

## THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

Volume LV No.4 April/May 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:**

#### **June**

**Tuesday 7**

**Meeting – Fern workshop/practice session on use of FernFlips - Introduction by Roy Skabo**

**Saturday 11**

**Field Trip – Fern foray along Briseis Water Race with Dr. Lee Bowkett, meet at Branxholm pool at 10.30am.**

**Saturday 25**

**Skemps Day – Fern foray**

#### **July**

**Tuesday 5**

**No general meeting this month**

**Saturday 9**

**Field Trip – Explore Kate Reed Reserve**

**Sunday 31**

**Skemps Day – Tree Maintenance on Skemps Creek (National Tree Day)**

#### **August**

**Tuesday 2**

**No general meeting this month**

**Saturday 6**

**Field Trip – Brushy Lagoon Reserve at Westbury**

**Saturday 27**

**Skemps Day – Continue tree maintenance on Skemps Creek**

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

## **General Meeting – April Tuesday 5 – Guest Speakers Justin and Jo Widdowson – Caretaking on Deal Island**

Helen introduced Justin and Jo Widdowson and their talk on caretaking on Deal Island.

While Jo, Helen and I worked on getting internet service to facilitate the visual side of the presentation, Justin talked off the cuff to make a start on the presentation eventually doing most, with contributions from Jo, as we were unable to get the promised pictures.

Justin started his often amusing talk by telling us they went to Deal Island as caretakers in the summer of 2017/18 and another three month stint for the winter of 2020. He likes the harshness of the winter and was disappointed to only experience 95 kph winds when he was hoping for 100 kph winds though he still had to lean into it.

He explained Deal Island, part of the Kent Group, is about half way from the northern tip of Flinders Island to Wilsons Promontory and he was expecting a small island with one palm tree and a treasure chest. Instead he was on an island of approximately 1,600 hectares of undulating land, in his words, a condensed Tasmania. One cove would have lichen covered granite boulders and she oaks and the next a white sandy beach while inland the vegetation goes from white fella's manicured farmland, to poa fields, to sheoak forests and there are also eucalypts, much stunted by the winds.

The Kent Group is home to about a dozen ship wrecks including the SS Karitane which hit a rock and was beached in Squally Cove. The valuable cargo of copper ingots was salvaged and the wreck is still there for divers to explore. Without a proper explanation Justin told us the salvage diver had walked Bass Straight and to just Google it. He described the snorkeling as awesome and with so many inlets you can always find one protected from the wind.

After a comment from Matthew it was noted flies blow on to the island and are a nuisance with Justin blaming Victoria. Other visitors during their summer stay consisted of around 300 people in about 90 vessels, including jet skis and the Young Endeavor. He is also the representative of authority on the island and described the many issues he had to deal with, including illegal fishing.

Giving more information about the island we learnt a lighthouse was built which was too high, spending about ¾ of its time in the clouds. The recently repainted lighthouse brought other infrastructure, much of which still exists, including a three bedroom caretaker's cottage, visitor's cottage, restricted to only six people, and the main building which has been repurposed as a museum. Solar panels charge up lithium batteries with gas brought in from Victoria providing power for cooking and hot water. The solar power was upgraded to allow for a heat pump to replace the unsafe, unflued gas heating.

Justin described Dover and Erith Islands as nearby neighbors with Dover being uninhabited and in his words would be 'an awesome place to do some surveys on'. The Stackhouse family ran cattle on Erith and there is a camp ground with a couple of shacks leased to Victorians who spend summers there. The entire Kent group is a national park with ¾ surrounded by a marine reserve with no take or restricted fishing areas. Justin told us there was little in the way of edible fish to be caught and used the native hen joke about cooking one type of fish with a brick.

He had seen dolphins and seals though no whales, telling us Murray Pass between the main islands is deep and fast flowing and whales have been recorded using it.

Weeds are an issue with ragwort beyond hand pulling or cut and paste. Insects, two bugs and a moth, have been introduced as biological controls and these appear to have been successful, at least in the early stage. There has been some success with sea spurge, boneseed and foxglove with ongoing hand pulling keeping these under control.

Justin gave details of the work of the caretakers including mowing around the buildings as a fire break. There are many small maintenance jobs, including fences to keep the wallabies out and a veggie garden to look after including the planting of seeds for the next crew. The old 4WD ute has been replaced with a Polaris to get about on the island with large distances involved to bring the heavy consumables, including gas bottles, from the airstrip to the living compound.

