

The Values of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage

Area

The natural and cultural values that have resulted in the TWWHA being reserved as conservation land and inscribed on the World Heritage List are:

Natural Values

The outstanding natural values of the Tasmanian Wilderness WHA include:

- glacially-formed landscapes of exceptional beauty such as Cradle Mountain, Frenchmans Cap and the Arthur Ranges;
- an impressive assemblage of karst and erosional features;
- pristine catchments where natural processes continue;
- living evidence of the previous existence of the supercontinent Gondwana;
- a profusion of threatened, rare and endemic plants including the native conifers, Huon pine (*Lagarostrobus franklinii*) and King Billy pine (*Athrotaxis selaginoides*);
- a complex mosaic of vegetation, including moorland, rainforest, alpine, eucalypt and riparian communities;
- undisturbed stands of the world's tallest flowering plant (*Eucalyptus regnans*);
- an assemblage of the world's largest carnivorous marsupials, the Tasmanian devil (*Sarcophilus harrisii*), the spotted-tailed quoll (*Dasyurus maculatus*), eastern quoll (*D. viverrinus*);
- two of the only three surviving species of monotremes — the most primitive group of mammals in the world — the platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) and the shortbeaked echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*); and
- rare and threatened species such as the Lake Pedder galaxias (*Galaxias pedderensis*), Pedra Branca skink (*Niveoscincus palfreymani*) and orange-bellied parrot (*Neophema chrysogaster*).

The Tasmanian Wilderness WHA is of immense importance to native species as an undisturbed natural ecosystem where biological, ecological and evolutionary processes can occur largely free from interference by humans. Not only are the natural values of the Tasmanian Wilderness WHA of scientific, educational and recreational importance to the world community, but many believe they are also of intrinsic value in themselves. The area is therefore of significance at all levels as a place where the rights of nature are recognised and respected.

In a national context the WHA is significant as one of the largest conservation reserves in Australia. It is noted for intrusions of Jurassic dolerite not found in Australia outside of Tasmania; the most extensive glacially-formed landscapes in Australia; important karst features such as caves that are amongst the longest, deepest and best decorated in the nation; it contains a significant proportion of Australia's cool temperate rainforest and snow country; and is the stronghold of many animals that are extinct, rare or threatened on the mainland of Australia, including the pademelon (*Thylogale billardieri*), eastern quoll (*Dasyurus viverrinus*), broad-toothed mouse (*Mastacomys fuscus*), and ground parrot (*Pezoporus wallicus*).

In the Tasmanian context the WHA is significant because it contains most of the state's pristine high-rainfall environment; alpine and sub-alpine environment; glaciated landscapes and karstic rocks; extensive unmodified coastal formations; around 20% of the state's rainforest; approximately 240 out of a total of 320 Tasmanian endemic higher plant species — of which about half have most of their distribution within the WHA; stands of tall eucalypt forest and secure habitat for many species of animals. [Source for the above – 1999 TWWHAMP]

With the addition of new areas in 2013 the above values were extended, resulting in greater diversity of values, inclusion of a greater range of rare and exceptional geological and biological examples, and greater integrity of the TWWHA with respect to natural values. An example of newly included natural values is the glacial landscape complex on the Navarre Plains that tells a critical part of the story of glaciation in Tasmania, which is rare southern hemisphere glacial landscape evidence, and provides a unique perspective on the most recent ice ages.

Cultural Values

The outstanding cultural value of the Tasmanian Wilderness WHA is the rich, undisturbed suite of Pleistocene Aboriginal sites dating back over 35,000 years, which include cave paintings and cultural deposits bearing testimony to an Ice Age society. Lack of disturbance enhances the value of these sites.

Holocene Aboriginal sites (up to 3,000 years old), consisting of extensive middens on the south and south-west coasts, exemplify a hunter gatherer way of life in a rugged and harsh coastal landscape. These sites (which have been relatively undisturbed by European settlement) are significant as examples of a traditional settlement pattern.

In the national context these Aboriginal sites provide valuable evidence about the original settlement of Australia, life in the most southerly part of the country during the

Ice Age, and human responses to climate change. The sites are of major cultural significance for the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.¹

Cultural values of the Tasmanian Wilderness WHA also include historic features from more recent activities. The remains of the Macquarie Harbour penal settlement — the first penal settlement in Tasmania — are internationally significant as an example of colonisation of remote parts of the world in the 18th and 19th centuries by means of the forced transportation of convicts across the world. The convict sites in the Tasmanian Wilderness WHA have outstanding importance as early examples of this major global social phenomenon.

The WHA also contains remains of sites related to other historic themes including exploration, Huon pine logging, mining, hunting, high altitude grazing, hydro-electric development, and recreation. These sites have significance in terms of the history of Tasmania's development. [Source for the above – 1999 TWWHAMP]

With the addition of the new areas in 2013, the cultural values were increased: New significant Aboriginal sites and site areas were added, and the TWWHA became a more representative Aboriginal landscape with greater integrity. Specific cultural heritage included through the new added areas included significant cave sites in the Florentine and Huon Valleys, a suite of open sites on the Navarre Plains that represent an important historical inland gathering place for Tasmanian Aboriginal people, and the highly significant cultural landscape of the Recherche Bay area.

Wilderness Value

The area comprises a large percentage of the remaining extensive, high quality, temperate wilderness in Australia, and is one of only a few such regions in the world. It is this wilderness quality which underpins the Tasmanian Wilderness WHA's success in meeting the criteria as a natural property and which is the foundation for the maintenance of the integrity of both the natural and cultural values of the area". It is also the only WHA with the term 'wilderness' in its title. [Source – 1999 TWWHAMP]

World Heritage Value

¹ Note - all Aboriginal sites within the WHA are important to the Aboriginal community. Also the Aboriginal perception of values, in many situations, does not divide natural from cultural values (e.g., plants and animals are of cultural value to the Aboriginal community).

In 2015, the TWWHA is one of only two World Heritage properties to fulfil seven of ten criteria (the other is in China).

The TWWHA meets all four natural criteria and three out of the seven cultural criteria.²

In relation to the natural values it:

- is an outstanding example representing the major stages of the earth's evolutionary history;
- is an outstanding example representing significant ongoing geological processes, biological evolution and humanity's interaction with the natural environment;
- contains superlative natural phenomena, formations or features, or areas of exceptional natural beauty; and
- contains the most important and significant natural habitats where threatened species of animals or plants of outstanding universal value still survive.

In relation to cultural values it:

- bears a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a civilisation which has disappeared;
- is an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement which is representative of a culture and which has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change; and
- is directly or tangibly associated with events or with ideas or beliefs of outstanding universal significance.

Other Values

The TWWHA was included on the National Heritage List in 2007. The National Heritage List is a list of places of outstanding natural, Indigenous, or historic heritage value to the nation.

The property meets the following six of the nine criteria for National Heritage listing:

- The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history;

² Note – The wording of individual criterion has changed slightly since 1999. For the current criteria refer to the July 2013, UNESCO *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* - <http://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/>.

- The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Australia's natural or cultural history;
- The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Australia's natural or cultural history;
- The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of:
 - I. a class of Australia's natural or cultural places; or
 - II. a class of Australia's natural or cultural environment;
- The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group; and
- The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. [Source for the above – 1999 TWWHAMP]

The State level values of the TWWHA have not been formally evaluated, but would include most of the outstanding universal values and national level values, as well as numerous other natural and cultural values.