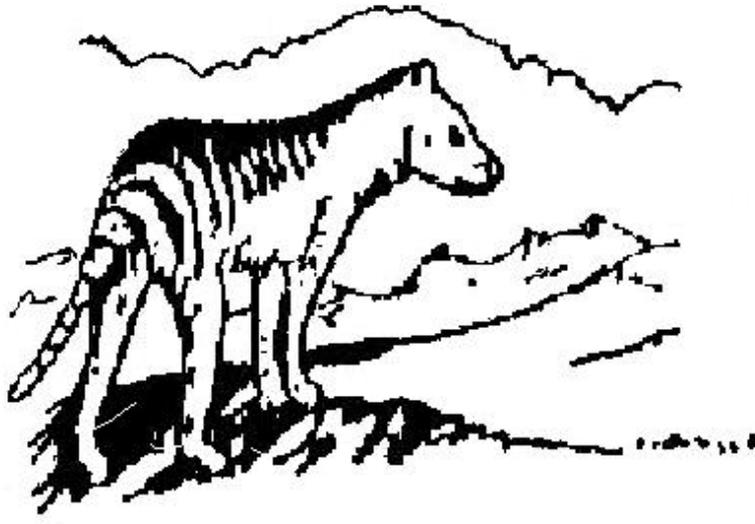


THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

Issued to members of the Launceston Field Naturalists Club as a contribution to club activities.



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

Volume XLIII No 6

August/September 2010

- Patron** : Mr Chris Tassell, AM
- President** : Mr N Manning, 46 Robin St Newstead, 6344 2277
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- Hon. Treasurer** : Ms K Manning, 46 Robin St Newstead, 6344 2277
- N'letter Co-ordinator** : Ms K. Manning
- Librarian** : Ms T McGlynn
- Committee** : G Cameron, L Mockridge, A Pegler, J Simmons,
M Simmons, R Skabo

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

PROGRAM

OCTOBER

Tuesday 5 **AGM Meeting with Guest Speaker Wendy Potts
'*Tasmania's Newest Threatened Plants*'**

Sunday 10 **Field Trip: Midlands Reserves**

**Friday 15 -
Sunday 17** **Federation Weekend King Island**

Saturday 23 **Skemp Day - Water Monitoring**

NOVEMBER

Tuesday 2 **Guest Speaker Erik Wapstra '*Tasmanian Skinks*'**

Sunday 7 **Field Trip: Ben Lomond with Erik Wapstra**

Saturday 20 **Skemp Day**

DECEMBER

Tuesday 7 **Members Night**

Saturday 11 **Christmas at Skemps**

To see the full July to December 2010 program visit

<http://www.lfnc.org.au/meetings.htm>

COMMITTEE/GENERAL MEETING

Skemp Report - Revegetation of Skemps Creek has been completed with the last trees planted on 21 August. The local fire brigade burnt the rubbish from the lopped trees on September 11. Work continues in the barn. Members were advised that painting needs to be done around the field centre, also the outside toilet and the barn, this would be done on the Skemps day on 26 September. The Club had the equipment required for the job if members wanted to assist.

Puggle

August - John Elliott asked members for the total number of digits that a frog has. Roy Skabo correctly answered 18: 8 fingers and 10 toes.

September - Roy Skabo's puggle question was presented in his absence. Members were asked to identify the crustaceans from the following list. Crayfish, barnacles, woodlouse (or slater), crab and kelp hopper (or kelp amphipod). Alison Green correctly answered that they all were crustaceans.

Sightings

August - Peter Ralph had seen five Black Cockatoos mobbing a Wedge-tailed Eagle over Legana that afternoon. Margrit Korosi reported two Wedge-tailed Eagles over Legana the day before. Prue Wright had seen a Sea Eagle above Beach Rd the night before and a Masked Owl at Gravelly Beach a fortnight ago. John Elliott had heard a Southern Boobook and a Fantail Cuckoo near Punchbowl during the previous week. Margrit Korosi reported that Green Rosellas had been eating a neighbours crab-apples.

September - Jan Everett reported seeing bandicoots and Green Rosella. Peter Warren reported a Wombat on Ben Lomond. Margrit Korosi had also seen a Wombat. Lynne Mockridge reported seeing a Long-nosed Potoroo near Kings Meadows Rivulet. Tom Treloggen had seen a Grey Goshawk and Scarlet and Flame Robins at Pipers Brook. Prue Wright had seen a Firetail Finch at Gravelly Beach. Tina McGlynn had seen an Echidna train at her property in Westwood. Ann Tolson saw a White Goshawk in Trevallyn and Alison Green a Crescent Honeyeater in Sandy Bay.

