



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Water and the Environment

Additional information on the state of conservation of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (Australia)

Key updates – 1 February 2021

(Updates since December 2019)

Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment

Heritage Branch



Additional information on the state of conservation of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (Australia)

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1 Introduction

Achievements since Australia's submission of the State Party Report on the state of conservation of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area in December 2019 are summarised below.

They include:

- substantial progress towards completion of a final Tourism Master Plan. Future tourism proposals that are under consideration by the Tasmanian Government will take the Tourism Master Plan into account, together with other relevant policies and legislation;
- imminent commencement (February 2021) of public consultation on the proclamation of Future Potential Production Forest Land (FPPFL) and Permanent Timber Production Zone Land (PTPZL) as reserved land;
- commencement and good progress on a number of projects designed to support and improve the management, understanding and protection of Aboriginal cultural values in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area;
- finalisation of the Retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value;
- a very successful breeding season for the critically endangered Orange bellied-parrot (*Neophema chrysogaster*); one of the attributes that contributes to the property's Outstanding Universal Value;
- ongoing study of the population status and ecology of the Maugean Skate;
- completion of significant stages of the Cradle Mountain Masterplan.

The updates demonstrate the continuing commitment by the Australian and Tasmanian governments to implement the 2016 World Heritage Committee Decision 40 COM 7B.66 and the recommendations of the 2015 Report of the joint ICOMOS / IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission to the property.

2 Updates to Section 2 of the 2019 State Party Report.

2.1 Tourism Master Plan

(update to section 2.1.3 of the 2019 State Party Report, page 10)

A draft of the Tourism Master Plan was released for public consultation between 19 March and 25 June 2020. The draft was sent to the World Heritage Centre on 30 March 2020, inviting review of the document by the Advisory Bodies. A technical review of the draft, prepared by IUCN, ICOMOS and the UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme at the World Heritage Centre was received on 4 July 2020. Australia provided a response on the technical review to the World Heritage Centre on 3 December 2020.

The technical response provided through the World Heritage Centre has been fully taken into account in the review of the Master Plan following the public comment period.

The Master Plan is in the final approvals stage with the Tasmanian Government, which intends to launch the Plan in the coming months.

2.2 Designation of land zoned for potential timber production as reserves

(update to section 2.1.4 of the 2019 State Party Report, page 11)

Stage 1 of the two-stage process for proclamation of Permanent Timber Production Zone Land (PTPZL) and Future Potential Production Forest Land (FPPFL) as reserved land has been delayed and will commence in the first quarter of 2021. Stage 1 will involve a stakeholder consultation process for proclamation of FPPFL within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. Reserve classes for each parcel will be determined following this consultation.

2.3 Detailed Plan for a Comprehensive Cultural Assessment of the property

(Updates to the 2019 State Party Report, pages 13-14)

There has been further progress on implementation of several projects outlined in the Detailed Plan for a Comprehensive Cultural Assessment of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

2.3.1 Rock Art in the Landscape and Seascape of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area: recording, conservation and risk management

This Project aims to improve our understanding of Aboriginal rock marking within the TWWHA and determine the associated cultural and natural risks to these sites through research, recording and assessment. The project provides opportunities for collaboration with the Aboriginal community and is informing discussions between the Aboriginal community and DPIPW on effective management actions and outcomes.

The 2020-21 field work program has commenced. Three field trips were completed between November 2020 and January 2021, with two new sites identified. Two field trips are scheduled in February and March 2021.

The digital recording of seven sites in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area commenced in January 2021.

2.3.2 Interpretation and Presentation of the Aboriginal Cultural Values of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Project.

The objective of this Project is to develop a Guide on the interpretation and presentation of the Aboriginal cultural values of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area in collaboration with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community. The Guide was finalised and provided to the Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) in October 2020.

Planning for the implementation of the Guide has commenced. This will include collaborating with external stakeholders and the PWS.

2.3.3 Management of At Risk Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Sites in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Project.

This Project aims to identify at-risk Aboriginal cultural heritage sites within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and determine and implement appropriate actions for their effective ongoing management. A GIS model for coastal sites that identifies the natural and cultural hazards in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area has been developed and development of a GIS model for inland sites has commenced.

2.4 Addition of cultural heritage specialists to the property staff

(Update to section 2.18 of the 29019 State Party Report, page 14)

2.4.1 Aboriginal Cultural and Heritage Awareness Training for staff working in the Tasmanian Wilderness

As part of the Aboriginal Cultural and Heritage Awareness Project, in September 2020 the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre commenced delivery of a three-year rolling program of cultural awareness training to Department staff who work in the World Heritage property. As at mid-January 2021, four training sessions had been conducted for staff throughout the State. Monthly sessions are fully booked until September 2021.

2.5 Draft Retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

(Update to section 2.17 of the 2019 State Party Report, page 14)

The Retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for the property has been finalised and will be presented to the 44th session of the World Heritage Committee.

3 Updates to Section 3 of the 2019 State Party Report

3.1 Orange-bellied parrot

(Update to section 3.2 of the 2019 State Party Report, pages 19-20)

As noted in the 2019 State Party Report, Orange-bellied parrots (*Neophema chrysogaster*) are one of the attributes that contribute to the property's Outstanding Universal Value. The species is listed as critically endangered under the national *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and endangered under Tasmania's *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*.

