

6. TASMANIAN WILDERNESS WORLD HERITAGE AREA

6.1 Description¹³

Location, size

The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (the Tasmanian WHA) is located in central, west and south-west Tasmania. It covers an area of 1.38 million hectares, which is around 20 per cent of the land area of Tasmania.

Major natural features

The area includes undisturbed forests and habitats of plants and animals that are endemic and rare or endangered, extensively glaciated landscapes and Aboriginal cultural sites including Ice Age cave art. The area has spectacular scenery and wilderness characteristics.

History

In 1982, the existing National Parks of Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair, Franklin-Lower Gordon Wild Rivers, and Southwest were inscribed on the World Heritage List as the Western Tasmania Wilderness National Parks World Heritage Area (1.2 million hectares). A further 600 000 hectares including National Parks, Conservation Areas, Forest Reserves, Protected Archaeological sites and around 300 hectares of freehold land were incorporated and the renamed area inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1989.

Management arrangements

The area is managed and funded subject to joint arrangements between the Tasmanian and Commonwealth governments. The arrangements include a Ministerial Council and a Consultative Committee with members appointed by both governments. The Plan of Management has been developed by the Tasmanian Department of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage under these joint arrangements.

The majority of the Tasmanian WHA is reserved in National Parks and is managed on a day-to-day basis by the Tasmanian Department of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage. Forest Reserves are managed by the Forestry Commission, the Hydro-Electric Commission manages a small area, and freehold land is managed by the owners.

Management funding

Under the joint arrangements, the Commonwealth Government has provided funds for capital works and operational funding. The funding commitments by the Commonwealth and Tasmanian Governments to capital works and operational funding are covered by rolling three-year agreements. In 1991-92, the Commonwealth Government provided \$3.2 million of a total of \$4.8 million allocated by the Tasmanian Department of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage to the Tasmanian WHA.

In 1991-92 around \$175 000 was earned from park fees for leases and concessions at sites within the Tasmanian WHA. In May 1993, visitor fees were introduced. These are for adults only and range from \$5 per day to \$40 for a one-year pass.

Management objectives

The overall management objectives of the Tasmanian WHA are to protect, conserve, present and, where necessary, rehabilitate the natural and cultural heritage.

Eleven primary objectives have been developed, these are to:

- protect the natural diversity of the WHA and maintain and restore its natural ecological processes and systems;
- maintain and enhance wilderness quality;
- maintain viable populations of all species;
- maintain and enhance scenic and environmental quality;
- protect and conserve cultural heritage;

¹³ Information was compiled from *Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan 1992*, and Department of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage, Tasmania, *Annual Report 1991-92*.

- develop, through research, a better understanding of natural and cultural processes and impacts;
- promote community awareness, acceptance, understanding and appreciation of the concept of World Heritage and the values of the Tasmanian WHA;
- assist visitor appreciation and enjoyment by developing and promoting an appropriate range of opportunities and facilities for public recreation and tourism both in and adjacent to the WHA;
- enrich the experiences of visitors through education and interpretation;
- develop public understanding of the principles and value of conservation;
- improve the basis for management through a better understanding of visitor use, expectations, satisfaction and community attitudes.

Major uses

The primary purpose of the Tasmanian Wilderness WHA is nature conservation and protection of archaeological features.

Tourism and recreation are the major direct uses of the Tasmanian Wilderness WHA and provide the greatest financial values, see section 6.2 below.

Minor direct uses include mining, salvage of Huon Pine, limited commercial fishing and apiary. There is one osmiridium mine producing at negligible levels. Beekeeping generated leatherwood honey to the value of \$208 000 in 1990.

A number of highways and lesser roads pass through the WHA. There are some telecommunications facilities and power transmission lines located in the area. The water catchments of the WHA, specifically Lake St Clair, provide resources for hydro-electric power generation. As noted in appendix 2, the values of water catchment services are likely to be significant. No information has been included on the financial or economic values of these uses.

6.2 Tasmanian Wilderness WHA tourism and recreation

The Tasmanian WHA covers approximately 20 per cent of the area of Tasmania. Locations in the Tasmanian WHA are within 1.5 hours drive from Launceston, 1 hour drive from Hobart and are half an hour from many towns. The area thus provides recreational resources for Tasmanians as well as for visitors from other states and overseas.

Most visits to the Tasmanian WHA are day visits by people travelling from home or from accommodation outside the WHA. The few built accommodation facilities within the WHA are huts and only four of these are leased for commercial use. Camping is allowed throughout the Tasmanian WHA and camping grounds and facilities are provided in some locations. The major visitor facilities provided in the area are visitor centres at National Parks.