Library Report - Tina McGlynn tabled newsletters from other field naturalist groups. Michael Clarke and John Simmons had donated books. The Launceston Environment Centre had supplied copies of the booklet 'Gardening for Native Bio-diversity' which was available for members.

General

Calendar - Members were presented with a slide show of the short list of photographs for the calendar and requested to vote on their choices.

Fill-a-Gap Grant - Grant received for purchase of approximately 60 more seedlings. This will be arranged with Habitat Nursery who have native plants other than those planted recently. A planting day will be announced following the purchase.

Land purchase - The purchase of land adjacent to Skemps by the Club, was settled on Monday 13 September.

New members - Ken and Pat Saunders were welcomed to the Club in September. Ken was presented with their membership kit at the General Meeting.

Shorebird Count - Members interested in being involved in the shorebird count organised by Emma Williams of NRM North later in the year, should contact John Elliott.

Annual General Meeting - members were reminded that the next meeting was the AGM and that all committee positions were vacant. Nomination forms were available and that they should be handed to the Secretary 10 days before the meeting. There would also be a guest speaker. Supper would follow.

Attendance Record - Members were advised that the Club needed to record the names of those who attended meetings, field trips and Skemps days for insurance purposes, this included any visitors. Member should ensure they sign the record books for this purpose.

Federation Meeting - To be held on King Island 15– 17 October, members can obtain more information from the Secretary.

SPECIAL & GENERAL MEETING AUGUST

The Special General Meeting was held to vote on the changes to the Club's Constitution. Members had received copies of the old constitution, the draft of the new constitution and a paper outlining each change and reason, in the mail. Due to insufficient numbers this meeting was delayed until members could be contacted requesting they attend so that this important meeting could go ahead.

Correspondence to members in the lead up to this meeting stressed the importance of the meeting and in the end we had the minimum number needed to conduct the special general meeting.

The general meeting was conducted until the we achieved a quorum and the special meeting was then re-convened. Following discussion and the speaking for and against motions, three sections in the draft constitution were re-worded. The motion was carried, approving the draft constitution with the changes as outlined.

Prue Wright then showed images from her recent trip to Maria Island. This piece of armchair travel looked at the birds and animals, flora and the history of the island. A very interesting place to visit, many thanks to Prue for her presentation.

FIELD TRIP - Notley Gorge, Sunday 8 August

A small band of members defied the threatening weather and proved once again that fortune favours the brave. Despite a heavy shower during the drive to the Gorge, during which one car turned back for home, we enjoyed quite pleasant conditions all day.

As predicted, there were few flowers and not a huge number of fruiting bodies of fungi. However, we did check out the Gunn's tree orchid (*Sarcochilus gunnii*) which was not in flower, spotted some flowers on Sassafras trees (*Atherospermum moschatum*) and the ferns, as usual, were fantastic. While the fungi were not visible in large numbers, we found some interesting species including several Fungimap targets. Golden Curtain Crust (*Stereum ostrea*) provided a spectacular display of golden brackets on fallen timber and dead standing tree. The uncommon Beenak Long Tooth (*Beenakia dacostae*) was found growing, unusually, on the trunk of a Man Fern (*Dicksonia antarctica*) and some fine examples of the beautiful Coral Tooth (*Hericium coralloides*) were spotted on the trunk of a dead Acacia tree.

After lunch in the picnic area we were invited by Tom and Tina McGlynn to visit their home at Westwood which proved to be a delightful (unscheduled) addition to the excursion. Their house and outbuildings date back to the 19th Century and have an interesting ownership history. The lowland area of the property is largely farmland while the hillsides are covered in dry grassy bushland which was logged in earlier days. Tom and Tina have planted numerous native trees and done a lot of weed removal.

One species, of considerable interest to me, grows in profusion on their property. *Melicytus dentatus* (Tree violet) is not often seen in great numbers, but here there are hundreds of the small distinctive shrubs. They are quite spiky and usually look to be at death's door. However, this is their natural look and in spring/summer they carry large numbers of tiny but attractive yellow flowers. Their close relationship to the violets (they are all members of the family *Violaceae*) would be a mystery to most people! The type specimen was found on what is now called Tamar Island, where there are only half a dozen or so plants remaining. The genus is subject to revision and the McGlynn property may be a good source of material to researchers.

