

# THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

Volume LV No.3 February/March 2022

**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 : Jeff Campbell, 0432 470 311**  
**Hon. Secretary : Noel Manning, 0458 030 767**  
**Hon. Treasurer : Karen Manning**

**Meetings 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of month, February-December (except Jul & Aug) at Scotch-Oakburn College, Senior Campus, Penquite Rd Newstead**

## **Program:**

### **April**

**Tuesday 5**

**Meeting – Guest Speakers: Justin and Jo Widdowson – *Caretaking at Deal Island***

**Saturday 9**

**Field Trip – East Tamar walk – birds, beetles and plants of our Tamar woodlands – meet 10am at Mt direction picnic spot just off the East Tamar Highway**

### **May**

**Sunday 1**

**Skemps Day – Macroinvertebrate water monitoring**

**Tuesday 3**

**John Skemp Memorial Lecture – Guest Speaker: Andrew Darby – *Migratory Birds***

**Wednesday 18**

**Field Trip – Narawntapu Beach and Bird Walk – meet 10am at the Rangers Station in the park, don't forget your Parks Pass**

**Saturday 28**

**Skemps Day – Fungi Hunt**

### **June**

**Tuesday 7**

**Meeting – Club Night – Members presentations**

**Saturday 11**

**Field Trip – Fern foray along Briseis Water Race with Dr. Lee Bowkett**

**Sunday 26**

**Skemps Day – Fern foray**

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

## **General Meeting – February Tuesday 7 – Seashore Life**

For our first meeting of the year, member Helen Tait followed up on our intertidal field trip in January by presenting three short documentaries on the Intertidal Zone to give members a greater understanding of how important the zone is.

Due to wave action, temperature and salinity changes, living in the intertidal area can be very hard on the plants and animals. The second presentation followed a group of students who were gathering specimens to enable the Smithsonian Institute to catalogue new creatures. The third presentation was filmed in Australia and looked at the common species found in the upper, mid and lower intertidal zones of rocky foreshores and finished up with a short taster from the documentary “My Octopus Teacher”, if you missed this meeting, check out the url’s below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DR1gP5S6Bsk> explainer ~8mins **Explaining the Intertidal Zone** (reference UnderH2O – PBS Digital Studios)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Khodxl7eok> creatures ~8 mins **Creatures of the Intertidal Zone: Up Close and Personal** (opb: Oregon Public Broadcasting )

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60VIG9MzuiE> ~8 mins **Investigating Rocky Shore- Zones and Common species** (filmed at Wong Point, Bateau Bay NSW .....Avalon College, Australia)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HRPCj9y3848> short taster (2.37 mins) for **My Octopus Teacher** 1 hr 25 mins

## **Skemps Day – February Sunday 27 – Insect Hunt**

Our first Skemps Day for the year focused on insects, however the cool, wet weather did not encourage the creatures to make an appearance. A few early heavy showers and the later lighter rain meant that we had to search for the creatures that had braved the rain and ventured out for us to find them. Many Klug’s Xenica butterflies had been seen in the last month or so, today just a few.

We took an early walk to the Loop Track to show members the newly installed signage and to check the need for further individual plant and fern signs.

At the end of the day, we recorded a green grasshopper with long antennae, a Tasmanian inchman - *Myrmecia esuriens*, grass moth - *Hednota relatalis*, native wasp, cricket, jumping spider, tortoise shell spider with black abdomen and 7 eyes, forest hunter and a fawn moth.

An enjoyable but quiet day on the insect front.

## **General Meeting – March Tuesday 1 – Guest Speakers Sam Jack and Emma Ferguson – *The future of local saltmarsh monitoring with NRM North***

Sam introduced himself and Emma Ferguson as well as the Tamar Estuary and Esk Rivers (TEER) Program. TEER is a voluntary partnership with various stakeholders to improve the water quality outcomes of the Esk/Tamar catchment area and the saltmarsh water monitoring is part of this program.

The saltmarsh monitoring was started in 2014 by UTAS academic, Vishnu Prahalad. The process started with him compiling maps of the saltmarsh communities and becoming a vocal advocate for their conservation due to continued decline, mostly from development. As well as the maps he,

with collaborators, developed a booklet and an application to help identify the vegetation and birds associated with the wetlands as well as record the findings.