He then amused us with his description of Squally Cove, commonly known as Bunnings, a collecting place of drift wood and rubbish caused by the prevailing winds. He made things from the timber collected some of which is square sectioned. Other items washed up included the usual plastic and fishing boat detritus as well as some unusual items. A quite heavy overnight bag had a fuel container and a lunch packet with Justin adding '...they went hungry that day'. There were life buoys from a chartered ferry that went down somewhere and other random stuff. He said each caretaker tended to concentrate on different non-essential tasks with one making a fire management plan while they concentrated on picking up rubbish and collecting and freezing bugs and cockroaches. These are taken to the Queen Victoria Museum which has identified a cockroach not seen on Deal Island before and a new species of spider named after his son Murphy.

The larger snakes are not present on the island just the green white lipped snake, though venomous, it is too small to inject poison. Wallabies are there and are in poor condition some of the year and before a fence was built needed to be removed from the airstrip when a plane was expected. The usual method is banging pots and pans with animals just getting in behind you and Cape Barron Geese are still an issue on the air strip after the fencing. The brush tailed possum is also on the island and with no predators is often on the ground. They are also a nuisance as they can remove fly screens to get inside to eat any food left about. Justin said they will come in the back door, walk past you and go exploring.

Life back home involved going back to supermarkets and they found the smell of perfume and aftershave overwhelming and it was also noisy and while worried that three months away from cars would be an issue they just hopped in and drove off as usual.

With questions coming throughout the talk there was none at the end and Matthew finished with the thanks and led the acclamation. We have been promised access to the expected pictures which will be shown at a future meeting.

Noel Manning



**Deal Island, Tasmania by RibbaSky,  
(CC BY-SA 4.0)**

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>, via Wikimedia Commons

## Field Trip – April Saturday 9 – Tamar River Ramble

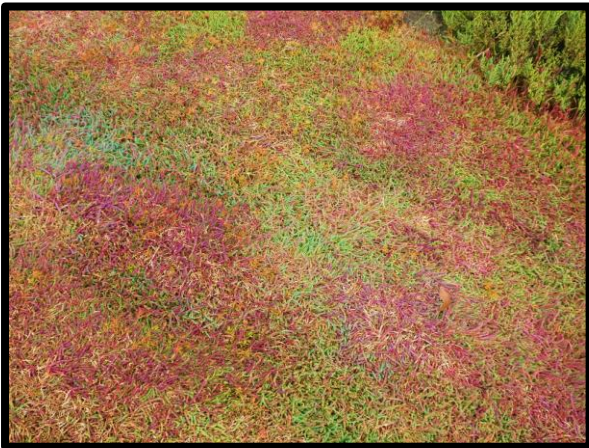
Members met at the Mt Direction picnic area for hot drinks, McGlynn biscuits and carrot cake to celebrate President Jeff's birthday. Following a briefing of the plans for the day from Helen, we headed up the gravel pathway to the bridge over the railway line, then walked left beside the railway line looking at the variety of plants before crossing to a disused quarry. Here we saw *Cassytha melantha*, *Eucalyptus obliqua*, *Allocasuarina littoralis* and *Daviesia latifolia*. On the return walk to the picnic area, Roy, Tina and Karen went bush seeing many Resurrection ferns, brown butterflies and a caterpillar (identified later by Simon Fearn as an Anthelid moth larvae, **(Image K Manning)**), while the other group took the disused roadway back to the Dalrymple Road. A large bag of rubbish was collected on their return walk and they also advised there were unfortunately a number of native animal road kill. The hillside area was very dry with no water in the creek at the picnic area, nor in the quarry.



Our next stop was at Mt George Scenic Lookout and Historic Semaphore station. It was a very windy area, but among the trees on the boardwalk we were sheltered, seeing dogwood, native olive, sheoak, gums, 2 varieties of wattle and a single *Wahlenbergia* flower. Due to the wind we decided to lunch at George Town under shelter at Windmill Point.

During the afternoon we joined the Kanamaluka Trail to observe the birds and plants in the

saltmarsh wetlands. We walked adjacent to the area where members had previously conducted monitoring with NRM North staff over the years, noting the saltmarsh plants as we went along. With a low tide, most of the birds were out on the rocky outcrops and a few were feeding in the mudflats closer to shore. At the end of the monitored area, there was a carpet of the beaded glasswort in a range of colours blending together.



