

# BANDICOOTtimes

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A PROGRAM OF



City of **HOBART**



Lambert Gully Bushcare volunteers brave wet and cold conditions to stabilise an eroded slope and put in new native plants that will provide food and shelter for local wildlife. Photo: Talia Sawers

## Bushcare Roundup

It's been full steam ahead since we restarted Bushcare and Trackcare activities after the 10-week hiatus caused by Tasmania's COVID lockdown.

From those first working bees and dig days in early June, the program has gone from strength to strength, and we're now experiencing a significant increase in the level of interest in our programs.

With so much interest in Bushcare activities we've hardly had time to catch our breath, but we have welcomed 160 new volunteers into the program since March and many more have contacted us in the hope of joining our volunteer ranks.

We are simply blown away by the community response and are working on a plan to provide additional volunteer opportunities for our new volunteers.

We've had to implement some changes to the Bushcare and



**Talia Sawers**  
Program Officer Bushcare

Trackcare programs to cope with the increased numbers and keep everyone safe during this period of heightened risk. Thank you to all of our volunteers for working with us to make this happen.

Despite activities being on hold for close to three months Bushcare has been incredibly active. The numbers from July last year to June tell the story:

- 140 individual activities held
- more than 530 volunteers took part in activities
- 233 new volunteers joined the program
- 3600 hours were contributed by our dedicated volunteers.

We also recently held a native plant giveaway to celebrate

National Tree Day. As always the giveaway was a big hit – more than 300 native plants went to new homes where they will be used to create habitat gardens.

Trackcare volunteers have been working hard to formalise the Yellow Hippo mountain bike track behind Knocklofty Reserve, and it's looking very impressive!

The Friends of Wellington Park completed their grant-funded project at New Town Rivulet in Lenah Valley, which included weed control and a community planting day to help establish the newly-opened area with native plants.

This spring we have some great Bushcare activities planned including more plant giveaways – keep an eye on our Facebook page for details.

Have a wonderful spring, and don't forget to find some time to observe the changes around us and welcome the diversity of new life in our bushland reserves.



**Cover photo:** Cornelian Bay Bushcare do the "COVID shuffle" at a recent clean-up day.

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# On the trail of the shy snail

**Dr Kevin Bonham**

Honorary Curator,  
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

The ammonite pinwheel snail (*Ammoniropa vigens*) is a tiny and very rare snail known only from the greater Hobart area.

One of many tiny Tasmanian snails in the family Charopidae, it is about 3 mm wide with a remarkably flat white to yellow-brown shell. Live specimens live under mossy rocks in wet forests on dolerite. Dead shells occur in the same places but are also sometimes found in loose soil on track or road cuttings. The snails, which are probably sightless (unlike other members of their family in Tasmania), live under rocks including in cracks in the soil. It is believed they spend much of their lives underground, grazing on decaying organic matter and micro-organisms.

The snail was discovered in the late 19th century and was probably once widespread across what is now suburban Hobart. However, only three surviving colonies are currently known, all of them in Hobart's southern suburbs.

There are some other sites elsewhere in greater Hobart where dead shells have been found and populations of the snail may still exist. It's also very likely that unknown populations could be found on the fringes of the city, especially on unsurveyed private land blocks.

## Shy by nature

Threats to this species include habitat loss and fragmentation, introduced snails and slugs that



Photo: Bruno Bell

## Join the snail trail

If you own land in greater Hobart with wet forest in good condition on dolerite rock Dr Bonham would love to hear from you. Your bush block could be home to

the ammonite pinwheel snail! If you are happy for Dr Bonham to search your property for snails email him at [k\\_bonham@iinet.net.au](mailto:k_bonham@iinet.net.au) or phone 0421 428 775.

may eat native snails, bushfires, climatic extremes such as heatwaves and droughts, and even flash floods.

Some populations are so localised that we could lose them completely through a chance event. As a result, the snail has been listed as Endangered on the Tasmanian threatened species list and Critically Endangered on Australia's national list of threatened species.

Until this year the snail has been extremely elusive. In hundreds of searches over 30 years I had seen only six live specimens. But this winter has been a remarkable one for finding this elusive creature.

