

# Threatened Plants Tasmania Newsletter July 2016



*Leucochrysum albicans* by Phil Collier

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Editor: Richard White

## From the outgoing President

Alison van den Berg, June 2016

Dear TPT Volunteers

As the recent past President of TPT I am jumping in to introduce you to the new TPT President, Inger Visby. Inger has been a very active volunteer for a few years now, and our group has already benefitted from Inger's involvement recently as TPT Secretary. Since the last election of TPT office bearers all roles are now filled by volunteers who have joined TPT in the last 3 to 4 years which I see as happy evidence that our group remains relevant and vibrant. We are in very good hands with Inger at the helm, Richard White as Treasurer and Kerri Spicer as Secretary - a big thanks to each of you!

## From the incoming President

Inger Visby, June 2016

On behalf of the TPT committee, I would like to say thank you very much to Alison for providing steadfast and capable TPT leadership for the last couple of years. I am very pleased to take over the role, and thank Alison for assisting me greatly in the transition, and many thanks to Kerri for stepping into the secretary role with gusto and amazing efficiency. Taking on these committee roles is made much easier by the fact that the TPT committee is a wonderfully collaborative group of plants enthusiasts, whom all pitch in with the necessary (and sometimes less exciting) administrative tasks that need to take place behind the scene, hugely assisted by Richard Schahinger and Magali Wright. This cooperative spirit is a huge credit to the entire committee, and makes TPT an especially enjoyable community group to be working in.

This year's field trips have, yet again, been a wonderful mix of plants, places and experiences. This included the stunning weather at Ben Lomond; the shock from The Nut that the *Leucochrysum albicans* had plummeted in numbers; continuing our learning at Surrey Hills with our caged-uncaged experiment on *Prasophyllum crebriflorum*; heading cross-country at Mt Field East looking for *Pterosphaera hookeriana*; and getting up and close with UTAS' Vishnu Prahadad and the unique saltmarsh plants.

Our weeding efforts also continue. I know that it might not be as exciting to be pulling up gorse and briar rose as searching for tiny ephemeral threatened species, but it is just as important. Our targeted funding and manual labour have contributed considerably to improving habitats for threatened species. Thank you especially to Viv & Magali for keeping us on track in this area.

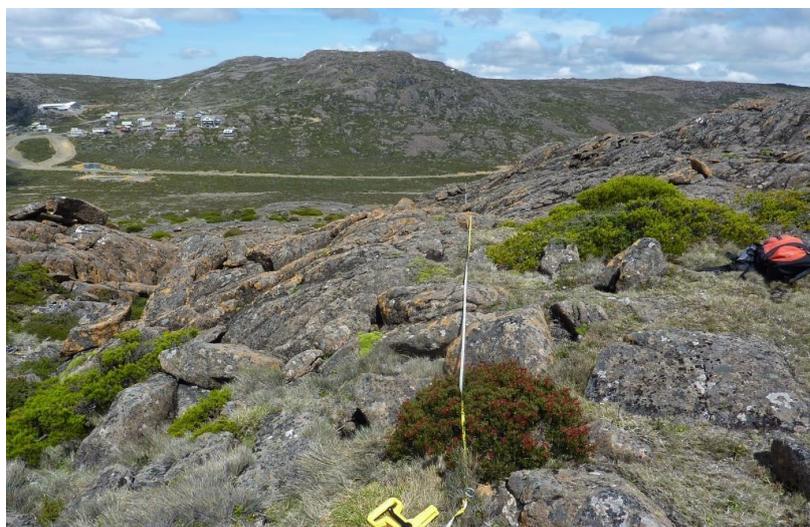
This year we also had our second dedicated training workshop; this time the topic was threatened sedges. The weekend was a huge success, thanks to the expert team of botanists, Mark Wapstra and Phil Collier, and Kerri Spicer for her superb organisational contribution – great effort!

Lastly thank you very much to all the volunteers who come along on our trips and ensure that all the important work happens. I hope you will enjoy reading about the last half year's trips, and become inspired to join us again in spring.

## TPT in the Field

### Ben Lomond threatened species weekend, January 2015

Inger Visby and Richard Schahinger



Superb TPT working conditions. A *Veronica ciliolata* subsp. *fiordensis* transect on Hamilton Crags across from ski village. Photo by Richard Schahinger.