**(Image above K Manning)**

We then went to the Signal Station café where we were assigned the boat shed for our afternoon tea providing us with a private area to sing happy birthday to Jeff after which we gave our final birthday wishes and said goodbye. We decided on a return in the flowering season to better appreciate the flora in the two main areas of this most enjoyable field trip.

**(Image right Tom McGlynn)**



### **Mt Direction**

**Flora:** - *Acacia dealbata*, silver wattle; *Acacia melanoxylon*, Blackwood; *Acacia verticillata*, prickly moses; *Acrotriche serrulata*, ants delight; *Allocasuarina littoralis*, black sheoak; *Bossiaea prostrata*, creeping bossia; *Bursaria spinosa*, prickly box; *Carex* sp., sedge; *Cassinia aculeata*, dollybush; *Cassytha melantha*, large dodderlaurel; *Chielthanthes austrotenuifolia*, resurrection fern; *Clematis aristata*, mountain clematis; *Comesperma volubile*, blue love creeper; *Coprosma quadrifida*, native currant; *Daviesia latifolia*, hop bitterpea; *Cassytha melantha*, large dodderlaurel; *Dodonaea viscosa*, broadleaf hopbush; *Eucalyptus obliqua*, stringybark; *Eucalyptus viminalis*, white gum; *Exocarpos cupressiformis*, native cherry; *Gahnia grandis*, brickmakers sedge; *Lepidosperma ensiforme*, swordedge; *Lepidosperma laterale*, variable swordedge; *Lomandra longifolia*, sagg; *Melaleuca ericifolia*, coast paperbark; *Notelaea ligustrina*, native olive; *Pimelea nivea*, bushman's bootlace; *Pomaderris* sp., dogwood; *Pteridium esculentum* subsp., esculentum, bracken; *Pultanaea daphnoides*, heartleaf bushpea; *Tetrarrhena distichophylla*, hair rice grass

**Caterpillar:** - *Pterolocera* sp., Anthelid moth larvae

### **Mt George**

**Flora:** - *Acacia melanoxylon*, Blackwood; *Acacia verticillata*, prickly moses; *Allocasuarina littoralis*, black sheoak; *Chielthanthes austrotenuifolia*, resurrection fern; *Dillwynia* sp., parrot pea; *Dodonaea viscosa*, broadleaf hopbush; *Eucalyptus amygdalina*, black peppermint; *Eucalyptus viminalis*, white gum; *Lomandra longifolia*, sagg; *Notelaea ligustrina*, native olive; *Pomaderris* sp., dogwood; *Pultanaea daphnoides*, heartleaf bushpea; *Wahlenbergia* sp., bluebell

### **George Town foreshore**

**Birds:** - *Cacomantis flabelliformis*, fantail cuckoo; *Calyptorhynchus funereus*, yellow-tailed black cockatoo; *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*, silver gull; *Cracticus torquatus*, grey butcherbird; *Cygnus atratus*, black swan; *Egretta novaehollandiae*, white faced heron; *Haematopus fuliginosus*, sooty oystercatcher; *Haematopus longirostris*, Australian pied oystercatcher; *Larus pacificus*, pacific gull; *Pelecanus conspicillatus*, Australian pelican x 11; *Phalacrocorax fuscescens*, black-faced cormorant; *Vanellus miles*, masked lapwing

**Butterflies:** - *Heteronympha Merope*, Common brown butterfly; *Pieris rapae*, Cabbage white butterfly

**Flora:** - *Acacia longifolia* subsp. *sophorae*, coast wattle; *Acacia melanoxylon*, Blackwood; *Austrostipa stipoides*, coast speargrass; *Distichlis distichophylla*, Australian saltgrass; *Dodonaea viscosa*, broadleaf hopbush; *Hemichroa pentandra*, trailing seastar; *Lomandra longifolia*, sagg; *Melaleuca ericifolia*, coast paperbark; *Phragmites australis*, southern reed; *Pomaderris apetala*, common dogwood; *Sarcocornia* sp., glasswort; *Selliera radicans*, shiny swampmat; *Spartina anglica*, common cordgrass (rice grass)(i); *Suaeda australis*, austral seablite; *Tecticornia arbuscula*, shrubby glasswort; *Tetragonia implexicoma*, bower spinach. (i) = introduced

## **Skemps Day – May Sunday 1 – Macroinvertebrate Water Monitoring**

Six Members arrived to a rather miserable day for the biannual monitoring of water quality in Skemps creek, a tributary of the Saint Patrick's River.