Working with naturalists Bruno and Otto Bell, we found five live specimens in just one search of a known site that had failed to turn up any specimens last year. Other trips have netted seven more findings, including one at a site where none had been seen

alive since 2011. We have learned more about how to find this snail and hope to have more success on future surveys.

## No ordinary snail

Live ammonite snails are very unlikely to occur in gardens, and there are a large number of other small snail species (both native and introduced) that people may see both in gardens and bushland.

Any suspected sightings or specimens need to be verified by an expert because of the number of similar species that occur in the Hobart region. A permit is also required to collect this species.

To ensure this very special little snail is still around in 100, 200 or even a thousand years we need to find more living colonies. This research will help determine which areas of Hobart need to be protected with the snail's habitat needs in mind.

# Nature through the eyes of iNaturalist

Take a walk on the Queens Domain at the right time of year and a keen eye will pick out tiny orchids emerging from underground, forming their insect-mimicking flowers.

A trip into Fern Tree's wet forests can turn up stunning, iridescent blue fungi or even near-microscopic tardigrades, sometimes called water bears, foraging in moss. In the still waters of an alpine pool on kunanyi/Mt Wellington you might find a freshwater shrimp with an ancient lineage or catch the reflection of a flowering waratah. Hobart is a hub of biodiversity.

Learning more about Hobart's incredible wildlife can be hugely rewarding and with reduced options for interstate and international travel, what better time to get to know your backyard?



Rob Armstrong  
Program Officer  
Bushland Recreation

And while there are many ways of connecting with and appreciating the nature of Hobart, all require a level of knowledge and understanding.

## Introducing iNaturalist

So how do you learn more about Hobart's biodiversity? Traditionally, people have joined groups like the Field Naturalists, visited local libraries and book stores for field guides and taken guided walks (or perhaps joined one of our Bush Adventures activities).

Now there is a new and powerful tool that helps you learn more about nature and how to contribute to

conservation programs wherever you are, whenever you like. All you need is a smartphone and the iNaturalist app.

What makes iNaturalist so useful and appealing is its depth and breadth. It is a field guide, a connection to expert advice in your pocket, an image library and a way to contribute to something bigger as a portal to many citizen science projects.

Whether you are interested in flora, fauna, fungi, or the whole gamut of life that surrounds us, there's something for every nature lover on iNaturalist.

So what are you waiting for? Download the app today and have a play. If you want to learn more about biodiversity and the iNaturalist app, look out for the Spring Bush Adventures program, which offers a range of nature activities for all ages.



Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle.  
Photo: Michael Roberts

## Nature in the City

Did you know Hobart may be one of the only cities where Australia's largest birds of prey, the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle (*Aquila audax subsp. fleayi*), can be seen soaring over the CBD during a lunch break? The Tasmanian wedge-tail is a subspecies, and the largest of all wedge-tailed eagles in Australia.

Or that southern right and humpback whales have been spotted in the Derwent taking a rest before completing their long journey south to Antarctica for summer?

If you could stand in the middle of the Hobart CBD and draw a circle with a radius of 10km around you, you would be surrounded by at least 7800 different species



and potentially millions more when we take into account the undiscovered and microscopic.

At any moment, wherever you are within the City of Hobart, you are surrounded by nature.

This web of life is made up of billions of individual creatures large, small and microscopic, all living their unique and invaluable life among us.

#### LEARN MORE

- **Bush Adventures:** [hobartcity.com.au/bushadventures](http://hobartcity.com.au/bushadventures)
- **iNaturalist:** [inaturalist.org](http://inaturalist.org)

Right, Tasmanian devils are one of the many incredible species that call Hobart's bushland reserves home. Photo: Michael Roberts



# Hobartians drawn to snow in record numbers

Figures released by the City of Hobart show a record number of people flocked to the snow on the weekend of Hobart's first big snow dump this winter, with 3250 cars travelling up Pinnacle Road over the August weekend.

The most popular day was a Saturday, with 1736 vehicles travelling up Pinnacle Road, eclipsing all previous records.

"The weekend was incredibly busy for our staff working to keep people safe in the snow on kunanyi/Mt Wellington," John Fisher, Manager Bushland said.