On the return trip to the house we passed through an avenue of huge eucalypts and pine trees. Growing under them was a considerable number of fungi which I believe were *Psilocybe subaeruginosa*, sometimes known as blue meanies, one of the best known of the hallucinogenic mushrooms. We passed up this opportunity in favour of a cup of delicious, but less mind-bending, tea.

Just before reaching the house and the cuppa, Tom and Tina showed us around the museum-like shearing shed and workshop, both full of stuff that history curators would die for. Another great LFNC excursion (which could easily have been a trip).

Roy Skabo

SKEMPS DAY - Planting on Skemp Creek, Saturday 21 August

This was the last planting on Skemp Creek for the year of the seedlings grown by Deloraine High School from seeds collected at Skemps. It was a fresh sunny morning and the many hands made light work, members worked in small groups ensuring that each plant got the full treatment (watering, weed mat, stakes, bag, wire guard and ties). The majority of the seedlings were planted below Bob's Bog prior to lunch. Following a late lunch, we did fill-in planting around the middle pond, with quiet a few plants being used to replace those that had been planted following the redevelopment of the ponds in 2003, which had not survived. We look forward to seeing the fruits of our labour growing into healthy trees.

GENERAL MEETING - SPEAKER - Jim Nelson

The guest speaker for September 2010, talking on frogs of Tasmania, was Jim Nelson, a past member of this club (who was involved in the discovery of the land burrowing crayfish at Skemps) before becoming a founding member of his current club, the Central North Field Naturalists group. Jim has been involved with frog surveys including a recent survey with the Department of Primary Industries looking for lethal chytrid (fungal) disease of frogs that has devastated many frog populations throughout the world. Unfortunately they did find this in Tasmania.

As frogs are generally hard to find but easy to hear identifying the species and mapping abundance is usually done by identifying their calls, so Jim gave us the call for each of our frogs. This is a good time for frog-hunting as most frogs call in spring. He showed the appearance and distribution of each Tasmanian frog, using a great Parks and Wildlife poster, and played the calls from a disc of recordings by Central North Field Naturalists members (which was available for purchase – see their club website <http://www.disjunctnaturalists.com/merchandise.htm>). Unfortunately the Parks and Wildlife frog poster is out of print, though the information is available in less compact form at <http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=3060> or region by region at <http://frogs.org.au/frogs/state/Tasmania/>.

Jim showed us the foot pads, used for climbing, that distinguish the three tree frogs (all *Litoria* species), from the marsh frogs and froglets. The Green and Gold Tree Frog doesn't actually climb very well. It waits until the warmer weather to call and has a deep croak that has earned it the alternate name of the growling grass frog. This species is in decline. It used to cover all of North-west Tasmania and was very common, but has disappeared from most of the farm dams where previously present and is now listed as vulnerable. It is scattered round Tasmania – Jim suggests Blackman's Lagoon near Waterhouse is a good place to look (or listen).

The little Brown Tree Frog likely to be seen above ground and is found just about everywhere in Tasmania. The green and black coloured Tasmanian Tree Frog (or Burrows frog, names after Miss Burrows who discovered this in Cradle Valley) is endemic to Tasmania, specifically the western part. Again the distribution appears also to be receding, though it is still common in the south west. This has a distinctive call sometimes described as duck-like, though Jim reports Dr Paul Swiatkowski who has done much research on this species considers it more goose-like.

The second group of frogs discussed were the small froglets: the small brown Common Froglet, and the Smooth Froglet should be very common at the moment, the males calling over each other after rain with their “crick crick” and cre-e-e-e-e-e-ek cre-e-e-e-ek calls”. The third froglet, the endemic Tasmanian Froglet has a quite different call, sometimes mistaken for a lamb or kid. (Rangers of the Overland Track get a number of calls about goats in the National Park, so I was told last year.) This froglet can be distinguished by a red patch on the inside of the leg.

There is Moss Froglet, discovered only in the 1990s and restricted to the south and south west of Tasmania, which lays its eggs on damp mossy areas. The tadpoles hatch but develop inside the large eggs until ready to turn into frogs.

The third frog group were the marsh frogs. The most distinctive call is probably that of the Southern Banjo Frog (also called bullfrog or Pobblebonk), with a distinct “bonk” call. These should also be calling now. They are also sometimes dug up in the garden. This group of frogs lay eggs in a foamy mass on the top of water, which gradually sinks. The Spotted Marsh Frog is mostly an eastern species, while the Striped March Frog used to be common but is mostly restricted to the north-east (eg near Waterhouse), though it is still common on King Island. In contrast the Spotted Marsh Frog, which sounds like two stones knocked together, seems to be increasing in distribution.

