

Media Release

Monday 30 December 2019

Rare flora enjoys forestry safe haven

Tasmania's biggest privately-owned forest estate is proving to be a safe haven for at least 44 known threatened species of flora, which are now kept under the protective watch of specialist botanists engaged by the forest owner.

Forico's managed forest estate, which spans more than 173,000 hectares, includes 77,000 hectares of natural vegetation managed for its conservation and biodiversity values. It is in these protected zones, where 86 individual sites of rare flora have been identified, some of which occur nowhere else in Tasmania – or the world for that matter.

The populations occur in virtually every vegetation type, including wet and dry eucalypt forests, wetlands, native grasslands and even in plantations.

Forico's Sustainability Manager, Simon Cook, said discovery of some of the threatened species followed the company's formation in 2014 and the subsequent decision to engage ecologists to document the distribution of threatened flora and fauna species throughout the Forico estate.

"From the very start of the Forico business, it became clear we needed to gain a better understanding of the presence and distribution of plant and animal species throughout the estate so we could ensure their long term protection. That led to some fascinating discoveries," he said.

"New populations of some of our rarest species were found in the process. Information provided by members of the public also proved invaluable.

"One of the most exciting discoveries was a new population of the blacktongue finger orchid (*Caladenia congesta*) from the lower slopes of Ben Lomond. This is a species found only in a very small number of places in Tasmania," Mr Cook said.

Forico is also the owner of the Henry Somerset Conservation Area in north west Tasmania, which is home to clusters of threatened flora species.

Altogether, 50 species of orchid are found in the conservation area making it a 'hotspot' for orchid enthusiasts and researchers.

Simon Cook explained that Forico actively manages the orchid reserve through prescribed ecological burning, weed removal and long term population monitoring.

"It is part of a much wider program by Forico to maintain or enhance biodiversity and conservation outcomes within all the natural vegetation we manage," he said.

“Some of our other programs over the past year to improve the natural values across our estate have included restoration of streamside reserves, weed control, hazard reduction burns and the rehabilitation of significant areas of native forest.”

For further information

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