We had it all...this really was a weekend to remember! The combination of stunning weather, glorious habitat, excellent company, and of course a good number of threatened species, made for one of the most rewarding outings of the season. Making the trip all the more enjoyable was the good fortune of having the knowledgeable John Davies and Richard Schahinger (Senior Botanist with DPIPWE's Threatened Species Section) along as our able leaders.

On the Saturday we enjoyed a fascinating show-and-tell with John, who was endlessly patient with our many questions. Our threatened flora focus this day was the EPBC-listed *Argyrotegium nitidulum* (shining cottonleaf), a species previously thought to occur at just two sites in Tasmania (Ben Lomond & Pine Lake). However, Richard checked the collections held at the Tasmanian Herbarium after the trip, and it turned out that the Pine Lake collection was actually *Ewartia planchonii*, so *A. nitidulum* is now known from just Ben Lomond! Alas, we had no joy in relocating *A. nitidulum*, but Phil Collier did find a small patch of the rare *Argyrotegium fordianum* (soft cottonleaf) on either side of the walking track a few hundred metres northwest of Legges Tor, one of just four locations in Tasmania.

Another of our goals for the day was to explore Menamatta Tarns for *Centrolepis muscoides* (recorded there in 1980). While this is not a listed species, it is a rarely recorded one, and is similar to the EPBC-listed *Centrolepis pedderensis*. Alas, we had no luck here and made our way back to Legges Tor, with the most notable find being some sizeable patches of *Podocarpus lawrencei* (mountain plumpine). Our long day was finished up with a short general meeting and a great communal meal.



The pretty, and very distinctive, hairy leaves of *Veronica ciliolata* subsp. *fiordensis* (Ben Lomond cushionplant) by Richard Schahinger

On the Sunday we were in Richard's capable hands, and the day was all about *Veronica ciliolata* subsp. *fiordensis* (Ben Lomond cushion plant), an EPBC-listed species known in Tasmania only from Hamilton Crags in Ben Lomond National Park. The party split into five groups of three: three groups setting up 50 m transects on the western flanks of the dolerite-dominated Hamilton Crags, one group to fill in the gaps at the southern extent of the population (the only previous detailed mapping having been undertaken in December 2005 by the Threatened Species Section & Tasmanian Herbarium), and the final group to undertake extension surveys of what appeared to be similar

habitat to the south towards Ossians Throne. The surveys resulted in some 'in-filling', with the total population now estimated to be c. 5000 plants (cf. 1500 to 2000 in 2005) in an area of about 3 to 4 hectares, mostly on the Craggs' western flanks and ridgeline, and all above 1470 metres above sea level. The transects were designed to gauge the species' response to a changing climate, so it will be of interest to see how a species close to its altitudinal limit fares over time. Thank you to all who came along and made this such a lovely and thoroughly interesting weekend.

## Vale of Belvoir, Surrey Hills, January 2015

Phil Collier



*Prasophyllum* sp. "Vale of Belvoir" by Phil Collier

We reluctantly made the difficult decision to cancel the scheduled weekend trip (23-25 Jan). The risk seemed too great from uncontrolled bushfires in the north-west combined with activities and accommodation in remote bushland with limited phone coverage. With the benefit of hindsight, we could have made a different decision. However, we substituted the long weekend trip by two day trips when a few local members helped us to complete our priority orchid monitoring tasks. At Surrey Hills we had a caged-uncaged experiment on *Prasophyllum crebriflorum* (crowded leek orchid) transect. We found that nearly all living plants were caged and that only caged plants had flowered successfully. This confirms our suspicion that larger herbivores, like wallabies, are a primary cause of the grazing pressure that we have modelled over the previous years. Again in hindsight, there were some technical limitations with the experimental set up, and we plan to repeat the experiment next season, even though the result this year

was extremely strong. At the Vale of Belvoir, the emergence and flowering of *Prasophyllum* sp. "Vale of Belvoir" was the poorest we have seen. Speculation surrounds cattle, evidenced by extra cow pats seen in January 2015, or the drought in 2015-16 as possible causes. We will probably never know, but it will be interesting to see whether plants recover next year.

## *Leucochrysum albicans* at The Nut, Stanley, February, 2016

Phil Collier

The purpose of this trip was to repeat the census of *Leucochrysum albicans* that was previously completed in 2009. This previous census identified ten sites where the population of plants was counted or estimated, with a total count of nearly 5000 plants. Our survey visited nine of the ten sites; site 8 was too scrubby to approach to check on the previous record of one plant. We extended site 5 to a nearby rock outcrop where we located 11 plants. In stark contrast to 2009, our total count in 2016 was 42 living plants. The full report for the trip analysed rainfall for the previous six months at Stanley, and found that rainfall was 25% less than the previous record low rainfall over the same period during the past 150 years of records. It seems likely that the extremely dry conditions are responsible for the lack of living plants, especially as many plants occur in dry rocky places with shallow soil. The report recommends another field trip in 2017, hoping for better rainfall and a recovery in plant numbers.