Jeff and Noel set off to collect a water sample from the usual creek riffle. The first difficulty was a major fall on Skemps Road just past the bend about half way to the creek crossing. This was completely impassable and presented a huge future job to clear.

They drove back up to the Centre and reached their destination via the barn only to find the creek in a minor flood due to the recent heavy rains. Moving around the creek and using the net to get the sample was quite difficult due to the deep, fast flowing water and I imagine the samples of the small invertebrates that live on the submerged debris in the creek and under the overhang were very poor. They collected where they could and returned to the Centre. The water sample was left settling for an hour before we started looking for the little bugs.

With the weather becoming worse, we soon moved our samples inside to finish the hunt for the critters. Other than socialising there was little else done, a few small maintenance jobs then it was a quick clean, locking up and heading home, after returning the water sample to the creek

The following Orders were found; (Trichoptera) Caddis cased; (Ephemeroptera) Mayfly; (Hemiptera) True Bug; (Diptera) True Flies and (Plecoptera) Stoneflies.



A Tipulid larvae from the Diptera family made an interesting specimen as their head can be retracted into their first body segment. We were able to observe this under the microscope due to its transparent body. The larvae also had white string-like veins running the length of the body.

Today we had 5 Taxa, with a 7.0 Signal 2 score, placing the sampling into Quadrant 3, which indicates poor sampling which was expected due to the fast flowing creek.

(Images above Tom McGlynn)

## The Tree

A few years ago I noticed a few trees threatening to block Skemps Road if they fell and offered them for chain saw training, though for various reasons this did not happen. In late 2020 Claire noticed that one of these, a dead tree just past the bend in Skemps Road, half way from the Centre to the creek crossing, was quite photogenic and took a few pictures.

Rob and I had looked at it with the possibility of dropping it away from the road, then Mother Nature stepped in and after a weekend of heavy wind late April, we found it had fallen.



Once down it was bigger than we had imagined and looked to be a major task to clear. Jeff and I made a start on a Skemps Day mainly clearing away the small branches to make it easier to get to the bigger ones. Rob joined us and we did a good job on the first Tuesday, still leaving much to do.

The following Tuesday saw the road cleared especially as Rob found a way to leave the huge main stump. It is both out of the way of traffic and more importantly unlikely to fall and therefore safe.

Three of us worked over two and a half days to finally clear the road, with still much to do to turn the tree into useful fire wood and to stack it away. To put this work into perspective, over the two days we worked I needed to sharpen the chainsaw three times and for half this time Jeff had his chainsaw there as well, which he needed to sharpen. Also, early one

Tuesday both chainsaws jammed and took a lot of work to free up. It turned out that the bark of this introduced tree made a very fine dust when chain sawed and this jammed the roller at the front of the chainsaw bar. A big thank you to Jeff and Rob for dealing with this huge problem. Noel Manning



Claire Manning (image page 6), Noel Manning (images below), Tom McGlynn (image above)



## **John Skemp Memorial Lecture – May Tuesday 3 – Guest Speaker Andrew Darby – *The long distance journey of migratory shorebirds***

Introduced by Helen, the speaker for the John Skemp Memorial Lecture for 2022 was journalist and devotee of long distance migratory shorebirds, Andrew Darby, author of the beautiful book

*Flight Lines - Across the globe on a journey with the astonishing ultramarathon birds.* The book was short-listed in the 2021 Prime Minister's Literary Awards, and won the Royal Zoological Society of NSW's Whitley Award for Best Natural History. Andrew's book is in memoriam to another great naturalist Clive Minton 1934 - 2019.

Andrew started his talk by telling us of Boullanger Bay on the west of Robbins Island in NW Tasmania, described by Vishnu Prahalad, Tasmania's foremost expert on Tasmanian wetlands, as Tasmania's wet wilderness. Andrew agreed and described it as a really great home for migratory shorebirds with its big tidal range and lots of exposed mud and sand flats.

Andrew told us that the Grey Plover was his favourite bird and backed by a picture taken by Victorian birder Heather Alexander, at Roebuck Bay, Broome WA, he lovingly described it. The one in the photograph is a female as are most birds venturing this far south as males travel less needing to be near the breeding grounds to claim territory. The tail feathers of the bird are a delicate scallop shape, a diagnostic feature is its distinctive black wing pits, it has long primary feathers and black axillary feathers at the tip of long wings, wings made for travel. This bird is bigger than a Hooded Plover seen on our beaches though much smaller than the Masked Lapwing, known as a plover in Australia.

