

# BANDICOOTtimes

Spring 2023 | No 90



## BLACK DUCKS IN DANGER

STORY PAGES 4-5

# Bushcare Roundup

**Claire Knowles**  
Bushcare Coordinator

I'm thrilled to be joining the Bushcare team as the new coordinator, and I'm already feeling very welcomed. I have a love for nature, as I know you do, and am looking forward to getting out on site to meet our marvellous volunteers and familiarise myself with your projects.

I grew up on Tasmania's beautiful east coast and spent much of my childhood exploring the bush and coastal areas. My father was the marine science teacher at our school and we spent a lot of time fossicking in rock pools, creating "touch tanks" for the marine lab.

My twin sister and I also spent a lot of time with our grandmother planting trees, removing weeds, letting blue wrens sit on our hands, exploring the creek and making jam. We were so privileged to grow up with devils, native birds, quail, quolls, and eastern-barred bandicoots in our backyard as well as the small creatures like native bees and butterflies.

I have memories of a wombat coming out from under the historic farm house and putting its paws on my chest. And of the time my brother's gum boots got chewed by devils because they most likely had an enticing smell!

All this time spent in nature led to a passion for biological science and I studied zoology and botany at the University of Tasmania. I then took up the challenge of completing a PhD in molecular and cellular biology, researching flowering genetics and plant hormones.



Claire Knowles brings a wealth of environmental knowledge to our Bushcare team.

Since then I've studied moths and sea mount corals and most recently worked on revegetation projects for Greening Australia.

I certainly know a lot more about threatened grasslands and the Tasmanian Midlands biodiversity hotspot than I did before!

My first Bushcare experience was around 20 years ago when I came across a plant giveaway at Cornelian Bay and excitedly collected a plant for the garden. I thought it an amazing initiative then and cannot wait to see all of the hard work our fabulous Bushcare convenors and volunteers put into protecting Hobart's bushland reserves.

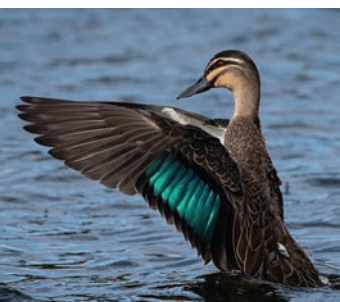
## Spring highlights

On National Threatened Species Day we kicked off a series of Walk and Talk events on the Queens Domain. The day's talk showcased the City of Hobart's long-term

strategies towards restoring the rare grassland ecosystem on the Domain.

We are also holding Walk and Talks at Mt Nelson and in Knocklofty Reserve explaining the ecological principles behind the management of our natural areas. The talks focus on how the City of Hobart uses low-intensity burns to reduce the build-up of flammable materials across our native grasslands, woodlands and forests, not just to protect people and their homes from dangerous bushfires, but also the natural environment.

The highlight of the Bushcare calendar is the End of Year Celebration, aka the Bushcare BBQ. Please come along and enjoy delicious gourmet food as we celebrate your achievements at the annual 'Bushcare BBQ' on Thursday 23 November at Legacy Park. Who will our golden secateurs recipient be?



Cover photo:  
Pacific black duck.  
Photo: Helen Cunningham

## Contact Us

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# Farmers' bane hitches ride into our suburbs

Glenn Wardle  
Biodiversity Officer

Serrated tussock is often thought of as an agricultural weed, and in Tasmania it is certainly the bane of many farmers. But its ability to colonise a wide range of habitats, dominate landscapes and disrupt ecosystems also makes it a threat to Hobart's bushland reserves.

Serrated tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*) forms dense stands, leading to increased fire risk and reduced land value. Identifying and managing this invasive grass is essential to safeguarding Hobart's natural and economic resources.

Although small, occurrences of serrated tussock have been recorded in West Hobart, South Hobart, Mt Stuart and Lenah Valley. Most occurrences have been found in areas of new construction where earth moving equipment has been used, suggesting the seed arrived on heavy machinery and equipment.