The program was picked up by NRM North in 2016 and there have been annual surveys since then with Sam involved in the last two. Initially there were six sites with two on private land being dropped leaving Swan Point, West Arms North and South, as well as George Town's Long Tom Reef. Citizen science volunteers worked with the NRM North coordinator to look at and record the abundance and diversity of birds and vegetation on a predefined track as well as the impact of human encroachment into the saltmarsh is noted.

He moved on to the various reasons why the program was not being run in 2022 starting with a new manager reviewing the parenting requirements across the program. A biological monitoring program requires certain permits and this is being looked at with some permits yet to be obtained. The review is also looking at the scope of the project and the frequency of the visits to each site with consideration being given to a full survey every three to five years while retaining the annual bird survey.

The scope of the survey could include two other habitat types, freshwater swamps and melaleuca marshes with up to two of the saltmarsh sites being dropped from the program. Through Vishnu, a student has been added to the program to develop monitoring methodology for each habitat type.

The program will still use the traditional methods, including photographs to establish a base line, transects with quadrats and all still involving citizen science volunteers. There will also be a dedicated bird monitoring program with the strange challenge of needing an animal ethics permit.

Sam told us about Fluker Posts which could be installed at some of the monitoring sites. He first saw these on the Great Ocean Walk in Victoria and he described them. Martin Fluker came up with the idea of these green posts in iconic locations where visitors could use their camera or smart phone to record a particular scene which is uploaded to a site so that changes can be noted over time. An App on a smart phone and a QR code on the post allow pictures to be uploaded to the site where these images will be kept.

Sam told us he enjoyed the program, especially the community interaction, and after a member question he finished by giving more information about the permits and the need to be, and be seen, to be sticking to the letter of the law.

Emma Ferguson then took over the talk and went on to introduce herself. She had arrived in Launceston April last year and started with NRM North in the June 2021, doing education and community engagement, with citizen science being a favourite part of her work. She then gave us details on the bird program which involves nest protection during the breeding season then after the nesting season, weed management to restore their habitat. This came to a stop halfway through last year when it was found that the program did not have the appropriate paper work.

It was found that they needed to have a volunteer program plan in place, a scientific permit and an animal ethics permit. To get the program started on time all this needed to be processed well before the breeding season as it was found it was not a simple process. This also impacted the saltmarsh wetland project.

Emma is hoping to start a community engagement program for members which will include the Tamar Island Wetlands volunteers to keep the relationship going with our Club. She values our input and our volunteering, and would like to utilize it in future years. It is an opportunity to give feedback about how citizen science fits in with what they are doing.

When COVID restrictions ease Emma would like to organize for members of our Club to visit the wetlands for an in-depth presentation around the biological monitoring program. The program would involve volunteer coordinator John Duggin talking to us about what his volunteers are doing, the data they have and find any trends in the biological monitoring program that he will be rolling out. As well Gambusia indicators will be looked at in relation to ecosystem health. It is

hoped Ralph Cooper will come along to do a tour through the wetlands to look at the amazing birdlife.

Such events will allow different groups to get together, do different types of citizen science and have input from each group about how we can help each other in the future. Until restrictions lift the Tamar Island Wetlands volunteers are unable to do tours or have more than 15 people in their interpretation centre. Emma invited members to give her or Sam suggestions and ideas for alternative activities until the restrictions lift.

Contact details are: Emma [eferguson@nrmnorth.org.au](mailto:eferguson@nrmnorth.org.au) or 0456 434 051 and Sam [sjack@nrmnorth.org.au](mailto:sjack@nrmnorth.org.au) or 0490 055 699  
Noel Manning

## Field Trip – March Saturday 12 – Don Heads coastal walk and rockpools

Members met today at the Don Railway picnic area before carpooling to the Don Heads where we walked out to the coastal platforms of basalt to view the sea stacks (image right T McGlynn) and other formations. We noted the polygonal columnar jointing (image below K Manning) in rock forms which occur during cooling. In many of the sea potholes we saw small sea stars, waratah anemones, chitons and limpets, and off the platforms, evidence of the rare xenolith inclusions in the boulders. Up close the huge sea stack was even more impressive than the distant view from the carpark. At the end of the spit we met three talkative local fishermen who showed us their catch. This included a squid, a cuttlefish and a black salmon held in a large rockpool. It was interesting to watch how quickly the cuttlefish changed colour when it was startled. Throughout the day we collected a bag of rubbish so it does not enter the ocean.