Finally there is the so-called Southern Toadlet, which isn't a toad at all but a small warty frog that walks a bit like a toad from the back but has a brilliant dark and blueish blotched underside. This is found in the eastern half of Tasmania and some areas of the mainland but breeds somewhat later, so calls in autumn. The Common Froglet also calls then, though not usually breeding then so can still be confusing.

Overall we have a variety of frogs, but several are in decline. Jim discussed possible causes, particularly the chytrid fungus disease which has been found in several areas of the State, and is linked to the decline and sometimes extinction of frog species throughout the world. This destroys the skin of older frogs but is possibly most easily seen in the mouth of tadpoles. This is one good reason not to transfer frogs from one location to another: this is illegal anyway.

We learned a lot about frogs and their behaviour from questions asked: where they tend to lay their eggs, how far from water some of the species can be found (the adults are terrestrial and sometimes quite a long way from water), predators, why tiny frogs are not a separate species but tadpoles hatched in very small pools that metamorphose quickly before they dry out. Also that you shouldn't really handle a frog unless you have to, to avoid disturbing the protective skin mucus, but the best way to do so if you need to, is to pick up by one back leg – they don't struggle and little mucus is disturbed. Also be on the lookout for introduced frogs such as the Queensland tree frogs imported accidentally on bananas. They can also carry disease.

We are indebted to Jim for a most interesting and informative talk. Here is a quick reference summary of Tasmanian frog calls to help your hunting:

Tree frogs (Family Hylidae)

- Green and Gold Frog (growling grass frog) *Litoria raniformis* - "craw-aw-aw-aw-awk", northern and eastern Tasmania
- (Southern) Brown tree frog *Litoria ewingi* - "ree-ree-ree-ree-ree"
- Tasmanian Tree Frog *Litoria burrowsae*, endemic - duck-like 'quank-quank-quank' (August to February)

Family Myobatrachidae

- Southern Smooth froglet *Geocrinia laevis* - "cre-e-e-e-e-e-e-ek cre-e-e-e-ek cre-e-ek cre-e-ek". Originally found in Tasmania, only recently found in Victoria / South Australia border
- Moss Froglet *Bryobatrachus nimbus*
- (Eastern) Common Froglet *Crinia signifera* - "crick crick crick crick crick".
- Tasmanian Froglet *Crinia tasmaniensis* - call is a quavering goat like bleat, Eastern 1/2 to 2/3rd Tasmania
- Southern Banjo Frog (Pobblebonk) *Limnodynastes dumerili* - "bonk"
- Striped Marsh Frog *Limnodynastes peroni* - "cluck".
- Spotted Marsh Frog *Limnodynastes tasmaniensis* - "click" or "plock" similar to the sound made when two stones are struck together.
- Southern Toadlet *Pseudophryne semimarmorata* - "creg-uk, creg-uk" Central to eastern Tasmania and Flinders Island (also southern Victoria and South Australia)

Judith Handlinger

FIELD TRIP - Tatana Private Nature Reserve, Saturday 11 September

12 members and a guest met Jim Nelson at the Tatana Private Nature Reserve along the Frankford Highway just out of Exeter. On the way we saw two raptors

near the Tamar wetlands.

Owner, Steve Cronin, gave us a short introduction to the reserve including the fact that many species found there are becoming rarer in the area nearby. The club has a brochure on the reserve which will be in the library at Skemps if you would like more information.

We then headed off to the first pond to look for frogs and heard calls of the little brown froglet (*Crinia signifera*) and saw plenty of egg masses. Jim found a little brown tree frog and a dead Pobblebonk, perhaps killed by a Kookaburra. A dead green and gold bell frog was found here also and Jim explained that these frogs will bask in the sun and if the weather cools they become too lethargic to seek shelter and die.

Steve explained that the native hens we saw were able to breed on the island thus avoiding the feral cats.

Two white Goshawks flew by as we headed for the next pond. From the veranda of his office Steve and Jim netted tadpoles of the brown froglets, the Pobblebonk and possibly the Green and Gold Bell Frog.

Unfortunately Jim detected the frog disease Chytrid which attacks the mouth parts of the tadpole and gets into the skin of the frog.