This highly invasive grass is hard to identify and often mistaken as native Poa, but telltale signs help distinguish it from native grasses:

- A purple feathery appearance when flowering in spring.



Serrated tussock is a threat to our native biodiversity. Photo: Glenn Wardle

- In summer, the feathery seed heads turn golden brown as they mature.
- Tussocks often remain green over summer while other species brown off.
- Leaf blades are tightly rolled and feel cylindrical when rolled between the fingers, while other similar species have flat edges.
- If leaves are dragged between the fingers from tip to base, fine serrations can be felt.

We don't want to see this farmers' scourge get a foothold in Hobart, so please report this weed if you think you have it on your property or see it in your neighbourhood.

You can find more information on how to identify serrated tussock on the Department of Natural Resources and Environment website – [nre.tas.gov.au/invasive-species](http://nre.tas.gov.au/invasive-species).

You can help control the spread of serrated tussock by:

- ensuring earth moving and mowing equipment is cleaned prior to entering your property
- reporting occurrences of serrated tussock.

If you think you have serrated tussock on your property or have seen it please contact the City of Hobart on 03 6238 2887 or email [glenn.wardle@hobartcity.com.au](mailto:glenn.wardle@hobartcity.com.au)

## PREPARE NOW FOR BUSHFIRE

Hobart is one of the most bushfire-prone cities in Australia. To lower the risk, the City of Hobart reduces flammable materials in our forests and maintains a large network of fuel breaks and fire trails.

We've done everything we can to protect you.

It's now your turn to take steps to keep your life, family and property safe from the threat of bushfire.

- Learn more at [bushfire.tas.gov.au](http://bushfire.tas.gov.au)



Prepare a bushfire plan



Clean up your garden



Make an emergency kit



Plan to leave early

# BLACK DUCKS IN DANGER

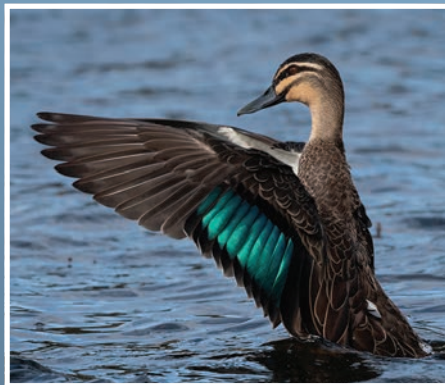
The simple pleasure of feeding ducks in Hobart is having tragic consequences for our native ducks. Story Jason Graham, photos Helen Cunningham.

Tasmania is home to 11 native duck species. Some are full-time residents, others are occasional visitors and can be a challenge to find. Hobart is home to some of the more common native duck species, including the tree-nesting Australian wood duck, the elegant Pacific black duck and the handsome chestnut teal.

We are also visited by rarer species like the Australasian shoveler with their massive bills, the oddly-named hardhead and the tiny grey teal. The best place to go duck watching is Waterworks Reserve, but remember, native ducks can be quite shy, so a pair of binoculars is recommended.

Unfortunately, the most common species of duck in the Derwent Estuary is the introduced mallard. Mallards are native to the Northern Hemisphere, and have been introduced around the world as livestock for their meat and eggs as well as being kept as pets.

Being a domestic animal with many different breeds, mallards can look very different from each other. Mallards are bigger and more aggressive than native ducks, and when there is a stable food and water source – bread, lettuce, oats, tubs of water – their numbers can explode.



Pacific black duck.

This is terrible news for our smaller, more timid native ducks. It doesn't take long for mallards to push out the smaller natives, who can't compete with the size and numbers of mallard ducks. While some of the mallards in Hobart may be escapees, the majority have been cruelly and illegally dumped.

The best thing we can do to protect our native ducks is to not feed ducks.

Feeding ANY kind of food to ducks is harmful. No human food can beat the natural diet of invertebrates and plants that ducks feed on while dabbling or diving, and swapping bread for greens still supports populations of dumped domestic ducks.

