

# CONSERVATION CORRIDORS CONNECT COMMUNITY

## NORTH BRUNY BIODIVERSITY FUND PROJECT

## BIODIVERSITY



2014

To borrow an old adage, a good network is far stronger than the sum of its parts. In June 2014 the North Bruny Biodiversity Fund Project formally wrapped up, but it has established a legacy of community teamwork and support that is destined to deliver lasting benefits into the future.

The project was all about habitat connectivity. At its core was a need to address the plight of the endangered Forty spotted Pardalote, a tiny bird with a big reliance on White gum bushland. With White gum range declining the 'forty-spot' is in big trouble; as well as several other species that call the north of the island home; including the Swift parrot and eagle species.

Finding a way to increase White gum numbers is of course an obvious solution (albeit an incredibly challenging one) but in order to truly benefit the birdlife there needs to be a patchwork of the trees across an area big enough to match their natural range. It's not enough to have a paddock full of White gums and nothing next door.

With much of North Bruny privately owned, any attempt at rebuilding habitat corridors was going to involve the local landowners. Indeed the application for funding through the Australian Government's Biodiversity Fund hinged as much

on community involvement as it did on ecological expertise. We already had great relationships with the farmers on that part of the island and it came as no surprise that many were more than willing to get involved.

When the funding was approved we had 15 landholders sign up for action, which gave us access to around three quarters of the entire North Bruny area. You can build some pretty extensive habitat corridors with that much real estate at your disposal.

Project delivery was managed by an NRM South team led by Andrew Winkler (and in the early stages by Holly Hansen), Oliver Strutt from The Understorey Network, Kingborough Council and Conservation Volunteers Australia, with unwavering support from Dr Sally Bryant from the Tasmanian Land Conservancy. This was a partnership with quite a few runs on the board already; we've been working closely for a while now.

Together we embarked on a carefully planned program of surveying, weed control, revegetation and fencing that would span just over two years. In consultation with local landowners we identified high-conservation-value areas for priority attention and generated specific site plans, at the same time accumulating data on the ecological processes of the region.

Through a workshop, landowners received targeted training on revegetation techniques, weed

control and general habitat management. Overall it was a huge team effort, and if the continued participation rate is anything to go by, a very rewarding one.

And the results? Better than we'd hoped for. By the completion date of the project we'd nailed the targets for weed management, with invasive species now well under control on 200 hectares. An ambitious target of 25 hectares of new plantings was smashed, with more than 32 hectares receiving a healthy covering of native grasses, shrubs and trees. In addition, 177 hectares was protected or enhanced in some other way – through fencing to prevent grazing, for example – 25 hectares more than we'd planned for.

Interest from yet more property owners who neighboured the 'formal' project area also helped us to expand the scope of the work considerably.

It's early days yet. But projects like these demonstrate how an effective partnership can work to deliver so much more than an individual effort. In this case there's the added benefit that the members of the community have adopted a caretaker role, ensuring that someone will be looking out for the Forty-spotted Pardalote long after the funding runs out.