In late 2020, 51 birds returned to summer breeding grounds at Melaleuca in Tasmania's southwest, following their overwinter migration on mainland Australia. This is the highest number of successful returns in recent history. The previous maximum of 35 birds occurred in the 2014-15 season. Returns have been as low as 17 or 18 birds in the past 10 years.

The most recent arrivals combined with the release of captive-bred adult birds during Spring 2020 means there are now 77 Orange-bellied Parrots known to be at Melaleuca.

Recent nest checks and nestling banding in Melaleuca has shown a large increase in the number of baby Orange-bellied parrots this breeding season.

As of mid-January 2021, there were 88 live nestlings across 27 nests, and 8 eggs still to hatch. This means there is potential for 96 fledglings, the highest number of nests, eggs and nestlings from nest boxes since official nest box monitoring commenced in 1994. Brood sizes have also reached a 7-year high.

Nests and nestlings have also been found in nest boxes in New Harbour, about five kilometres from the bird's main Melaleuca breeding site. This is the first record of Orange-bellied parrots breeding at this site since nest-boxes were installed there in 2010, and follows unsuccessful attempts to release captive-bred adults in 2018 and 2019 to try to expand the breeding population.

3.2 Maugean Skate, Macquarie Harbour

(Update to section 3.3 of the 2019 State Party Report, page 21)

The maximum permissible biomass for aquaculture in Macquarie Harbour was lowered from 21,500 tonnes in January 2017, to 9,500 tonnes in May 2018. This limit, which took effect from 1 June 2018 until 31 May 2020, was recently extended to 31 May 2022.

The Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies continues to undertake work to further understand the ecology and population status of the Maugean Skate in Macquarie Harbour. Further surveys are planned for early 2021.

4 Updates to Section 4 of the 2019 State Party Report

4.1 Proposed Tourism Development - Halls Island, Lake Malbena, Walls of Jerusalem National Park

(update to section 4.1 of the 2019 State Party Report, page 23)

A proposal to develop a small tourism operation on a private leasehold property on Halls Island in Lake Malbena was referred under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) on 28 March 2018. This proposal sought to establish a 'standing camp' to accommodate a maximum of six visitors and two guides for four-day stays. Visitors would arrive by helicopter to the adjacent mainland and travel by row boat approximately 60 metres to Halls Island. A maximum of 30 tours each year is proposed. Halls Island has an existing small wooden hut, built in 1954, that will remain on the island. This hut was used by the previous leaseholder and more recently by bushwalkers. The current lessee of the island has exclusive use, but proposes to continue to allow recreational access and overnight stays on the island under a public access program.

The proposal is considered to be an allowable activity under the 2016 Management Plan zoning for this area. On 31 August 2018, the Australian Government delegate decided that the project was unlikely to have a significant impact on any protected matters, including World Heritage values, and could proceed without further assessment under the EPBC Act. Following a challenge to this decision in the Federal Court, on 16 September 2020, the Australian Government Minister for the Environment decided that the proposal is a Controlled Action requiring assessment and approval under the EPBC Act before it can proceed. The assessment process is ongoing, with additional information to be published for public consultation before a decision is made whether or not to approve the proposal.

The development application for the proposal was not approved at the local government level. However, this decision was appealed to the Tasmanian Resource Management and Planning Appeal Tribunal by the proponent and the Director of National Parks. The appeal was upheld on 21 October 2019. Subsequent appeals to the Tasmanian Supreme Court are understood to be ongoing.

4.2 Cradle Mountain Master Plan

(Update to section 4.2 of the 2019 State Party Report, pages 23-24)

As reported in the 2019 State Party Report, Cradle Mountain (in the Cradle Mountain - Lake St Clair National Park), received approximately 280,000 tourists in 2017-18. Visitor numbers were forecast to reach 300,000 in 2019-20 prior to COVID-19. This growth, together with forecast increases in coming years, has necessitated a considerable investment in new infrastructure to protect this significant area of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, and ensure a quality visitor experience is provided at this key visitor node.

The Tasmanian Government is making an investment of more than AUD \$56.7 million for implementation of the Cradle Mountain Master Plan. Development of the Visitor Gateway Precinct is progressing well and the new Visitor Centre (2km outside of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area) was completed and officially opened in June 2020.

The Tasmanian Government has progressed an analysis of transport options and detailed cableway route assessment to inform the business case and project feasibility. Modelling of capital construction costs and pricing structures is underway to further inform the project analysis. Subject to the outcome of these investigations, the project will progress through a comprehensive environmental impact assessment.

4.3 Dove Lake Shelter, Cradle Mountain - Lake St Clair National Park

(Update to section 4.3 of the 2019 State Party Report, page 24)

The Dove Lake Shelter at Cradle Mountain - Lake St Clair National Park obtained all necessary Australian and Tasmanian government approvals in 2019 and construction of the shelter commenced in May 2020. The shelter is due to be completed in August 2022.

1 February 2021