



THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

Volume LIII No.2 December 2019/January 2020

The aim of the Launceston Field Naturalists Club is to encourage the study of all aspects of natural history and to support the conservation of our natural heritage

Patron : Prof. Nigel Forteach
President : Mrs Prue Wright, 0438 410 192
Hon. Secretary : Mr Phillip Brumby, 0407 664 554
Hon. Treasurer : Mrs Karen Manning, 0363 442 277

**Meetings 1st Tuesday of month, Feb-Dec at Scotch-Oakburn College,
Penquite Rd Newstead**

Program:

February

Sunday 2
World Wetlands Day @ Tamar Island
Tuesday 4
Club night – Who is Sharing Your Patch?
Wednesday 19
Bunnings BBQ fundraiser, 8.30am – 4pm (Contact Prue Wright if you can assist)
Sunday 23
Skemps Day
Saturday 29
Field Trip – Bakers Beach saltmarsh monitoring and easy hike (see page 6 for further details)

March

Tuesday 3
Club night
Tuesday 10
Bunnings BBQ fundraiser, 8.30am – 4pm (Contact Prue Wright if you can assist)
Date TBC
Field Trip – Mt Barrow with Dr Peter McQuillan
Sunday 29
Skemps Day

For further program details visit <https://www.lfnc.org.au/meetings.htm>

Skemps Report:

With John and Grant ceasing their volunteering activities at Skemps it was not looking good for the months when weeds and bracken are growing so well. I must at this stage thank both Grant and John for their efforts over many years. Grant started around 12 years ago in a Work for the Dole capacity and has proved invaluable, volunteering for five or so years after his legal commitments to us ended. He did most of the mowing over that time, accompanied me on chain sawing missions, improving my skills along the way, and used his ute to move firewood. He was also a good field naturalist during our morning tea and lunch time discussions telling us of his sightings, sometimes asking for identification of these. John, while proudly turning into a grumpy old man in the last few years, was an excellent field naturalist sharing his knowledge during our breaks at Skemps. He was tireless in his weed spraying, carrying 10+ kilograms of glyphosate over the property to kill off the weeds and then going back with the slasher to clear the tracks of bracken. His blackberry removal technique showed his resourcefulness, in a given patch he would spray the blackberry he could reach then slash a few paths into it when it died off and use these to get into the harder to reach areas of this weed. He also worked hard at removing the fences along the Federation Corridor and was the designer, and principal worker, for a number of projects on the property, including two new fire wood sheds and a storage cupboard designed to free up space in the library.

For 2020 a new team has come on board with Karen helping over her holidays, often working with Rob who puts in an excellent effort during his half day. Christine, Tony and Peter (W) are going along when available with Peter restricted to the ride on mower. New members Matthew and Bernadette are also regulars with Bernadette adding using a ride on mower to her resume. It nearly did not happen the first day as the mower had dropped a belt and it took much looking to find the problem followed by a lot of work to reconnect it and get the mower driving again.

In December and January there has been much activity at Skemps. Karen and Rob moved the last of the wire from the southern side of the Federation Corridor to a more accessible area for later collection and storage. The half-buried sheet of roofing iron on the southern side of the corridor was removed along with the clearing of foxglove in the area by Claire, Karen & Christine. The iron was another unsuccessful effort by John Simmons to deter a wombat from invading the corridor. There is still some of the fence on the eastern side of the corridor which does not impede the movement of the native animals so it may remain for a while. After dismantling the fence on the north and south sides of the corridor we have many star droppers, wire and wire netting for future projects.

Tony and I used the chainsaw to clear eight blockages along the Tyre Track to the bottom falls and then through to Bob's Bog and the following week I did a similar route with the slasher working on bracken and fern. I have also had the slasher over the Loop and Forest Tracks. A small group spent some time cleaning the pipe taking roof water to the small tank at the back of the Centre as well as cleaning the guttering feeding it. Karen and Matthew cleaned the board walks on the Zig Zag track as Rob was concerned that the buildup of debris on and under the structures threatened to rot them due to the retention of water. Matthew and Karen also removed foxglove from behind the fire shed while Rod and family worked on foxglove and thistles during their camping stay, a treat for their boys to finish the school holidays. They also removed around 200 tree guards. Rhys and Bernadette used a car and trailer to pick up tree guards as well as move firewood and clean up the debris from a fallen tree near the top pond. Members have noted that many tree guards still need to be removed and this is a major job for a Skemps Days.

Our new and enthusiastic team has reinvigorated volunteering at Skemps. If others can assist please contact your committee or me.

Noel Manning

Club Night – Tuesday 3 December 19

***Year That Was* and Photographic Competition**

President Prue started the evening off by presenting "*Oh no not another Prue's Quiz*" by showing photos and asking members to answer questions about each, Claire handing out chocolates for the correct answers. New member Bernadette was presented with her member's kit and welcomed to the Club.

The *Year that Was* presentation was put together this year by Karen Manning. It included images from each of the field trips and other activities held or attended during the year. The 12 minute presentation had background music from Season One of the Game of Thrones Sound Track.

Over supper, members placed their voting stickers for the photo competition to select two winners from the many images supplied. Peter Longman won with an image of 2 wedge-tailed eagles, with Karen Manning's image of a green spider on a paper daisy as runner up.

Thank you to all who attended this evening and also for the wonderful sweet and savoury items provided for supper.



***Neosparassus diana*, badge huntsman spider**

Club's Annual Christmas Party – Sunday 8 December 19

Eighteen people arrived for this get-together. Peter's grandchildren decorated the Christmas tree and Prue cleaned up around the *Blandfordia punicea*, Christmas bells, which is outside the kitchen window, revealing four stems soon to flower.