"The record traffic numbers on Pinnacle Road was an extraordinary event given national and international travel bans, and shows the huge interest locals have in exploring Hobart's incredible bushland reserves, especially in the snow.

"This winter has seen enormous interest in exploring Hobart's



This winter has seen some extraordinary scenes as Hobartians embrace their mountain, kunanyi/Mount Wellington.

nature reserves, with 7000 people recorded walking the Milles Track in just one week in late June to see the Disappearing Tarn.

"Our Bushcare program has been flooded with people wishing to volunteer in our bushland reserves and our working bees continually

book out with people on all of our waiting lists.

"Our Bush Adventures activities are getting snapped up as soon as they are announced and mountain bike riders can't get enough of the new tracks we have opened on the mountain."



August 2020

## CITY OF HOBART BIENNIAL GRANTS ARE NOW OPEN

The City supports activities taking place in the Hobart local government area that demonstrate a creative, community or environmental benefit.

Apply now for:

- Creative Hobart Small Grant up to \$5000
- Creative Hobart Medium Grant up to \$5000 - \$15 000
- Community Grant up to \$5000
- Event Grant up to \$20 000
- Urban Sustainability Grant up to \$15 000

Applications close at 5 pm on Monday 5 October 2020

To find out more and to apply, visit [hobartcity.com.au/grants](http://hobartcity.com.au/grants) or phone 03 6238 2132



City of HOBART



The City of Hobart has released a sustainable action plan for Hobart. Photo: Craig Garth

# Sustainability at the heart of new climate change report

Ongoing reductions to Hobart's energy use and emissions, improved resilience against natural disasters and the embracing of innovative energy and transport solutions are among the key goals of the City of Hobart's draft Sustainable Hobart Action Plan now out for community feedback.

The draft Sustainable Hobart Action Plan – Responding to Climate Change, aims to make Hobart more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable and is open for community consultation until 25 September.

Lord Mayor Anna Reynolds said the City was reducing its corporate emissions and responding to climate impacts through both mitigation and adaptation measures.

"The City of Hobart was the first Tasmanian council to commit to climate action in 1999, the first Tasmanian council to set a zero-waste-to-landfill target, and the first capital city in Australia to declare a climate emergency," Cr Reynolds said.

## FROM THE DRAFT PLAN: RESILIENCE

### HABITAT EXTENSION & RESTORATION

Helping our bushland teams develop a more resilient landscape.

As bushfires increase in frequency and urban development continues, the loss of vegetation, hollow logs, dead trees and other crucial habitat is increasingly stressing native animals, insects and birds. The City of Hobart's Bushland Unit designs its hazard reduction burns specifically to protect existing habitats, but it is possible to involve all areas of our Council and community together to not just preserve what we have, but create natural habitat within our gardens, parks, reserves and open spaces. Technology can help: we will use drone footage to provide our bushland teams with map overlays of locations of certain types of trees and vegetation crucial to some of our threatened natural species, and then work with Landcare and other groups to identify places to plant new ones to encourage wildlife to hop across and spread to new areas.

### HAVE YOUR SAY

View the draft plan and provide feedback at [yoursay.hobartcity.com.au](https://yoursay.hobartcity.com.au)

"This draft plan aims to further develop and promote the City's leadership in this area through a series of practical steps to make Hobart a more sustainable city.

"It includes programs aimed at fostering sustainability leadership among our young people, the investigation and trial of

energy-efficient transport and technologies, and programs that encourage new ways of sharing, purchasing and storing energy.

"Before we can finalise this plan, we want to know what a sustainable Hobart might look like for those people who live and work in our city."



# BURNING QUESTIONS

After the massive bushfires that swept through NSW and Victoria last summer many minds have turned to why and how we reduce the bushfire risk by minimising the build-up of fuel in the Australian landscape.

The method goes by a number of names: fuel reduction burns, hazard reduction or prescribed burns. I'll use the term prescribed burn here for reasons that will hopefully become obvious.

The City of Hobart takes prescribed burning very seriously. Over the past few years we have invested heavily in equipment and training staff to undertake prescribed burns, predominantly between autumn and spring.