Roebuck Bay is a wonderful place for shorebirds and the birds agree as they can be seen there in the tens of thousands and it attracts those who study them. As they gather in large groups, what Andrew described as a cannon, fires metal projectiles over the birds carrying a net to trap them. There are very few casualties and this netting allows researchers to flag band, leg tag and satellite tag the birds to look at what their lives consist of.

The presentation was backed by a wonderful slide show and except for five instructive maps most of the other were all about the birds shown in flocks or individually. One had Maureen Christie and Clive Minton preparing a bird for tagging and Andrew described them as important for shorebird study in Australia. He detailed Maureen's life up to when she became such an important studier of shorebirds and described Clive as a global figure in shorebird studies with the British calling him the father of wader studies.



**Grey Plover, *Pluvialis squatarola***

AL BADUSH, CC BY-SA 4.0

<<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons



Clive put together, and for a very long time led, the Victoria Wader Study Group, ultimately leading to the banding of 100s of thousands of these birds. Banding was important in the early days of bird studies as a bird found somewhere, and if the tag was returned, showed what migratory birds were doing and where they went. We saw a bird with an orange flag which indicated it was banded in South Australia while the band had the information to identify the individual bird.

In a set of images we saw a Grey Plover being held and processed ready to be tracked on its journey and we were given details of the birds. The bird has large eyes to see well in the dark, a sturdy chisel bill to deal with a variety of prey and it is thought they have a receptor in the eye to 'see' the earth's magnetic field. It is thought they can read the stars and landmarks when available to know where they are and what direction to take. They will take off with a tail wind and climb thousands of metres high to get the best place to be for the long flight.

The two birds for his study were labeled CYA, who left first, and CYB. The birds leave South Australia in late summer or early autumn to get to the Arctic breeding grounds as soon as possible. When they leave here there is still snow in the Arctic and Andrew reminded us that this is continuous, ultra-marathon, flapping flight, not gliding above the waves or sitting down to rest. The first of the maps showed the flight path superimposed over a Google Earth map and the yellow line of CYA had a zigzag over the Australian desert. A deep low spun out of the Gulf of Carpentaria and headed west pushing this flock to the west and then the birds corrected their flight to get back on course. The flight took them over Indonesia and the Philippines with CYA first stopping at Thompson Beach, a wetlands on the west coast of Taiwan. CYB left with her flock a couple of weeks later and whether by luck, wisdom or experience managed a better flight crossing over Taiwan to stop at a wetland in southern China.

During this 7,000 kilometre flight the birds burn a huge amount of fat and then start to burn whatever energy is in their organs. When they finally land they are exhausted and spend some weeks recovering and then these two flew up to the Yellow Sea, CYA to the southern end and CYB to the northern end.

Andrew had been to this area and witnessed the tens of thousands of birds in the Yellow Sea which is so very important to the shorebirds using the East Asian Australasian flyway. After time spent recovering here the birds spread out to finish the journey heading north over China and Russia up to Siberia, the Arctic coast and even across to Alaska. The birds are following the snow line and the Arctic summer which he described as rapid, full of life and quickly over.

Both birds then left the Arctic shore on the same day for the 8,000 square kilometre Wrangel Island. Russian owned it is a biosphere reserve, home to 400 vascular plants and is the best breeding ground for the polar bear. Snow geese also breed there as well as many migratory shorebirds. There is practically no human population, mainly just wildlife, with a small Russian military presence and a few scientists.

Andrew really wanted to see the birds on the nest and was booked onto the only Western boat to visit Wrangel Island when he was diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer. He shared this personal challenge with us, not only as it impacted on his story, as saving the shorebirds has a parallel to his eventual recovery. He was lucky that his condition responded to immunotherapy although only a small percentage of people do. His treatment then added to the data being collected on survivors who have immunotherapy to help improve it and the study of the birds also adds to the data about them and may be able to save them by saving their habitat.

Seeing the birds on the nest on Wrangel Island may have been difficult and he found another site in Arctic Alaska where these birds also breed and he contacted the American scientist Phil Bruner and arranged to meet him on his study patch outside Nome on the edge of the Arctic

Circle. He had been studying Grey, American Golden and Pacific Golden Plovers known as the Tundra Plovers and this site also had a good road for easy access compared to Wrangel.

