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The Editor,
Mercury Newspaper,
Hobart TAS.

Sir,

Re: A PARKS DEPARTMENT

I am writing in response to your Editorial ('Face up to the threats', Mercury, March 14) calling on the Tasmanian State Government to provide better protection for its 674 Threatened Species, and to create a "... *stand-alone environment department responsible for Parks and Wildlife, conservation and biodiversity, and with a single minister to take up the cause and argue for better funding in Cabinet.*"

The 'Friends of Cradle Valley' community advocacy group has been very concerned for a long while about the apparent conflicts of interest in the portfolio of the Minister responsible for Threatened Species in this State, David Llewellyn, whose department seems to be unsupportive of many attempts to manage and protect vulnerable wildlife. We are also profoundly concerned about the Parks and Wildlife Service being starved of funds, to the extent that it's now failing to maintain some of its most important assets (such as Walheim, in the Cradle Valley Lake st./Clair National Park), and unable to deliver a consistently high standard of services to visitors. Our over-stretched Parks and Wildlife staff have to face up to great public expectations, and shoulder immense responsibilities.

The Tasmanian Government has continued to add to the State's reserve system under the various Regional Forest Agreements, and is now signaling the establishment of another National Park in the Bay of Fires region on the East Coast. However there are no indications as yet from Premier David Bartlett that new funding arrangements for the Parks and Wildlife Service are going to be put in place, or that a significant injection of funds, staff, or resources for implementing land management plans and policy enforcement in these new areas is being considered. The Friends of Cradle Valley believe that Tasmania's Parks and Reserves system has never been well served by locating the Threatened Species Unit in the state Department of Primary Industries and Water. Indeed it was illogical to place the scientific arm of the service in the same department as farmers, graziers and horticulturists who may well have opposing values.

The Parks and Wildlife Service is responsible for managing over 38% of the State of Tasmania (excluding marine reserves), and it deserves much better than to be merely a Division that's hidden somewhere in the underbelly of the Department of Environment, Parks, Heritage and the Arts. To have any credibility, it should be a department in its own right. Elevating its status will also position it better to attract more funding to Tasmanian Parks.

Yours sincerely,
John R. Wilson (Dr)
Hon. Secretary,
Friends of Cradle Valley

