yaloak we will see aspects of the group's current productivity focus (pastures, cropping and soils) blending with the more traditional Landcare (such as care for waterways, remnants, rabbit and weed control). Day two will show agroforestry and productive farming in the Otways. On show will be the practical applications of the Master TreeGrowers program and sustainable forestry and trees on farms.

Cost: \$500.00 (Price includes flights, all meals and accommodation (based on twin share, however, we can arrange for you to have your own room by arrangement)).

\$100 deposit at time of Registration - Full payment by 3rd June.

**Numbers will be limited, so register early!!**



Registration to Greg or Gill by phoning  
6323-3310 m: 0438 642 112,  
or email [greg.lundstrom@launceston.tas.gov.au](mailto:greg.lundstrom@launceston.tas.gov.au)

**The itinerary and full details are available on our website: [www.tamarnrm.com.au](http://www.tamarnrm.com.au)**



# Biodiversity Page

## Beware of Men Bringing Flowers...

BirdLife Australia polls shown Superb Fairy-wrens (*Malurus cyaneus*) are Australia's favourite bird. Their beautiful colours, social behaviour, frequent sightings and general "happy" demeanour certainly put them on my list of favourites. But it is their social activities that are really interesting.

Superb Fairy-wrens are highly promiscuous. In fact, all but one of our Fairy-wren species, the Purple-crowned Fairy-wren, are. This breeding strategy ensures that young have the strongest genes available. The groups of Fairy-wrens you see are usually made up of a dominant 'coloured' male and female as well as subordinate males (often uncoloured) and females. They are highly territorial and will fight off other wrens that come onto their patch and all help with feeding and raising young.

You will often hear them singing duets, which cement bonds, but also allow the male and female to keep track of each other. However, this strategy does not always work. Males will sneak off and offer flower petals and a little song to neighbouring females. Females also keep an eye on these neighbouring males, sizing them up as possible fathers to their offspring. In the breeding season, females will often mate with her partner and the most "eligible" male in the vicinity, resulting in 90% of nests having young not only of the dominant male in that territory.

Eligible males are those that have the brightest colours and moult into those colours earliest (or even remain blue throughout the year). These bright colours take a lot of testosterone to produce and testosterone can be hard on the body. Therefore males that maintain their blues the longest are often the strongest and most "eligible".



## Fungi Feature

This month's cover features fungi and was reproduced courtesy of Charlie Price. We had trouble picking just one of her fabulous photos. After a few discussions, we narrowed it down to two. Charlie received a prize pack from Tamar NRM for her efforts.



This stunning fungi is *Aseroe rubra* (Stinkhorn). If you went along to the fascinating talk by one of Australia's foremost mycologists (fungi expert), Dr. Tom May, put on by the Australian Plant Society on Tuesday the 17<sup>th</sup> May, you would have heard Tom talk about this species of "stinkhorn". There are a wide range of ways fungi disperse their spores with the help of wind, rain or, as in the case of this Stinkhorn, insects. A smell of rotting meat rising from this fungus attracts flies, which then carry away the slime covered spores.

This was one of the first fungi species described from Tasmania. It can be found in alpine grasslands and mountain woodlands and rich soils in sheltered areas in eastern Australia also in urban areas on transported eucalypt wood chips. In 800 teaspoons of soil from around Australia, 40,000 different species of fungi were recorded.

A good site for more information on fungi is [fungimap](http://www.fungimap.org.au) on [www.fungimap.org.au](http://www.fungimap.org.au).



# Environmental Education

## Low Head Penguin Colony Weeding Days

A combined youth group from Launceston and George Town known as SAM (SERVICE AND MISSION) gave freely of their time over three days in April, participating in Tamar NRM's Community Sea Spurge (*Euphorbia paralias*) Control Program at the Low Head Penguin colony. They removed about 20 bags of this coastal invader by hand pulling, making sure that they got out as much of the tap root as possible. The benefit of manual removal is that it negates the need for chemical spraying at this highly visited site, and one famous for penguin nesting habitat. The team were also shown the nesting shelters made by students of the local primary some years earlier, and received a talk on coastal issues, by Megan Dykman from NRM North.