Over lunch Helen scanned the water through her binoculars and saw a seal. Following lunch, members fossicked in the rocks with the outgoing tide and also looked over the mudflats with its saltmarsh plant life and large crabs. We started our walk back to the train museum on a track going around a small wetland. This track was shaded by tall Elm trees with a wonderful display of *Sarcocornia* (beaded glasswort) in shades of red and green. There were many ferns in this area and all were identified during the walk except for one. Roy later advised it was *Pteris*

*Comans*, netted brake, a fern that is common to the north-western area of the state but rare elsewhere. After finishing with the wetland area we crossed a new foot bridge to enter the Don Bushland Reserve for the return walk to the cars. We were impressed with the natural assets of



this reserve which was new to most of us. At the bridge we met up with an interesting local and her friendly dog and she asked what we were doing. She told us about her life and move to Tasmania and also the history of boat building on the Don River. We ambled through the reserve, a healthy *Eucalyptus viminalis* and *E. amygdalina* woodland with a *Melaleuca* paperbark foreshore.

The group then split into two with the slower walkers and keen photographers taking images of the plant-life and listening to the birds along the railway and walking tracks. Back at the Don River Railway some members were ferried back to the Heads to collect their vehicles before returning to the picnic facilities near the Railway for drinks, icy poles, nibbles, and a final chat before heading home. Thank you to Helen for organising this interesting and very enjoyable field trip and introducing us to a wonderful reserve.

Tina McGlynn located a YouTube video about the Don Reserve which is worth watching if you have not been there <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJNfKE6LKR8> approx 25 minutes

**Saltmarsh plants** - *Atriplex cinerea*, grey saltbush; *Austrostipa stipoides*, coast speargrass; *Distichlis distichophylla*, Australian saltgrass; *Euphorbia paralias*, sea spurge (i); *Juncus kraussii*, sea rush; *Rhagodia candolleana*, coastal saltbush; *Sarcocornia quinqueflora*, beaded glasswort (image right K Manning); *Suaeda australis*, austral seablite; *Tecticornia arbuscula*, shrubby glasswort; *Tetragonia implexicoma*, bower spinach



**Trees/Shrubs** - *Acacia leprosa* var. *graveolens*, varnish wattle; *Acacia longifolia* subsp. *sophorae*, coastal wattle; *Acacia melanoxylon*, blackwood; *Acacia mucronata*, longleaf caterpillar wattle; *Acacia verticillata* subsp. *verticillata*, prickly moses; *Allocasuarina littoralis*, black sheoak; *Allocasuarina verticillata*, dropping sheoak; *Banksia marginata*, silver banksia; *Bursaria spinosa*, prickly box; *Cassinia aculeata*, dolly bush; *Coprosma quadrifida*, native currant; *Eucalyptus amygdalina*, black peppermint; *Eucalyptus ovata* var. *ovata*, black gum; *Eucalyptus viminalis* ssp. *viminalis*, white gum; *Exocarpos cupressiformis*, common native-cherry; *Indigofera australis* subsp.



*australis*, native indigo; *Melaleuca ericifolia*, swamp paperbark; *Monotoca glauca*, goldey wood; *Myoporum insulare*, common boobialla; *Notelaea ligustrina*, native olive; *Pimelea drupacea*, cherry riceflower; *Pimelea humilis*, dwarf riceflower; *Pomaderris apetala*, dogwood; *Pultenaea daphnoides*, heartleaf bushpea; *Pultenaea juniperina*, prickly beauty; *Rubus parvifolius*, native raspberry; *Senecio odoratus*, scented groundsel

**Ferns** - *Blechnum minus*, soft water-fern; *Blechnum wattsi*, hard water-fern; *Cyathea australis*, rough tree-fern; *Dicksonia antarctica*, soft

tree-fern; *Histiopteris incisa*, bat's wing fern; *Hypolepis rugosula*, ruddy ground-fern; *Polystichum proliferum*, mother shield-fern; *Pteridium esculentum*, austral bracken; *Pteris comans*, netted brake (image previous page K Manning)

**Ground covers** - *Acaena novae-zelandiae*, common buzzy; *Styphelia humifusa*, native cranberry

**Grasses** - *Carex appressa*, tall sedge; *Dianella tasmanica*, flax lily; *Gahnia grandis*, cutting grass; *Imperata cylindrica*, cogon grass; *Lomandra longifolia*, sagg; *Phragmites australis*, southern reed

**Climbers** - *Cassytha melantha*, large dodderlaurel; *Clematis aristata*, climbing clematis; *Comesperma volubile*, blue lovecreeper