Even simply putting out a tub of water may seem like a harmless way to help ducks, but the only species who benefit from this are mallards, who prefer to stay

in their local area and essentially take it over.

Native ducks on the other hand simply fly away if they're thirsty or hungry. It's important to remember that the majority of ducks being fed are dumped domestic ducks, and feeding these dumped pets encourages people to continue to dump unwanted or excess ducks.

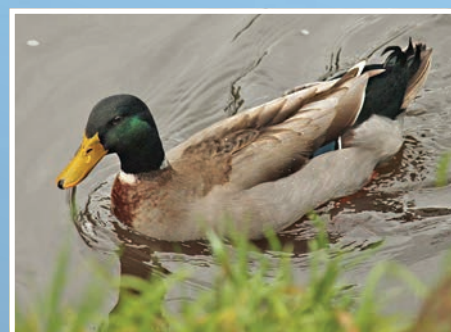
The belief is that most dumpers are leaving ducks in places where there are already ducks being "looked after" by locals. By feeding ducks, we are giving people permission to dump more.

The biggest problem with having lots of domestic mallards in and around Hobart is the threat they pose to the Pacific black duck. Mallards and Pacific black ducks are closely related and can interbreed easily, which results in lots of fertile hybrid offspring.

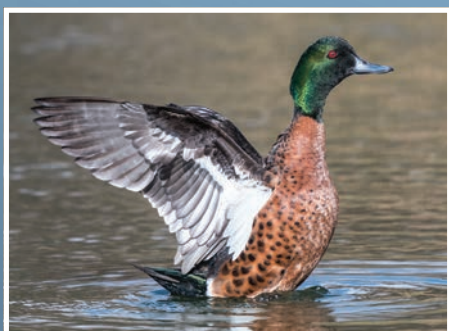
Crossbreeding is very common, with larger male mallards skipping the courtship rituals of our smaller black ducks by simply forcing themselves on our native females. Some Pacific black duck/mallard hybrids are easily spotted by their bright orange legs, blotchy bills or larger bodies, but many of the traits are subtle and take practice to identify.

Sadly, it is becoming harder

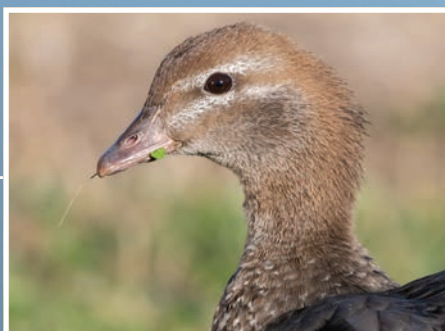




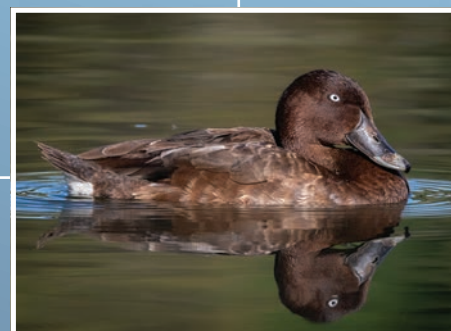
Mallard.



Chestnut teal.



Australian wood duck.



Hardhead.

and harder to spot genetically pure Pacific black ducks in the Derwent Estuary and many other Tasmanian waterways. In places like the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens and New Town Rivulet, it's almost impossible.

This mallard hybridisation (cross-breeding) has resulted in the near-extinction of many duck species around the world. In New Zealand, the problem is so widespread native Pacific black ducks have almost been completely replaced by hybrids.

Pacific black ducks are now rare on Macquarie, Lord Howe and Norfolk islands due to mallard cross-breeding. Around the world, the mallard hybridisation problem is always more severe on islands. The fact Tasmania is smaller than New Zealand is very concerning for the future of our Pacific black ducks.

To best look after our native Tasmanian ducks, we need to enjoy them by identifying them, learning about them, and by simply watching them going about their business.

I guarantee that enjoying ducks without hurting their chances of survival by feeding them is much more fun!