Mentor James Oakley said he was pleased that the youth group kids were able to serve the environment and local community through the Sea Spurge project. "It was great for us to see some of their development as they undertook the activity." One of the activities organisers Jenny Baxter said "it is good for youth from Launceston and George Town to meet, interact and learn how an insidious weed like Sea Spurge impacts the environment. Youth know quite a lot about the environmental problems of the river and the coasts, but being made aware of how to protect this unique environment was an eye-opener to most of the group"

Tamar NRM and NRM North are working together to improve past revegetation projects undertaken by both organisations through weeding and tree planting working bees. As well as Sea Spurge, target weeds include Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and Mirror Bush (*Coprosma repens*) in the reserve area. Local schools will assist with infill plantings to support local biodiversity.



SAM Youth Group hand pulling Sea Spurge.



## Healthy Soils, Healthy Plants, Healthy People

An interactive art and science soil workshop entitled Healthy Soils. Healthy Plants. Healthy People. was held at St. Leonards on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> May, linking the two disciplines of soil science and art using soil together in a most imaginative manner.

Twenty three people attended a day of hands on creative pottery and ochre painting and soil science. The morning sessions were run by Dr. Bill Cotching who is highly skilled in soils science and a keen potter, assisted by his wife Judy during the ochre art session. The afternoon field session was spent in the vegetable garden at Worldview Centre for Intercultural Studies at St. Leonards. Murray Smith outlined what they undertook with their gardens and he and Bill discussed different practices such as cover crops, deep rooted plants and ripping along contours.

It is intended that this first pilot workshop will be the for-runner to other starting later this year. Knowledge gained from the feedback sheets will help shape future sessions.

The workshop was organised and facilitated by Gabi Solomon, sponsored by Tamar NRM and funded by an NRM North community grant.



*Dr Bill Cotching presenting at the Healthy Soils, Healthy Plants, Healthy People workshop.*

This project was supported by NRM North through funding from the Australian Government

## Heritage Forest Community Garden

Officially launched on Tuesday 5th April this year, the Heritage Forest Community Garden at Mowbray is a local community resource where members grow great nutritious chemical-free food, develop skills and share life. The site on City of Launceston land is operated by Youth Futures Inc. with partners Migrant Resource Centre (North Tasmania) Inc. and Rotary Launceston with the support of the Tasmanian Community Fund.

Initiatives like this community garden can alleviate the risk of vulnerable community members trying to have secure access to food. Being food secure means a person has long-term access to sufficient, reliable, nutritious and safe food that is financially viable.

Community members can purchase a plot through Youth Futures for a nominal fee, which will go towards resources such as the water and drip irrigation system. Gardeners will have the autonomy to grow what they like in their garden bed providing they maintain the area.

Although not yet fully established, further development of a picnic area with tables and chairs and other amenities will enable even greater utilisation of the facilities.

Tamar NRM congratulates all concerned and will be investigating ways to link in our activities so as to add value to sustainable living initiatives such as this one.

See:

<https://www.facebook.com/heritageforestcommunitygarden/>; or contact Youth Futures at 6 Invermay Road, Invermay (Monday to Friday between 9 am to 4 pm) - Phone 6331 6176.



*A new inspiring community & food growing project with Youth Futures, Migrant Resource Centre North, City of Launceston, Rotary and permaculture designers taking shape at Mowbray.*



## Photovoltaics, Batteries and Bushfires

By Sue Woinarski\*

Around fifteen years ago we installed our first photovoltaic panels. Over time, and as money became available, we made two additions. This greatly reduced our power bills. Our big frustration was that when the grid went down the panels went off as well. This is for safety reasons, so that workmen repairing a downed grid don't get electrocuted by power coming onto the grid from PV systems. Where we live, the grid goes down often and to see the sun shining and know you were not using it was galling.

So we started investigating batteries. We settled on lead acid gel, established technology that needs little maintenance. They were expensive, but worth it to have power when all the neighbours are in the dark, and use your own stored power in the evenings rather than buying in power from the grid. Under normal conditions the batteries are set up to only use the top 20% of their charge, that is, they retain 80% of their charge. This lengthens the life of the batteries so that we expect to get at least 15 years of use out of ours.