After that we walked down the western side of the reserve seeing devil scats along the way and sundews were observed growing here. We were eventually stopped by the northern wetlands and while Jim and Steve recounted their work with wildlife, fantails flitted about. On the return walk many noted the prolific growth on many of the old fence posts. With the paler silver green lichens interspersed with darker greens many resembled mini forests. Steve showed us some plants which are rare even on the reserve, these were *Lomatia* and an unidentified beardheath, *Leucopogon* sps.

We all thanked Steve for his time showing us around and the efforts he puts into the reserve before heading to Paper Beach for lunch.

Saying it was just after one thirty made us no less hungry than saying the time was 20 to 2. Paper beach was too windy and cold so we headed for the more sheltered Swan Point Foreshore. Lunch finished abruptly as the rain started and Prue Wright invited us to her place to look at her efforts to revegetate the two acres around her house.

The land is a former quarry and includes 50 plus metres of an unnamed creek, with a good flow on the day we were there due to recent rains. There was evidence of recent flooding with material stuck high on the protective wire around the plants in the area of the creek, although this did not seem to affect the survival of her recent plantings. Chimneys around the creek indicated the presence of engaeus. Prue has been revegetating the whole block with Tasmanian and Australian native plants and showed the better growth of those protected from browsing by the native animals. Prue is propagating her own plants. Prue has set herself a mammoth task and we wish her well with her future endeavours.

Noel J Manning

VALE MARY PAGE

Members were saddened by the announcement of the death of Mary Page who passed away on the 7th September. She was a long time valued member and staunch supporter of the Club and its projects, at Skemps in particular. We have not seen her very much of late at meetings or outings because of health problems.

Mary was a talented artist and her love for the bush and the eucalypts in particular was the motivation for studying and painting all the Tasmanian eucalypts, as can be seen in her beautifully painted self-published book *'The Eucalypts of Tasmania'*.

Mary will be sadly missed by her many friends.

Marion Simmons

SKEMPS DAY - Sunday 26 September - planting and working bee

17 members and one guest met at Myrtle Bank for a Skemp day and working bee. While it was fine, sunny and warm in Launceston, Skemps was a little colder even if the sun was shining. Not long after we arrived the clouds moved in and the temperature went down making the warm fire most welcome.

The usual cuppa and morning tea was followed by a planting session while the scheduled painting was postponed due to the threatening rain.

Many, including our guest, took advantage of the BBQ for their lunch and the usual chat and friendship of other members during and after lunch.

A special committee meeting during the lunch break looked into the problem of the small room which has been made available to us for the AGM. It was decided to have the meeting on the same day and still have a speaker as both had been widely advertised. We will attempt to get a bigger room for the meeting.

A post lunch planting session saw all the seedlings in the ground and the revegetation of Skemp Creek well on the way to completion. Noel J Manning

AUSTRALIAN NATURALISTS NETWORK (ANN) 2012

The 2012 ANN Get-Together will be held in Canberra from Saturday 13 to Sunday 21 October, 2012. An interesting programme of events is being planned. There will be lots to see and do. Read all about it in coming months on <http://www.fieldnatscanberra.com/index.html>

NATIONAL SHOREBIRD MONITORING PROGRAM

NRM North will be conducting Shorebird counts in the North East area during summer. If you would like to participate, please advise John Elliott who will forward any future correspondence to you regarding the program.

'GARDENING FOR NATIVE BIODIVERSITY'

The above booklet is again available following a recent reprint. Members who missed out on a copy at the last meeting can contact the Launceston Environment Centre by phoning 6331 8406 or by emailing info@lec.org.au to organise their copy.

AUSTRALIAN PLANT SOCIETY MEETINGS

LFNC members are welcome to attend APS meetings held on a Tuesday at Max Fry Hall, Gorge Road Trevallyn at 7.30 pm. The next meetings will be on:

October 19 - Gardens for Wildlife, speaker Iona Mitchell

November 16 - Outback Odyssey, speaker Julie Nermut

Additional Information

Club Outings:

1. 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 \$3.00. Sunday parking free.
2. You need to provide your own food and drinks for the outing unless otherwise specified. Morning tea is normally provided by the bus company on bus outings.
3. When travelling by car in convoy, each driver is responsible to ensure that the vehicle behind is in sight immediately after passing each cross road or fork in the road.
4. When car pooling, 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: Name tags are to be worn at 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. Contact our booking manager, John Elliott on 6344 9303 regarding availability and keys.

Field Centre Phone Number - 6399 3361

Postal Address: PO Box 1072 Launceston 7250

Internet site : <http://www.lfnc.org.au>

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