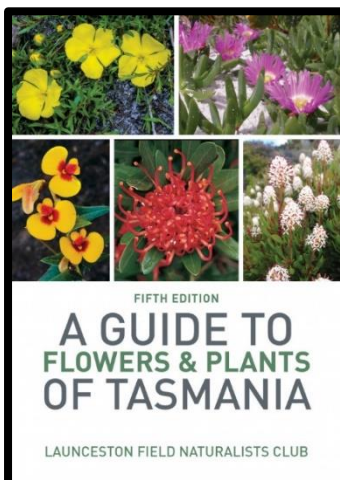
**Herbs** - *Stylidium graminifolium*, trigger plant

**Birds** - *Anthochaera chrysoptera*, little wattle bird; *Anthochaera paradoxa*, yellow wattle bird; *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*, silver gull; *Cracticus torquatus*, grey butcherbird; *Dacelo novaeguineae*, laughing kookaburra; *Egretta novaehollandiae*, white faced heron; *Fulica atra*, eurasian coot; *Larus pacificus*, pacific gulls; *Microcarbo melanoleucos*, little pied cormorant; *Petroica boodang*, scarlet robin; *Phalacrocorax varius*, pied cormorant; *Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*, New Holland honeyeater; *Rhipidura albiscapa*, grey fantail; *Sericornis frontalis*, white-browed scrubwren; *Vanellus miles*, masked lapwing

**Rockpool Life** - *Actinia tenebrosa*, waratah anemone; *Hormosira banksii*, Neptune's necklace; *Limnoperna pulex*, flea mussels; Limpets large and small; *Meridiastra calcar*, eight-armed seastar (image right K Manning); *Nerita atramentosa*, black nerites; *Parvulastra exigua*, small seastar; *Polychaete* worm tubes; *Siphonaraia dimenensis*; Skate egg case; *Sypharochiton pelliserpentis*, serpent-skin chiton



**Fisherman's Rockpool** - Cuttlefish, Squid, Black Salmon



## A Guide to Flowers and Plants of Tasmania

Great news, the Club's publication has recently arrived back on the shelves at Petrarch's Bookshop. The book has been unavailable since late last year due to being out of print.

Members of the public who had enquired about purchasing a copy while the book was unavailable, have been contacted and advised to check with their local bookshops.



## Skemps Day – March Saturday 26 – Plant maintenance along Skemps Creek

Although the thermometer (13 degrees) in the car suggested a cool reception at Skemps on our tree maintenance day along Skemp Creek the cloudless sky made it seem quite warm. Our first task was to water the plants in Marion Simmons's Acacia Walk and the Blackwood's recently planted for Al Pegler.



Following a quick cuppa, members set off to the Top Pond to firstly remove the wire fencing around the two group plantings. These areas had been opened up some time ago and to date the

plants had not been attacked by the locals who only grazed the grass around them. Removal of the fencing proved difficult in places as the grass had grown up through the wire requiring many hands to remove it. One section of wire proved especially



difficult as a jack jumper nest was around the wire with this section eventually removed with no human casualties from the angry ants. Grass clods were taken from the wire and placed upside down around some trees to suppress the grass.

All individual tree guards were removed on both sides of the creek from the top pond to the roadway crossing. While removing a tree guard on the far side of the creek, well below the top pond, Noel found a ~150 mm stick insect which halted our work as we took photographs.



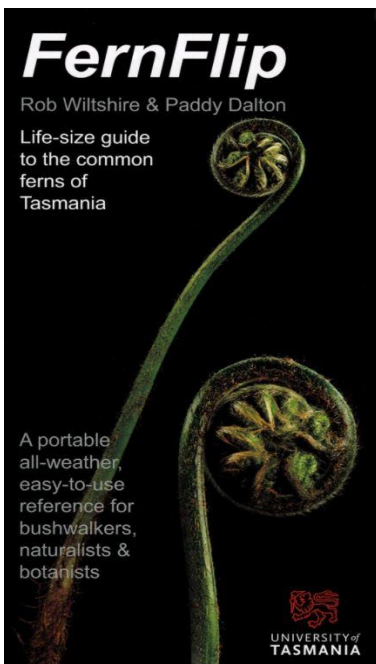


The long sections of wire were then rolled up, loaded onto the trailer along with individual tree guards and the stakes and taken away for storage near the barn with some of this work completed after lunch.

We also noticed the flat leaf mounds of thistles starting to come through and removed what we could see and also collected some dried thistle heads. The remaining guards and stakes will be collected by the following Tuesday's volunteers.