But when the grid is down the batteries will discharge down to 30% charge. What this means is that if there is a fire and the grid goes down we can still use our electric pump and we don't have to buy a diesel pump which we hope to never use.

The "brains" of the system, the "SP PRO" decides where power goes. Power coming into the system from the panels goes first to provide the requirements of the house. Next, excess power goes to charge the batteries, then when the batteries are fully charged any excess power is exported to the grid. When the sun goes down and the panels cease providing power the batteries take over until they reach their predetermined discharge level, then

power is drawn from the grid. When the grid goes down the system switches instantly to batteries and lights don't even flicker. If the grid goes down on a sunny day the panels keep working and supply the house or the batteries, but not the grid.

The only weakness we can see in this system is that if the grid goes down in cloudy weather and the batteries discharge to their predetermined minimum, it is necessary to wait for sunny weather to recharge the batteries as they can only charge from the panels, not from the grid. We are looking for a solution to this. Rather than installing more panels or more batteries we are looking at adding a little wind generation, but everyone we speak to says "Stay away from wind", but we are still looking and are not ready to leave the grid just yet.



*The battery bank at Sue and Zig's Weymouth property*

*\*Dr. Sue Woinarski is a member of the Sustainable Living Working Group and on the State-Wide Community Cat Eradication Taskforce (SCCET) Working Group. She is a retired vet and lives with husband Zich at Weymouth.*

# Wasp Management In Tasmania

By Anna Povey

Many people have been noticing large numbers of introduced wasps around Tasmania this autumn. The dry spring may have contributed to high numbers, as fewer nests would have been flooded. Colonies are usually annual, but, with Australia's milder winters, some colonies survive the winter intact, growing even bigger in their second year. Some nests here may reach 100 times the size that they do in Europe. The biggest nest ever found was dug up at Karoola near Launceston last year ([www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-02/world-biggest-wasp-nest-found-on-a-property-in-northern-tas/6367536](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-02/world-biggest-wasp-nest-found-on-a-property-in-northern-tas/6367536))

European Wasps, *Vespula germanica*, in Australia were first recorded at Hobart in 1959 and more recently, English Wasps, *V. vulgaris*, arrived in Tasmania about 1995. These two species are difficult to tell apart but the former is more common and widespread.

It is important to distinguish these introduced pests from various native wasps, such as the Flower Wasp, *Thynnus zonatus*, which is more slender and a solitary species that does not bother us (though they will sting if handled).

Landholders are increasingly concerned about European wasps' impact on native invertebrates, as they attack and consume many of our native invertebrates to the degree that they can greatly reduce abundance and diversity. Although there are records of echidnas sometimes eating wasp larvae, wasps have almost no predators or parasites in Australia.

Land for Wildlife member, Matt Rose, decided to tackle the wasps around his forest property. He diligently tracked wasps (once they have fed, they fly in a straight line back to their nest) and found 25 nests within 500 metres of his house.

Matt says, "If you can trace the location of the nests, they are easily controlled using an insecticide dust with an active ingredient of Permethrin (Yates Ant and Roach Dust is what I use, available from most supermarkets). The treated meat baits used when you can't find the nests include the active ingredient Fipronil. Wine Tasmania are the contact for Fipronil baits."

The poison bait based on Fipronil in wallaby mince is most effective and is very targeted. Unlike water traps and suchlike, which also kill native insects, while actually making little difference to total wasp numbers, this bait allows wasps themselves to carry the poison back to their nest. This is far preferable to putting yourself in danger by approaching a nest (which should only be done in the dark and very carefully; multiple stings can be life threatening).

The bait can be purchased is available through Wine Tasmania (see their website - [winetasmania.com.au/news/article/fipronil\\_wasp\\_bait\\_permit\\_approved\\_for\\_wine\\_tasmania](http://winetasmania.com.au/news/article/fipronil_wasp_bait_permit_approved_for_wine_tasmania)). The cost is \$16 / frozen bait, and you need to pre-order. Of course you should follow all the instructions provided to ensure that the poison does not affect anything or anyone but the wasps!