Intrepid volunteers searching for *Leucochrysum albicans* at the nut in Stanley by Phil Collier

## Weeding at Smiths Lagoon, Conara, February 2016

Alison van den Berg

The aim of this field trip was to follow up on our previous efforts in removing woody weed species from this Midlands wetland site, home to at least 12 threatened flora species. The lagoon is on private property covered by a conservation covenant under the Tasmanian Nature Conservation Act 2002. Among the threatened flora species at the site is the EPBC-listed *Xerochrysum palustre* (swamp everlasting), and the largest known Tasmanian population of the endangered *Schoenus latelaminatus* (medusa bogsedge), as well as several ephemeral plants restricted to wetlands in the Northern Midlands.

The target weed of the day was hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), which was treated on a previous trip in 2011. It turned out to be a very warm February day, and our eager group of group of 5 volunteers, who travelled from the north and the south of the State, were led by Dr Richard Schahinger. Between us we covered the whole lagoon and were able to locate all of the previously treated shrubs. It was very satisfying to see that many of the hawthorns had died completely, and those that did show signs of regrowth were struggling, and were treated once again. Very few new plants were recorded and those that were found were treated. Some work was also done on the blackberry thickets, however these may need further attention, and we are looking at possible solutions for their removal.

Hopefully we will find the lagoon free of Hawthorn on our next field trip scheduled for 2021!



Volunteers with Richard Schahinger checking on weed regrowth at Smith's Lagoon by Viv Muller

## ***Pherosphaera hookeriana* at Mt Field East, February 2016**

Inger Visby (with input from Richard Schahinger)

It was a damp and cold morning when a bunch of intrepid explorers headed for Mt Field, expertly lead by DPIPWE's Tim Rudman and Richard Schahinger. The patchy weather didn't spoil play however, and a most enjoyable day was had by all.

The aim of this trip was to validate Tim's attempt at mapping the distribution of the vulnerable *Pherosphaera hookeriana* (Mount Mawson pine) in the Mt Field East area from aerial imagery where the species appeared to have a distinctive dark signature in its alpine heath habitat. The group walked along the track to Mt Field East for 2 km to the species' first (known) occurrence then split into two: the first group continued on to the southwestern flanks of Mt Field East, while the second headed into unknown territory to the northwest, following the drainage line which feeds into the Davis River (which in turn feeds into the Broad River). The species was found to be dominant in places (typically poorly-drained), but not all target areas flagged by Tim returned positives (some being dense copses of *Leptospermum rupestre* (mountain teatree) and others mostly *Baekkea gunniana* (alpine heathmyrtle). However, thousands of previously unrecorded plants were found, increasing the known range of this species in Mt Field.

Follow-up surveys by Tim and Richard in March showed the species to be dominant along the valley downstream of the Government Huts (just before you get to Lake Dobson), as well as on the northern and eastern margins of Eagle Tarn (immediately north of lake Dobson), with good numbers also along the Broad River valley and the track to Mount Lord. Plant numbers at Mt Field — which is the 'hotspot' in Tasmania for this endemic species — are likely to be an order of magnitude higher than earlier estimates of c. 5000, which is good news for what is a highly fire-sensitive species in a changing climate. Tim will be compiling the results of the TPT *Pherosphaera hookeriana* surveys with the results of other surveys, and discussing the usefulness of aerial imagery as a mapping tool.



A large patch of *Pherosphaera hookeriana* by Richard Schahinger

## Boomer Marsh, Dunally, March 2016

Doug Clarke

The trip to Boomer Marsh was undertaken in perfect conditions on Saturday the 5th of March. The trip commenced with an overview of saltmarsh communities given by Vishnu Prahalad from the University of Tasmania. This was an excellent start to the morning, giving us all a better appreciation of what makes saltmarshes tick, their values and their significance to ecosystem health. Richard Schahinger (Senior Botanist with DPIPWE's Threatened Species Section), then led fifteen volunteers in search for the threatened *Wilsonia humilis* (silky wilsonia), and in attempt to relocate the rare *Ruppia tuberosa* (tuberous seatassei), only known on three sites and last seen in Boomer Marsh in 1947.