A small group walked around the Top Pond and Federation Corridor and collected the remaining tree guards and sticks recently removed from around trees and dropped these in a more accessible area for collection and transportation to a storage area for later use. Also collected were the bundles of fencing wire removed from the Watergate side of the Corridor as the trees have grown and now provides a wildlife corridor across to the Loop Track. Foxglove was also removed in this area.

Lunch was the usual noisy affair, which was followed by further walks prior to the tables being decorated for the afternoon tea provided by members. Santa paid us a visit and Secret Santa gifts were distributed to the adults after the children had received their gifts.

Following afternoon tea our lucky door prizes were drawn and won by Prue and Peter. Karen Manning

Field Trip – Friday 27 December 19 – Rockpool Survey at East Beach

Eight members and a guest participated in the last of three rockpool surveys at East Beach. We all arrived early to have a bite to eat and a chat before heading to the beach on a warm day and with a light breeze. On the beach it was blowing quite hard and some members had difficulty negotiating the rocks in safety.

Our rockpool which was filled with dead seagrass last survey had very little this time. In fact the rockpool had very little of anything other than shells. There were a few scraggly floating pieces of the dead seagrass plant and a piece of *Hormosira banksia*, in the pool. There was also the empty case of a small sea urchin, along with 1 tiny green *Parvulastra exigua* a dwarf cushion star, a small shrimp and *Sypharochiton pelliserpentis*, snakeskin chiton x4; *Austrocochlea constricta*, ribbed top-shell x16; *Siphonaria diemenensis*, common siphon-shell x10; *Cellana solida*, orange-lipped limpet x4; *Nerita atramentosa*, western black nerite x 24, and polychaete worm tubes on the rocks.



Disappointed with the variety of species seen, we ventured further around the headland where we spent an hour looking around, seeing a variety of marine grasses and starfish, crabs including a decorator crab found by Helen, anemones and tulip shell egg cases. Karen Manning



Tosia australis, southern biscuit star



Tough egg capsules of Tulip shell



Meridiastra calcar, eight-armed seastar



Ophionereis schayeri, Schayer's brittle star



Decorator Crab



Sea anemone

Ben Lomond Weekend – 17 to 19 January 2020

Member Peter opened the Borrowdale Ski Lodge building, known as the Hut, for us on the Friday afternoon with only Claire, Karl and me joining Peter and his wife Prue for the two nights. The drive up was marred by the thick smoke from the devastating fires on mainland Australia. Saturday saw Roy and Matthew join us early and after a few pleasantries and a cuppa they headed off for a walk looking at the nature of the mountain with Roy being the teacher to new member Matthew. Meanwhile my family investigated the new day shelter, constructed since the fire, then headed off along the overland ski trail for a walk and while clambering over the rocks on the edge of the plateau we could see an extensive fire front in the valley to the east of Ben Lomond which appeared surprisingly close. Claire also saw a white lipped snake as we tried to get the furthest out marker poles to stand up again.

When we returned to the Hut for lunch Steve, Tom, Jill and her friend Carol had arrived and they had done a few walks around the village and had inspected the new public shelter. We all wondered how such a large structure made the journey up the ladder. On their return to the Hut this group met two couples walking around and as well as a lengthy chat invited them in for drinks, the younger couple were honeymooners from Europe and the other visitors from New South Wales with the woman an excited conversationalist with an interest in birds.

What is it about Ben Lomond that helps me sleep better? After an unexpected sleep in and a lazy start to the day I had a quick breakfast on Sunday and when the family awoke we started on the cleanup, working on the stoves and surrounding bench tops, the table tops and the last of the dishes and finally the

vacuuming, before saying our thanks and goodbyes to the Warrens and heading off. Another relaxing and pleasant weekend on Ben Lomond enjoyed by a small group of the hardiest from our Club. N Manning

Saturday 29 February - Field Trip

Bakers Beach saltmarsh monitoring and easy hike

Meet at the Narawntapu carpark at 10am. We will be conducting saltmarsh monitoring at Bakers Beach at low tide which is approximately 10.45 am, observing and recording the seabirds and wildlife, after which we will record the wetland plants and look at any human impact in the area, e.g. signs of vehicles being driven on the saltmarsh area, rubbish etcetera.

Following this we can either have lunch and go for an easy hike or take our lunch and find somewhere to eat during the hike. We will be back in time to return to our location of earlier in the day at high tide around 4.45pm to again observe and record, the seabirds and wildlife.

Bring a snack for tea after which we will head home.

If you need a lift, please contact Prue Wright our Program Manager, who can put you in touch with another attendee.

Remember that Narawntapu is a National Park and you will need to have a Parks Pass for your vehicle. A day pass can be purchased at the Ranger's Station for \$24.00 (per vehicle up to 8 people).

Additional Information

Club Outings:

- All outings depart from Inveresk carpark (near Museum entrance) at 9 am unless otherwise specified. Internet site updated regularly to reflect short notice changes. Saturday all-day parking cost is \$4.00. Sunday parking free.
- Provide your own food and drinks for the outing and wear/take clothing/footwear suitable for all weather types.
- When travelling by car in convoy, each driver is responsible to ensure that the vehicle behind is in sight immediately after passing a cross road or fork in the road.
- When carpooling, petrol costs should be shared between all the passengers, including family of the driver, and based on other clubs the Committee suggested \$11 per 100 km. This is a guideline only.

Name Tags: Please wear your name tags to meetings and on outings.

Tea/Coffee: A levy of 50c is currently charged for supper provided at meetings.

Field Centre: All members have access to the John Skemp Field Centre, but should contact our booking manager, Phil Brumby on 0407 664 554 or bookings@lfnc.org.au regarding availability and keys.

Field Centre Phone Number: (03) 6399 3361

Postal Address: PO Box 1072 Launceston 7250

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