(continued)



## Wasp Management in Tasmania (continued)

Baiting needs to be done at the right time of year (mid-late February to April), when wasps are looking for protein to feed their brood. First you need to make a bait station (instructions are provided for a feeder made out of two tin cans, or a plastic milk bottle) and pre-bait with wallaby mince (not poisoned) for a few days. This allows the wasps to discover the bait station, and allows you to ensure that no other animals are getting access.

Relocate the station if ants, birds, quolls or possums are able to access it.

When enough wasps are visiting the feeder (10 in 10 minutes), replace the lure with the poison bait. It should be so effective that the bait only needs to be left for a couple of days (after which it will be drying out anyway), and in Wine Tasmania's experience, doing this once or twice a season is sufficient.

**\*\*Important note:** Agricultural chemicals, including insecticides are not to be used for any purpose or in any manner contrary to the label unless authorised, so **READ THE LABEL**. For information on registered chemicals and current permits, visit the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) website [www.apvma.gov.au](http://www.apvma.gov.au).

For further information, contact Anna Povey (0498 800 611). If you have a conservation covenant, please ring Anna before using insecticides in your reserve.

General information on European wasps is available on the DPIPWE web site <http://dpiipwe.tas.gov.au/biosecurity/plant-biosecurity/pests-and-diseases/european-and-english-wasps>

## Myrtle Rust in the Tamar Valley

Myrtle rust is continuing to be detected in home gardens and is now known to be in Launceston. Biosecurity Tasmania has a statewide emergency response program underway in an attempt to eradicate Myrtle rust, before it becomes established and poses a serious risk to the health of Tasmania's native bushland.

Lophomyrtus plants are the key carriers of Myrtle rust and Biosecurity Tasmania needs to inspect these plants in home gardens (with your permission) for signs of disease. This time of the year, the rust will have been washed off leaves and hard to detect, but recording the locations of these plants at any time of the year will assist.

You can help by simply letting DPIPWE know if you have Lophomyrtus plants on your property.

For more information visit the DPIPWE website at: [www.dpiipwe.tas.gov.au/myrtlerust](http://www.dpiipwe.tas.gov.au/myrtlerust)



## Around the Catchment Coming Events

### **Seed Collection for all Seasons Workshop**

"Springland", 377 Old Bangor Tram Road, Mount Direction Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> May, 10 am - 3.00 pm. Catered. Come along and learn more about the how, when and why of seed collection with Tamar's own Anna Povey.

### **Tamar NRM Reference Group Get-together**

Tamar Function Centre, Windsor Park, Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> June 7.00 pm. Strategic Directions - Environmental Mini Quiz - Supper

### **Besom Heath Workshop**

Bridgenorth, Friday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2016, 11.00am – 2.00pm. Joint Tamar NRM & Biosecurity Tasmania event Supported by West Tamar Landcare.

### **Two Day Productive Catchments Tour**

Victoria, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> July. The study tour will show examples sustainable farming and agro forestry practices. Accommodation, flights and meals all included. \$500 registration fee

### **National Tree Day**

Sunday, 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2016 (Schools Tree Day 29<sup>th</sup> July)

### **Australian Forest Growers Biennial National Conference 2016**

Launceston, Sunday 23 October to Wednesday 26 October 2016 - "Making the Right Choice" More details are available from the Conference website at <http://www.afg.asn.au/news/afg-2016-biennial-national-conference>

Further details on Website: [www.tamarnrm.com.au](http://www.tamarnrm.com.au)

## New Tamar NRM Facebook Page

*Have you found us on Facebook Recently?*  
*Tamar NRM has a new page where we post all the latest news, views and events.*

*Log onto our new page at:*

<https://www.facebook.com/TamarNRM15/>

*Help us to develop and manage on-ground projects delivering benefits to our environment and community.*

## **Tamar Region Natural Resource Fund**

*Donations and Sponsorship Arrangements are always welcome.*

**We hold Tax Deductible Gift Recipient Status.**

### **Support our Working Groups:**

#### **Weeds Working Group**

*Chair:* John Thorp (0419 323 400)

#### **Sustainable Living Working Group**

*Chair:* Bruce Jackson (0407 872 520)

#### **George Town Coastal Management Group**

*Chair:* Ian Sauer (0407 046 346)

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**facebook:** [www.facebook.com/tamarNRM15](https://www.facebook.com/tamarNRM15)