



benefits from not using farm machinery on steep land and in water courses, and a focus on the most commercially productive land. And then there is the ongoing personal satisfaction from conserving biodiversity for future generations.

Some of the particular issues that 'Redbanks' owners have had to deal with include:

- The establishment of access lanes that are developed as a result of fencing off can change the way that water runs off the property. The construction of these lanes can concentrate run-off and may require the construction of sumps and underground drains.
- Fenced off areas in this part of Tasmania are vulnerable to blackberry infestation that need constant management.

- While there are numerous native species that require protection, there are two species, which have presented challenges for the farm. Bennett's Wallaby and the Native Hen have thrived in fenced off native vegetation and graze on commercial pasture and crops, and require special management.

### Sustainable farming

Integrated with biodiversity conservation, 'Redbanks' supports an intensive system of agricultural enterprises. The farming enterprise includes:

- the production of 15,000 day old chicks per week, with a proportion grown out on 'Redbanks' and others transferred to another property for the production and marketing of low-fat chicken meat products;
- annual production of 1,000 tonnes of potatoes, 1,000 tonnes of onions, 18 hectares of broccoli, 18 hectares of peas, 18 hectares of poppies, and 36 hectares of wheat;
- direct sale of gourmet produce to the public through a retail outlet on the property;
- fattening of beef cattle; and
- farm forestry.



All the agricultural enterprises are managed for sustainability.

Manure from the intensive poultry is recycled as fertiliser over crops and grazing paddocks, thus improving crop yield and winter cover crops are always used to protect areas that were cropped in the spring and summer. As well as this, best practice systems used include establishing mulch rip lines on contours to protect soils against run-off and not ploughing any steep slopes, regardless of how profitable a particular crop might be.

### Balance, harmony and profitability

The approach at 'Redbanks' is to try to integrate biodiversity conservation seamlessly with production and profitability. This focus is reinforced by a written Nichols family mission statement which states:

"We are in the business of food, timber and fibre production with special regard to the conservation of the local biodiversity."

The Nichols family has achieved a high level of vertical integration through growing crops for the intensive chicken enterprise and through on-property sales and value-adding. All this is done in harmony with biodiversity conservation. The property's future looks good with the next generation interested in working on 'Redbanks' and continuing the business. Meanwhile the lessons learnt from the 'Redbanks' approach to managing a farm are being passed on to others, with the Nichols making an effort to regularly show groups around their property.

### Lessons learnt

- Protection of biodiversity can be integrated with production and profitability.
- While protecting biodiversity comes at a cost, there are benefits to farming such as shelter for stock and focus on the most productive land, as well as personal satisfaction in conserving biodiversity for future generations.
- Special management techniques are required to promote increases in wildlife.
- There are cost effective on-ground techniques, such as recycling manure and mulching rip lines, that can be used to improve crop yields and profitability and look after the land.

Biodiversity encompasses the variety of all living things. Conserving biological diversity gives us the best chance of adapting to our rapidly changing world.

This leaflet is one of a series showing how farmers, Indigenous communities, local government and community groups have either initiated special biodiversity projects, or have successfully incorporated biodiversity protection into their work and daily lives.

We hope these success stories provide useful information and inspiration to others in similar situations.

For more information: [www.nrm.gov.au](http://www.nrm.gov.au); or freecall 1800 552 008

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#### Photo Credits

Front: Wedge tailed eagle; Matt Carter  
Remnant vegetation in productive farm land; Tristan Nichols

2: Stream habitat for crayfish;  
Replanting;

3: Andrew Nichols working with chickens;  
Tasmanian Giant Freshwater Crayfish found at 'Redbanks';

Back: Remnant vegetation protected by fencing. Photos Tristan Nichols.

Banner: Bark; Joseph Lafferty. Lichen; Peter Ranyard. Hand; Andrew Tatnell.