Prescribed burns alone will not stop major bushfires impacting communities and under severe or catastrophic fire conditions nothing can stop a bushfire in full flight. Tragically, the entire nation witnessed that last summer on the mainland.

## Burning by nature

A lot more goes into carrying out a prescribed burn than picking out a good day and lighting up a section of the bush.



**Alan Hill**  
Program Officer  
Fire & Biodiversity

It would be financially impossible and environmentally catastrophic to burn every patch of bushland in Hobart every year in the hope that razing nature to the ground would rule out any bushfire risk. Instead, we work within a number of parameters: environmental considerations, resource limitations and community needs.

## Environmental considerations

The Australian bush is fire adapted, but that doesn't mean all native plants and animals can survive regular prescribed burns. There are animals and plants that will not survive even a small amount of fire, while others, especially many plants, rely on frequent burning as part of their life cycles.

Tasmania's grasslands were once extensive throughout the state's midlands – a landscape most likely created and maintained through regular burning by Aboriginal people.

We still have areas of these native grasslands in Hobart and they require fire every three to five years. This is known as the fire interval or fire threshold, and varies for different vegetation.

Drier woodland forests generally should not be burnt at less than five year intervals and no greater than about 20 years.

Wet forests should not be burnt at intervals of less than 30 years, if at all. However, under most conditions wet forests will not burn and often only burn during a major wildfire, so prescribed burns are rarely an option in this type of forest.

## Variables at play

When taking into account the needs of the community we look at which bushland areas are close to houses. Will smoke impact the local community? How can we reduce that impact?

We also factor in activities planned for the area. The grasslands in the Queens Domain are an obvious case. The Domain often plays host to sporting events and people use it every day for walking and jogging, it is close to houses and businesses, bounded by major roads and



// The Australian bush is fire adapted, but that doesn't mean all native plants and animals can survive regular prescribed burns.

there are even commercial grape vines nearby!

Evaluating other factors is also critical to a safe and successful prescribed burn. This includes understanding what the wind will do on the day, how well the smoke will rise and disperse high into the atmosphere and of course knowing that the vegetation is dry enough to take on a cool burn, but not so dry that it becomes a fire hazard in its own right.

All of these conditions, and more, are taken into account for each individual burn, and form what is termed the prescription, hence prescribed burn.

## We have a plan

Every time we carry out a prescribed burn in Hobart's bushland reserves it has behind it a detailed burn plan setting out weather conditions, any limitations on burn intensity and constraints such as threatened plant or animal species, or Aboriginal and European heritage values that should be protected.

Preparing for each burn can be quite complex and includes

removing fuel from fire trails, raking around flammable trees and larger habitat trees as well as any threatened assets or sites.

The City takes the matter of smoke very seriously. Smoke from prescribed burns can disrupt business and traffic, taint crops such as grapes and, even more seriously, impact people's health.

To counteract these threats we do all we can to give people plenty of notice about planned prescribed burns in their area.

People living nearby are alerted to the upcoming burn prior to the day, as are those who have let us know they may suffer breathing difficulties because of increased smoke in the atmosphere, such as people with asthma.

We also voluntarily comply with the smoke management program managed by the EPA. This program assesses the amount of smoke in the atmosphere and if conditions will result in poor smoke dispersal, planned burns can be halted.

## Wait and watch

It is then a waiting game,

City of Hobart fire crews carry out a fuel reduction burn earlier this year in Ridgeway Park.

watching the weather forecasts and waiting for the weather gods to give us the right conditions for our burn.

The day arrives, our trained fire crews arrive early and everybody is shown the proposed burn area. They are drilled in every aspect of the day's proceedings, including how the burn will be conducted and any potential safety risks.

Finally, a test burn of a few square metres is lit and then extinguished. This is the moment we make the final call on whether or not the prescribed burn can go ahead.

If the burn gets the green light we call the Tasmania Fire Service and let them know the burn will proceed as planned.

The burn then proceeds as close as possible to the plan. At the end of the day, any burning or smouldering material is extinguished, dangerous trees removed and the area patrolled into the night.

We watch the area until the fire is completely out. The TFS is informed and the fire is declared out.