The Tasmanian WHA has a reputation for wilderness recreation. The following quote from the Management Plan sums up the character of recreation in the WHA:

'The WHA provides opportunities for a wide range of recreation pursuits. Although the majority of visitors to the area are on day trips undertaking activities such as picnicking and short walks, the region is widely recognised as the focus for remote area recreation in south-eastern Australia. The extensive tracts of high quality wilderness in the region set it apart from many other natural areas. Walking, rafting, canoeing, fishing, skiing, caving, climbing, boating and horse riding may all be undertaken in the area in a natural setting. The region provides people with the chance to experience solitude, challenge, independence, tranquillity and closeness to nature' (DPWH 1992, p. 56).

While much of this recreation is undertaken privately, there is a growing commercial tour industry that includes guided day or overnight walking tours, rafting, 4WD tours, a cruise on the Gordon River and trout fishing. Bus tours from other parts of the state bring visitors for day visits.

The number of visits to the Tasmanian WHA has been estimated by Buckman and O'Loughlin (1991). Table 6.1 is taken from their report of visitor statistics for 1990-91.¹⁴ It is somewhat difficult to compare the figure for visits with data on the number of visitors or visitor days(nights) recorded in other tourism statistics series. The number of visits figure is based on counts made at different centres and locations within the WHA. People visiting more than one centre in a day may be counted more than once whereas those spending more than one day in the same general location would only be counted once. The average length of stay in the Tasmanian WHA is estimated at half a day. Buckman and O'Loughlin have multiplied the total visits number by 0.5 of a day to calculate an approximation of visitor-days at 298 544 for 1990-91.

Table 6.1 Visits to the Tasmanian WHA 1990-91

Centre	Total visits	No. days no data recorded	Period
Cradle Mountain	147 000	22	1990-91
Cradle Mountain accommodation	77 000	0	1990-91
Lake St Clair	131 000	19	1990-91
Lake St Clair accommodation	16 208	0	1990-91
Gordon River	69 380	0	1990
Maydena Gate*	30 000	126	1990-91
Marakoopa Cave	21 000	3	1990-91
Western Central Plateau**	16 500		1990-91
Hartz Mountains	11 000	0	Averaged
Liffey/Meander	48 000		1990-91
Forest Reserves***			
Other visits****	30 000		
Total	597 088		

*Only includes visits between November and June (inclusive). **Inland Fisheries estimate based on annual surveys. ***Forestry Commission estimate of twelve monthly visitation based on four months of road counter data. ****Includes walkers, fishing vessels, aeroplanes, unrecorded cars and other 'uncaptured' data. Special note: Some visitor entry points to the Tasmanian WHA are not included in the above table. The most popular of these are the Lyell Highways which are mainly used by people whose only interest is probably the use of the roads. A number of smaller centres including Recherche Bay and Liawenee are also excluded. Source: Buckman and O'Loughlin 1991, p. 44.

¹⁴ Data for 1991-92 are published in the Annual Report of the DPWH but have not been used here as there were a large number of unrecorded days for the major centres of Cradle Mountain and Lake St Clair.

There is no doubt that the Tasmanian WHA experienced increasing annual visitation over the last decade. Although total visitor numbers are not available, trends in visits can be gauged by comparing records of visits to major centres across years. The amount of data available is limited. Table 6.2 below is based on figures in Buckman and O'Loughlin (1991). The data indicate an 193 per cent increase in visits to Cradle Mountain from 1984-85 to 1990-91 and a modest two per cent increase in visits to Lake St Clair from 1987-88 to 1990-91.

Table 6.2 Visits to the Tasmanian WHA 1984-92

	1984-85	1987-88	1990-91
Cradle Mountain	50 188	70 574	147 380
Lake St Clair		127 849	130 778

Source: Buckman and O'Loughlin 1991.

The Tasmanian Visitor Survey provides information on places in Tasmania visited by tourists from interstate and overseas. Figures for the number of visitors to the four most popular locations in the Tasmanian WHA in 1984 and 1992 are reproduced on table 6.3 below. Data for 1991 are also provided for a comparison with table 6.2 above.

Table 6.3 Interstate and overseas visitors to the Tasmanian WHA

Location	Visitors 1984	Visitors 1991	Visitors 1992	Change 1984-92
Cradle Mountain NP	35 664	99 144	141 337	+296%
Lake St Clair NP	57 885	78 505	106 699	+84%
Central	40 876	51 797	54 146	+32%
Highlands/Great Lake				
Gordon River	73 523	74 054	110 283	+50%

Source: Fisher 1993.

Financial values

Expenditure by visitors to the Tasmanian Wilderness WHA has been estimated at \$59 million for 1991-92. This is an order-of-magnitude estimate only.

Calculating financial values

Financial values of tourism and recreation in the Tasmanian WHA are measured as expenditure by tourists. There is no up to date information on financial values of tourism and recreation in the Tasmanian WHA, either published or held by the relevant government agencies.

An estimate of the likely order-of-magnitude of financial values of Tasmanian WHA tourism and recreation is made here, based *inter alia* on a 1987 report by the Centre for Regional Economic Analysis (CREA), entitled 'The Contribution of the National Parks and Wildlife Service to the Tasmanian Economy 1986-87'. The study included a survey of expenditure by visitors to sites managed by the then NPWS (now DPWH) and from this, expenditure at all NPWS sites was estimated. These sites include National Parks in the Tasmanian WHA. They also include Port Arthur and Mt Field National Park and both these sites have higher visitation than any of the locations in the Tasmanian WHA.