# *Protecting biodiversity – part of farming*



*“...a prime example of a sustainable, environmentally friendly and profitable enterprise. The mixed farm is managed so that wildlife conservation can coexist with commercial farming.”*

Australian Landcare magazine's description of 'Redbanks' when it won the National Landcare Primary Producers Award in 2004

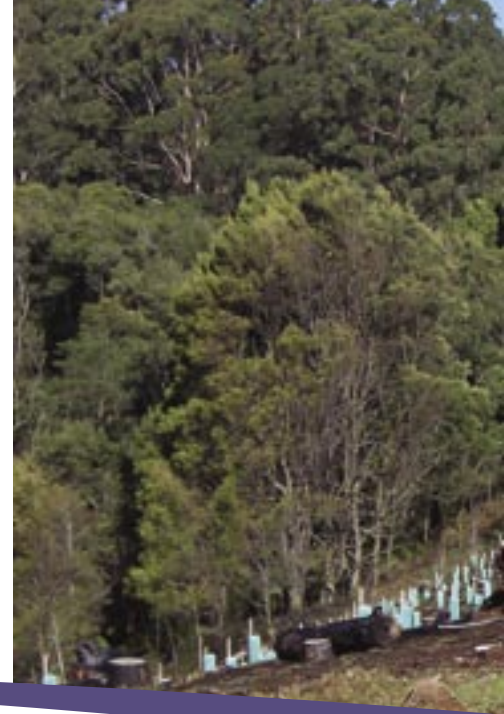
Biodiversity conservation is part and parcel of farming according to Andrew and Carolyn Nichols of 'Redbanks' in Tasmania.

And they have a 2004 National Landcare Primary Producers Award to prove it.

They see caring for biodiversity as just as important to farming as planting crops and tending livestock.

Andrew's grandfather was a farm worker in the United Kingdom. On weekends he would take his grandson on long walks through the Leicestershire countryside pointing out bird species such as the Yellow Hammer, which was rapidly declining.





This interest in wildlife was a factor behind Andrew and his wife moving to Tasmania. One of their first impressions on arriving in their new country was the amount of native bush still remaining and the rich flora and fauna it supported.

### Production and biodiversity

In 1986 Andrew and Carolyn bought 'Redbanks', a 380 hectare farm on productive land at Sisters Creek with gently undulating volcanic soils and an average rainfall of 1,036 millimetres a year.

Part of Rocky Cape National Park borders the property, which also contains some 80 hectares of native bush including White Gum and Blackwood forests and valuable old habitat trees as well as a stream inhabited by the rare Giant Tasmanian Freshwater Crayfish. The Nichols' approach to farming is reflected in aiming to retain this uncleared bush and only farm on already cleared land. They began developing a Nature Conservation Management Plan when they brought the property and set it in place across the entire farm in 1998.

In his acceptance speech at the Landcare Awards Andrew Nichols said:

"We still have a chance in Tassie to keep ourselves unique, but only if we fence off these remnant areas of bush and only if we make sure we go through time with all these creatures along with us. If you don't get a thrill when you see a wedge tailed eagle or a flock of black cockatoos flying over then you are taking living in this wonderful country very much for granted."

### Biodiversity conservation on 'Redbanks'

Almost one third of the 380 hectare 'Redbanks' property is set aside for biodiversity conservation.

The conservation areas are made up of a mix of remnant native vegetation, revegetated areas including watercourses, as well as steeper areas and wetlands that have been fenced off to protect them from livestock.

Wildlife corridors between remnant vegetation areas have been established on the property as a result of revegetating steeper areas with native species, or putting these slopes into plantations. Creeks and waterways have been fenced off and revegetated with local species and shelter belts planted which protect stock and crops.

The Nichols admit that successfully integrating biodiversity conservation into productive farming doesn't come without cost and effort. This can include capital investment in fencing and revegetation as well as on-going management costs. But the balance sheet for now and the future makes it all worthwhile.

On the costs side is the capital cost of establishing and maintaining fencing, the loss of some productive land, the need to control weeds in fenced off land and management issues posed by providing shelter for native species which will feed on commercial crops. On the plus side of the ledger is the provision of shelter for sheep and cattle, aesthetic benefits, safety