Then we wait for the right conditions and the next burn.

## Spanish heath? Not on our patch

As every Bushcarer knows, taking weeds out of the landscape is hugely satisfying, but nothing beats removing a patch of environmental weed from bushland that is otherwise free of weeds, allowing the native seed bank to recover.

That's why Ridgeway Bushcarers are grinning ear to ear after taking out a patch of Spanish heath over the course of a couple of working bees.

We caught this weedy patch in the nick of time, removing it before it could spread into the nearby healthy native bushland surrounding it.

We left the Spanish heath onsite to break down, rather than risk spreading it by offloading it at the tip as green waste.

Mother nature will now take her course as local native shrubs and grasses reclaim their rightful territory. We will check the area again next year to ensure Spanish



**Bec Johnson**  
Team Leader Bushcare

heath has not returned.

Ridgeway Bushcare convenors Andy and Bron send out a huge thank you to everyone involved, especially the new volunteers who may not know the area as well as the locals but made up for that with their commitment and energy!

### What's the fuss about?

Although Spanish heath (*Erica lusitanica*) is now a declared weed it was once widely available for sale in Tasmania – its attractive bell-shaped flowers made it irresistible to the cut-flower industry and many home gardeners.

Spanish heath is a winter flower – its sprays of white flowers are no

strangers to Tasmanian roadsides.

Its prolific, tiny seeds have been spread across large tracts of Tasmania over the past decade by roadside slashing and the movement of heavy machinery. Once this weed invades a roadside verge it's just a matter of time before it ventures into nearby bushland and forestry areas. If slashed or burned it will regrow with stronger roots.

To spray or not to spray...

Contrary to many people's views, herbicide spray is a good option for woody weeds if they have become too widespread to be controlled by hand.

It is important the right herbicide is used by an experienced and qualified person, and that they follow all correct usage and safety directions, including the appropriate protective equipment. This way there will be little off-target damage to insects, soil, waterways or other plants.

### FAST FACTS

- Spanish heath is a declared weed, so it's illegal to sell the plant at a nursery or garage sale, or to give it away. It's even illegal to take some home for your favourite vase!
- If you are cutting out Spanish heath to remove it from your garden, leave the cut pieces onsite to break down. Even better, cut it into smaller bits so that it breaks down more quickly and reduces seed output.
- If there's no room to leave it onsite, get a council permit to transport a declared weed to a secure landfill, not green waste. Bag it and put a tarp over it while driving.





Hobart mountain biker Leyla Sharman shows off her technical skills on the new upper Drops. Photo: @kiphotomedia

# Riders fly high on new tracks

New mountain bike tracks built by the City of Hobart in the foothills of kunanyi/Mt Wellington have proved irresistible to local mountain bike riders.

The two new tracks, Stumpside and Pitfall, and an improved and extended Drops track, have recorded huge numbers of riders during the coldest months of winter – around 160 people a day have been queueing up to test a new jump section across an old fire trail.

The upper section of the Drops track was added after the existing

informal track was upgraded to meet international guidelines. A new lower section was also added to replace a degraded informal exit onto Strickland Avenue.

All three tracks were built with the aid of Trackcare volunteers and offer a range of riding styles – cross-country, flowing tracks and a variety of technical challenges.

The City of Hobart is now turning its attention to building a climbing track that will connect the new tracks to Shoobridge Bend, linking up with the North-South Track. Once finished, the track

will contribute to a network of mountain bike tracks that allow riders to stay off roads and ride all the way to The Springs.

The new tracks are jointly funded by the City of Hobart and a Tasmanian Government cycling grant. They also contribute to the City of Hobart's Mountain Bike Network Plan, which aims to improve riding opportunities in the foothills of kunanyi/Mt Wellington.

The draft plan underwent extensive community consultation and the final report will go before Hobart Council later this year.



# HELP CARE FOR NATURE

Using local native plants in your own garden is a great way to attract local birds and other wildlife by providing food and shelter. Learn how to create your own native garden sanctuary at [hobartcity.com.au/careforenature](https://hobartcity.com.au/careforenature)

Photo: Superb fairy-wren, Michael Roberts