*Wilsonia humilis* was relocated (this is the southernmost site for this species), with our survey confirming its limitation to just one patch at this site. Alas, *Ruppia tuberosa* was not located on the day (October to December being the preferred survey time for this annual or short lived perennial), but suitable habitat (pools and channels) was found.



Group at *Wilsonia humilis* (silky wilsonia) location by Doug Clarke

## Heathy Hills Nature Reserve, March 2016

Viv Muller

Heathy Hills Nature Reserve, the only known Tasmanian site for *Mirbelia oxylobioides* (sandstone bush pea), continues to be a TPT focus, as we monitor and do weed follow-up subsequent to pakana's excellent gorse removal work (funded by Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife and an NRM South Naturally Inspired Grant). Our most recent trip on March 19, saw Viv and Magali take new records of the photopoints, while Christine and Priscilla assessed gorse re-growth, and checked for native plant recruitment in the cleared areas. At that stage, after a very dry season, there were a few new gorse seedlings emerging, but not as many as might be expected, and a few juvenile plants that had established since the initial primary removal effort, and these were treated. There are silver wattles colonising the cleared areas but no other significant native plant recruitment as yet. Other weed issues near the Jordan River boundary which will need addressing include Californian thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), other thistles, great mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*), mignonette (*Reseda luteola*) and hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) amongst others. The newly created gorse boundary will need regular maintenance to prevent re-infestation of critical parts of the reserve and we hope that boundary issues such as rubbish dumping and stock access can be addressed in overall management plans.

An NRM South Naturally Inspired Grant is funding a further visit by pakana in the late spring of 2016, and TPT will also visit again in late 2016. It's a great reserve, so look out for the next trip!



The lovely rock formations at Heathy Hills by Richard White. Insert: dry fruit pods of *Mirbelia oxylobiodes* by Viv Muller.

## Monitoring for white gum regeneration, Bruny Island, April 2016

Magali Wright



Oliver Strutt explaining the design of the field trials to TPT volunteers by Magali Wright

Seven TPT volunteers undertook monitoring the White gum regeneration trials on North Bruny Island 29 May with staff from the Understory Network, Kingborough Council and NRM South. The endangered Forty-spotted pardalote relies specifically on white gum for its food and shelter, and a reduction of the condition of white gum has been linked to the decline of pardalote numbers.

The trials, set up in 2012 and 2013, investigate practical methodologies for stimulating white gum regeneration in remanent woodland and around isolated paddock trees. This year we recorded 138 eucalypt seedlings of which 95 were white gums, which was very similar to the observation from the previous year.

The results so far suggest that excluding browsing with fencing is key, though to date there is no difference between excluding stock alone and excluding stock and native browsers. Promising treatments include burning, scalping (removing the total layer of soil, nutrients and plant roots) and adding swales downslope from isolated paddock trees. So far, it appears that fencing 10m from the canopy of isolated paddock trees results in the best seedling establishment.

## Threatened sedges training workshop, Ross, May 2016

Kerri Spicer

This weekend training workshop, brilliantly and expertly led by Mark Wapstra and Phil Collier, introduced the intimidating but fascinating world of sedge identification to 15 enthusiastic TPT participants. Over the course of the weekend we worked our way through the identification of 10 genera of sedges, and the 20 threatened Tasmanian species. We were fortunate to have material, fresh or pressed, for all threatened species thanks to the Tasmanian Herbarium, Mark and Phil.

Phil soon had us exploring our surgical skills, dissecting the fruiting parts of plants under microscope, revealing the intricacies of hypogynous bracts, and the diversity of beautiful textures and patterns found on the fruit. Mark had us delving into the identification keys in *The Students Flora of Tasmania (4b)* in attempt to identify plants to species level, and to familiarise us with the characteristic features for each genus. A quick jaunt to the Ross River at the end of our first day revealed a multitude of sedges, including the threatened *Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani* (river clubsedge).

By the end of the weekend there were mutterings of “what the fassicle?” as our heads began to bulge with all this new information. We all went away having had a great weekend of learning, feeling a little more confident of sedge identification.



Viv, Christine and Robin absorbed in the intricacies of sedge identification by Kerri Spicer

## The Tasmanian Orchid Conservation and Research Program

Hosted by the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens (Tasmania Seed Conservation Centre)

Viv Muller & Magali Wright

The project is supervised by Dr Nigel Swarts and Dr Magali Wright, and has been in operation since 2013. The program

...aims to improve the conservation status of Tasmanian threatened orchids, through research into their distribution, threats, biological and ecological interactions and the implementation of the *Threatened Tasmanian Orchid Flora Recovery Plan*.