The Pacific Black Duck Conservation Group is a volunteer Landcare group dedicated to the conservation of the Pacific black duck in Tasmania and raising awareness about our native duck species.

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram. To learn more about native ducks in Hobart visit [hobartcity.com.au/ducksofhobart](http://hobartcity.com.au/ducksofhobart)





Cornelian Bay Bushcare volunteers return after weeding out she-oak saplings on the Queens Domain. Photo: Sonya Stallbaum

# Big tree project claws back lost ground

On National Threatened Species Day City of Hobart fire and biodiversity staff began rolling out the next phase of a project to restore nationally threatened grassy woodlands by installing large habitat tree logs across the northern section of the Queens Domain.

Great strides have been made over the past decade restoring native grasslands on the Queens Domain and these new habitat logs will provide extra shelter and safety for wildlife like our eastern barred bandicoots, lizards, frogs and skinks.

Over the past 200 years the Domain has seen all sorts of development, including abattoirs, quarry building, cattle grazing and it was even home to a tip.

These activities have all taken a toll on the Domain's native bushland, but we are now seeing the natural values of this much-loved space



A southern brown bandicoot searches for food on the Domain. Photo: John Sampson

bounce back through our Grassy Woodlands Restoration Project.

The large old logs being installed across the northern section of the Queens Domain will replace valuable ground habitat lost through years of development, bushfires and even wood

hooking, which is now illegal.

Up to 40 large logs will be installed on the Domain by the City of Hobart's fire and biodiversity staff, who have chainsawed hollows and grooves into the fallen timber to create habitat for birds, micro bats and other wildlife.





Samantha Jones from the City of Hobart fire and biodiversity team carves out a habitat hollow in a large old log destined as new ground habitat. Photo: John Sampson

Many people are noticing the bounce back in native wildlife on the Queens Domain over the past five years. It is becoming a common site for families visiting Legacy Park on the Queens Domain to see southern brown bandicoots hunting for grubs on the nearby lawns and we are seeing more raptors hovering over the Domain looking for prey, a sign of a healthy, thriving ecosystem.

Much of the Domain's threatened grasslands have been opened

up by cutting back she-oaks and restoring the Domain to its original landscape when it was a thriving hunting ground for the traditional owners, the Muwina people.

Our fire and biodiversity team and volunteers with our Bushcare program have all played a vital role in restoring the Domain's critically endangered lowland grasslands, and helping rid the area of environmental weeds.

The Cornelian Bay Bushcare group spend most of their Bushcare time

at the Queens Domain going low and slow, tackling weed threats that require intensive hand-weeding down in the native groundcover.

They have also been involved in seed collection and planting replenishment of rare inter-tussock species.

Another important job is ongoing field sweeps – to seek and destroy young she-oak saplings that continue to pop up in the restored grassland areas. This sort of work is best achieved by a larger team who can spread out across large areas, perfect for the Cornelian Bay Bushcare team!

This is the City of Hobart's longest-running ecological restoration project and something to be incredibly proud of in the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

The landscape of the Queens Domain has a long and rich living history of Tasmanian Aboriginal occupation and the remnant bushland that exists today has been shaped by thousands of years of Aboriginal burning practices.

To learn more about this important project visit [hobartcity.com.au/grassy-woodlands-project](https://hobartcity.com.au/grassy-woodlands-project)



# BUSHCARE CELEBRATIONS

— 2023 AWARDS & BBQ —

**Thursday | 23 November 2023**

**5.30-7.30 pm**

**VENUE**

**Legacy Park, Queens Domain**

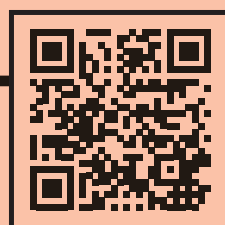


**BOOK NOW**

☎ 03 6238 2884

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🌐 RSVP [hobartcity.com.au/bushcare2023](https://hobartcity.com.au/bushcare2023)  
or scan the QR code



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