Back at the Centre we shared cake and had a cuppa before the final pack up and heading home. Thank you to all the members who arrived today to assist, a great days work. Karen Manning



### FernFlip

The Committee was given the opportunity to purchase 10 FernFlip's at a reduced price which will be made available to members for \$8.00 each (RRP is \$9.95). This guide will be an invaluable resource to members who participate in the Briseis Water Race fern foray in June with Dr Lee Bowkett and for the foray on Skemps Day later that month. Please see the Treasurer if you are interested in purchasing a copy.

### Skemps Report - February/March

With the onset of the cooler weather the grass is growing much slower and does not need mowing near as often though when visitors return more fire wood will be used. As well as other weeding, Karen and Caitlin went to the far side of the creek out from the front door of the Centre to work



on a small area of Spanish Heath found and dealt with a few months back. We will need to keep an eye on this as it was seeding when first found.

Jeff treated our new sign posts for the Loop Track with Hydroseal to reduce rotting and attached the various signs doing some of this work at home. Rob and Jeff installed the posts with the new signage for the Loop Track while Caitlin and Karen installed the individual plant signs on the Loop Track and cleaned those at the start of the Zig Zag Track (image right K Manning). It all looks professional and quite impressive. Caitlin also used the Gravograph to make some of the signs and it will be handy to have another skilled user of this machine.

Jeff noticed that the roof joists in the trailer shed were coming away from the wall. With assistance from the very practical Rob they spent a couple of Tuesdays securing it from possible collapse and then had to restack the fire wood which fell during the work.

After collecting the trailer and arriving at the Centre, Jeff discovered he had in fact left the trailer behind at the shed much to the amusement of the observers. He has since purchased and installed a new hitch and discovered that the tongue inside the old one was badly worn.

Having lost four out of the 12 acacias planted for Marion's Acacia Walk we are very careful to water the remaining ones and the three replacements every time we are at Skemps. We have also recently weeded in the enclosures and added a Blackwood.

After spending so much time cleaning and organising the barn it was disappointing to find that a trapped bird had made a mess before dying. Caitlin, Jeff, Karen and I spent a few hours cleaning it again.

With rain predicted Caitlin, Jeff, Karen and I went to the north east corner of the Federation Corridor on 22 March, this was before our cuppa, to plant the black woods for Al Pegler's memorial. When planted and watered we all walked the Loop Track to retrieve a no longer used seat to place near these trees. The same day, a platypus was seen in the top pond.

Volunteers collected all the remaining guards, bags and sticks after the Skemps Day activity on Saturday 26 March for storage near the Barn, and removed a few other guards as we moved down the roadway. We then made a concerted effort with weeds near the creek crossing, with Andrew removing a bag of thistle mounds and a large holly bush, Caitlin and Karen removing dried thistle, many smaller holly bushes and one sycamore tree. Two foxglove plants in leaf only were spotted in the long grass allowing Andrew to identify them without flowers. Another large holly bush was removed by Jeff, Rob and me from the area where the *Epacris gunnii* grows densely below the exit of the Zig-Zag Track. We three also spent a few hours removing a tree fallen further along Skemps Road. The tree was large, hung up at one end and entangled with smaller trees brought down during the fall. For all the work there will be little firewood to be had due to rot.

If you would like to join other members and volunteer at Skemps on Tuesday's, please contact me and I will add your phone number to the notification list. A text to confirm the day will be sent on the Monday evening.

Noel Manning



## Additional Information

### Club Outings:

- Are held during a weekend following the General Meeting. Until further notice, members should make their own travel arrangement to participate, contact the Program Co-ordinator if you require further details or wish to share a lift.
- Provide your own food and drinks for the outing and wear/take clothing/footwear suitable for all weather types.
- The program is subject to alternation at short notice. Notification of changes to field trips will be advised at the General Meeting prior to the event. Please contact the Program Co-ordinator to confirm details if you are unable to attend the meeting.

**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 [secretary@lfnc.org.au](mailto:secretary@lfnc.org.au) regarding availability and keys.

**Field Centre Phone Number:** (03) 6399 3361

**Postal Address:** 23 Skemps Road, Myrtle Bank 7259

**Internet site:** <https://www.lfnc.org.au>

**Facebook site:** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/527797787360157/>

**Emails:** [president@lfnc.org.au](mailto:president@lfnc.org.au)    [secretary@lfnc.org.au](mailto:secretary@lfnc.org.au)    [program@lfnc.org.au](mailto:program@lfnc.org.au)  
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