2016 Annual report, Tasmanian Orchid Conservation and Research Program

As regular readers will know, volunteers from TPT and from Friends of the RTBG have been intimately involved in the orchid propagation part of this work, both in the laboratory and in the nursery, and this past financial year provided in-kind labour to the value of \$15,750. TPT have also supported the effort through a grant from the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife, and through activities outlined in the Threatened Flora Link MOU.



2016 re-emergence of *Caladenia saggicola* (with flower bud forming). Originally germinated and potted out in the 2014-2015 season. Photo: Magali Wright

This past season, we have seen the very exciting benefit of some methodological improvements. Using different potting mixes, and improving the pest management regime, we have seen the re-emergence (by May 2016) of 39% of the orchids which were potted out, following germination in the lab, in the 2014-2015 season. This is clearly an improvement on the <5% re-emergence from the 2013-2014 season! This year's re-emerged plants include, amongst others, the single *Prasophyllum olidum* plant, and numerous *Caladenia saggicola*, some of which are showing flower bud formation.

Unfortunately, the 2015-2016 season was not good for collecting new material, probably due to the very dry conditions. However, germinations were set up using a limited amount of newly collected material and some previously stored material, both seed and fungi. There were mixed results, as outlined in the table below, and only 86 plants were potted out. This is a concern, with seedling loss and other issues being the target for further improvement of the methodology. However it is particularly pleasing to see several *Prasophyllum olidum* and *Caladenia anthracina* plants and quite a lot of *Prasophyllum incorrectum* doing well so far.

**Table 1** *Ex situ* conservation activities, orchid species name followed by EPBCA and TSPA listing status

Region	Collection (seed/fungi)	Germination set up	Propagation (plants deflasked into pots)
South		<i>Prasophyllum tunbridgense</i> (EN, e)	No germination
		<i>Prasophyllum milfordense</i> (CR, e) †	Germination to stage 2 and 3, not possible to transfer
	<i>Caladenia caudata</i> (Seed;V,v)	<i>Caladenia caudata</i> (V,v)	Deflasked 2 plants into pots
		<i>Caladenia saggicola</i> (CR, e) †	Germination to stage 4, not possible to transfer
	<i>Pterostylis ziegeleri</i> (seed and fungi ; VU, v)†	<i>Pterostylis ziegeleri</i> (seed and fungi ; VU, v)†	Germination to stage 4, not possible to transfer
Cradle Coast	<i>Caladenia dienema</i> (fungi; EN, e)	<i>Caladenia dienema</i> (EN, e)	Deflasked 13 plants into pots
	<i>Prasophyllum pulchellum</i> (seed and fungi; CR, e)†	<i>Prasophyllum pulchellum</i> (CR, e)	Germination to stage 2 and 3, not possible to transfer
	<i>Pterostylis rubenachii</i> (seed and fungi; EN, e)	<i>Pterostylis rubenachii</i> (EN, e)	No germination
North		<i>Prasophyllum incorrectum</i> (CR, e)†	Deflasked 58 plant into pots
		<i>Caladenia anthracina</i> (CR, e)†	Deflasked 9 plant into pots
		<i>Prasophyllum olidum</i> (CR, e)†	Deflasked 4 plant into pots

† funded by FNPW grant, philanthropic or community funds and/or additional in kind.

## TPT field trips 2016/17

Threatened Plants Tasmania has an active field trip program mostly in spring and summer to survey, monitor and manage the habitat of threatened and endangered plant species. Dates and destinations of these trips may be altered due to weather or changing circumstances. Any updates and details of each trip are sent to the TPT email list and will be available about 2 weeks in advance on [www.wildcaretas.org.au](http://www.wildcaretas.org.au) and [www.tpt.org.au](http://www.tpt.org.au). All trips are led by botanists and data gathered contributes to improved knowledge and management of the species.