Direct expenditure on visits to all National Parks was estimated at \$27 million, and a total direct plus indirect income effect of \$61.5 million was reported. This implies a multiplier of 2.27, or that the direct

figure is 44.1 per cent of the total direct plus indirect value. This figure includes expenditure by Tasmanians and visitors to Tasmania on local travel to National Parks, fares for commercial tours and other costs associated with the visit. Travel to Tasmania and accommodation other than in the National Parks are not included.

The number of visits on which this survey was based was approximately 940 000 in 1986-87. This implies an average expenditure of \$28 per visit. This is equivalent to \$36 per visit inflated to 1991-92 dollars. The direct expenditure for the 597 088 visits to Tasmanian WHA sites in 1990-91 could therefore be of the order of \$21.4 million.

The CREA report acknowledged that this is not the full picture and that some proportion of expenditure by overseas and interstate visitors to Tasmania should be attributed to the attraction of National Parks. The CREA report contains information from another survey by CREA of visitors to Tasmania. One third of visitors surveyed said that their entire trip was due to the attractions of National Parks and so the entire expenditure for one third of visitors to Tasmania was calculated. The direct plus indirect amount was \$119 million, implying that the direct expenditure was around \$52 million. This value is for **all** National Parks and similar areas, including the Tasmanian WHA. It includes that part of the \$27 million spent on visits to National Parks by visitors to Tasmania.

The best that can be done to translate 1986-87 findings to current estimates is to take one third of current expenditure by visitors to Tasmania as a proxy for direct expenditure. Direct expenditure by visitors to Tasmania was \$429 million in 1992 (Fisher 1993) and one third of this is \$143 million. This represents expenditure by visitors to Tasmania attributable to **all** National Parks and similar areas. It does not include travel to Tasmania. This expenditure figure provides an upper limit on expenditure that could be attributable to visits by tourists to Tasmania to the Tasmanian WHA.

An estimate of expenditure attributable to the Tasmanian WHA has been made from Tasmanian visitor statistics for 1992 presented in Fisher (1993). Total expenditure was \$429 million. The number of visitors to Tasmania in 1992 was 398 134. The average length of stay was 11 nights. Average daily expenditure was \$98.

The majority of the Tasmanian WHA is located across two tourism regions, Southern and West Coast. It is assumed here that all tourists to these regions visited the Tasmanian WHA. There were 86 000 visitors to the Southern region and 107 000 visitors to the West Coast region. It does not matter that some people may have visited both regions, it is the length of stay in each region that is important. The average length of stay in the Southern region was 3.8 nights and it was two nights for the West Coast. The figure of two nights is used for both regions here (consistent with the approach used for the Great Barrier Reef WHA and Wet Tropics WHA). Total expenditure for the two regions together comes to \$37.7 million, in 1992 dollars.

Recall that the expenditure on visits to the Tasmanian WHA by Tasmanian residents and tourists to Tasmania was estimated at \$21.4 million. The additional expenditure by tourists of \$37.7 million should be added to this, but there is an element of double counting of expenditure by tourists involved. The resulting value of \$59 million is therefore an upper estimate using the method described. Note however, that it is less than half of the \$143 million possibly attributable to the attractions of **all** Tasmania's National Parks to tourism.

If the multiplier of 2.27 derived in the 1986-87 study by CREA is applied, the direct plus indirect effects are \$133 million. This should be interpreted with caution given the time lapse since the research and the uncertainty of the current expenditure estimates.

TABLE 6.4 TASMANIAN WILDERNESS WORLD HERITAGE AREA

<i>USES</i>	<i>DESCRIPTION</i>	<i>GROSS FINANCIAL VALUES</i>	<i>ECONOMIC VALUES</i>
PRIMARY USES			
Nature conservation	1.38 million hectares of relatively undisturbed natural environment.	Nil, however these attributes provide the resource base for potentially sustainable direct uses which generate financial values	These attributes provide the resource base for economic values of potentially sustainable direct uses plus the economic values of non-market indirect uses Economic values of non-market indirect uses have not been measured for the Tasmanian Wilderness WHA.
Conservation of cultural features	Aboriginal cultural sites including Ice Age cave art. Historical sites.		
COMPATIBLE DIRECT USES			
Tourism and recreation	Approximately 597 000 visits per year	Direct: of the order of \$59 million (1991-92)	not known
Beekeeping	45 apiary sites	\$208 000 (1990)	not known
Limited mining	1 mine	negligible	not known
Limited commercial fishing	minor	negligible	not known
Huon pine salvage	60 m ³ per year	negligible	not known
Highways and roads	not described	not known	not known
Telecommunications	not described	not known	not known
Water catchment services	not described	not known	not known
Research	not described	not known	not known