Date	Action	Site	Species
17 Sep	Map population	Tolosa Park	<i>Epacris virgata</i> Kettering
24-25 Sep	Establish transects and surveys	Coles Bay	<i>Conospermum hookeri</i> ( <i>Philothea freyciana</i> etc)
8 Oct	Survey	Bagdad	<i>Calandrinia eremaea</i> , <i>Brachyscome perpusilla</i> , <i>Hyalosperma demissum</i>
15 Oct	Surveys	Badger Head Road	<i>Ephemerals</i> ( <i>Stylidium</i> spp. & <i>Phyllangium</i> spp.), <i>Xanthorrhoea</i>

			<i>bracteata</i>
<b>15 Oct</b>	Saltmarsh surveys	Lauderdale, South Arm, Calverts Lagoon	<i>Ruppia tuberosa</i> , <i>Lachnagrostis</i> sp., <i>Cotula vulgaris</i> subsp. <i>australasica</i>
<b>22 Oct</b>	Re-survey burnt areas & survey	Conara & Epping Forest	<i>Caladenia</i> spp., <i>Pultenaea humilis</i> , <i>Calandrinia</i> spp. etc.
<b>23 Oct</b>	Survey	Beechford Road	<i>Caladenia caudata</i> , <i>C. patersonii</i> , ephemerals
<b>26 Oct</b>	Survey	Arthur-Pieman	<i>Prasophyllum</i> sp. Arthur River
<b>29 Oct</b>	Post-fire monitoring	Pontville	<i>Cryptandra amara</i> , <i>Pultenaea prostrata</i>
<b>5 Nov</b>	Rescore 2011 plots etc	Township Lagoon	Various
<b>12-13 Nov</b>	Re-survey & survey 2016 burn for orchids	Arthur-Pieman	<i>Vittadinia australasica</i> , <i>Euphrasia collina</i> subsp. <i>tetragona</i> , <i>Prasophyllum secutum</i> etc
<b>19 Nov</b>	Survey	North Bruny Island (Rookery Track)	<i>Thelymitra atronitida</i> & other orchids
<b>4 Dec</b>	Weeding	Amy Street (Glenorchy)	<i>Velleia paradoxa</i>
<b>10 Dec</b>	Weed re-scoring	Heathy Hills	<i>Mirbelia oxylobioides</i>
<b>28 Jan</b>	Re-survey	The Nut	<i>Leucochrysum albicans</i>
<b>4-5 Feb</b>	Census, survey	Mt William & possibly Cape Portland	<i>Cassinia rugata</i> , <i>Gratiola</i> spp., <i>Wilsonia</i> spp., <i>Zieria veronicea</i>
<b>18Feb</b>	Census	George Town	<i>Chorizandra enodis</i>
<b>18 Feb</b>	Monitor & cage modification	St Patricks Plain & Barren Tier	<i>Eucalyptus gunnii</i> subsp. <i>divaricata</i>
<b>25 Mar</b>	Survey	Arthur-Pieman	<i>Corunastylis brachystachya</i>
<b>8 Apr</b>	White gum trials	Bruny Island	<i>Eucalyptus viminalis</i> (40-spotted pardalote habitat)
<b>22 Apr</b>	Translocation	Pontos Hills	<i>Hardenbergia violacea</i>
<b>10 Jun</b>	Seedling protection (& weed control)	Calverts Hill	<i>Eucalyptus morrisbyi</i>

## TPT orchid monitoring 2016/17

Threatened Plants Tasmania invites your participation in an on-going native orchid monitoring program in 2016-17. This important work can't be done without the help of volunteers, visit [www.tpt.org.au](http://www.tpt.org.au) or email [president@tpt.org.au](mailto:president@tpt.org.au) to discover how to participate. All you need is an interest in learning more about native orchids; no experience or qualifications are necessary.

Most of our monitoring projects now extend beyond 5 years of annual data collection, and the projects become even more valuable with each additional year of data.

Monitoring trips require a panel of interested people who can be called upon at short notice once flowering and fruiting dates are known. If you would like join the "on-call panel" for orchid monitoring, please contact [president@tpt.org.au](mailto:president@tpt.org.au), specifying whether you are available for north Tasmania and/or south Tasmania.

Date	Action	Site	Species
<b>14 Sep</b>	Map & rescore	Milford	<i>Caladenia saggicola</i>
<b>18 Oct</b>	Monitor	Henry Somerset	<i>Caladenia caudata</i>
<b>11 Nov</b>	Monitor	Henry Somerset	<i>Caladenia tonellii</i>
<b>12 Nov</b>	Map & rescore	Milford	<i>Prasophyllum milfordense</i>
<b>30 Nov</b>	Map & rescore, possible weeding	Campbell Town golf course, Tunbridge Township Lagoon	<i>Prasophyllum olidum</i> , various weeds

## 2016/17 TPT Committee

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TPT is a Wildcare group.

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