The birds seen by Andrew were different to what he saw back in Australia as the females take on their silver breeding plumage which camouflages them on their ground based nests. He was very keen to see the nest with eggs as that is where the story of these birds begins. Phil sized him up to see if he would be a responsible citizen at his study site before sharing the secret to finding nests. He used carefully placed stones to indicate a nesting site with some numbered underneath to identify the breeding pair.

Phil explained to Andrew that to get to the chosen nest, about 40 metres away, he needed to keep an eye on it or he would soon lose site of it. To our amusement the instructions also included avoiding standing on other eggs along the way while negotiating the boggy ground and a creek. Andrew made it to the nest which was constructed with few materials, just some reindeer lichen, a few strands of grass and moss and it had three eggs with Andrew suggesting it was waiting for a fourth. I quote from him '...I'm in the Arctic, it's a beautiful day, the air's icy, um I'm alive um and I am looking at new life'. With these simple words Andrew let us share the wonder and emotion of that special moment.

From here we moved back to the two tracked birds, the only ones to survive of the 10 setting off with the GPS tracking devices, and their journey back to Australia. CYA set off with the weather against her and ended up on the Arctic coast where she had been before and then the signal disappeared. Andrew gave some possible explanations before detailing the return journey of CYB.

She left Wrangel Island running into head winds, turned right and landed on the shore awaiting better conditions. She then headed over Siberia and China before making it back to the same mudflats of the outward journey on the northern end of the Yellow Sea. After a month of feeding up she again flew south and into a super typhoon south of Japan catching the outer edge acting as a slingshot to propel her south. Andrew finished this part by saying 'She flew on and on and on and on and on and on and I am not going to tell you where she ended up....you can read the book.'

He then told us of the importance of the Yellow Sea, shorebird central, for both the north and south migration and the threats to its continued existence as a staging ground. All backed up with impressive slides with one showed three threats. In the foreground peasants collected shell fish a food source of the birds, rows of wind turbines which are a threat to the birds and fishing boats which are present in the thousands.

Andrew told us how close he was to a flock of Great Knot, about its normally shy ways, the way it skittishly flew away from noises then returned and they were piping (calling) as they worked their way along the shoreline. He was telling us these birds stayed in an uncomfortable situation as they had nowhere else to go and their feeding habitat is disappearing.

Andrew told us that in Australia, within a matter of weeks, four migratory shorebirds were listed as critically endangered, the Great Knot, the Far Eastern curlew, Curlew Sandpiper and the Bar-tailed Godwit ssp. *menzbieri*. While the ssp. *baueri* goes from New Zealand to the Yellow Sea and then on to Alaska, returning direct across the Pacific to NZ the ssp. *menzbieri* goes to the Yellow Sea on both the north and south migration and is thus threatened by the reduced resources there.

While we find the Pacific Ocean daunting it is home to these birds, they know how to manage it, finding the right conditions to start the journey and adjusting their flight as conditions change.

Some parts of the Yellow Sea have been World Heritage listed for shorebirds and many other sites around the shore will be also listed by China. South Korea is taking pride in the listing of their remaining wetlands for shorebird protection. The science has been done, the evidence has been presented and the birds are starting to look for a better place.

We saw images of the eastern curlew described by Andrew as the largest migratory shorebird though not the furthest fliers only going as far as northern China or southern Siberia to nest. He had watched one in Broome burrow into a hole and pull out a crab.

The last image was of an unimaginable number of birds on the wing at Boullanger Bay and we were reminded there is an industrial size wind farm proposed for Robbin Island, opposed by BirdLife Tasmania and Andrew himself. He said that obviously we need renewable energy though it is in the wrong place. He suggested a visit in summer for the shorebirds or other values to be found there or we could volunteer for the BirdLife Tasmania annual bird counts.

After 14 minutes of questions and insightful answers Andrew (S) gave the vote of thanks, presented Andrew with a copy of our book and led the acclamation. Noel Manning

## **NRM North presentation at the Tamar Island Wetlands Centre – May Tuesday 17**

Five members attended this event as a follow up to our February general meeting talk by Sam Jack and Emma Ferguson. At the Wetlands presentation, Sam gave a more in depth talk about the new requirements for monitoring in saltmarsh areas, which has stopped the monitoring this year. He also detailed the birdlife, silt and invasive pest species, such as Gambusia and ricegrass, affecting the estuary and all this was backed by a detailed PowerPoint presentation.

We then joined John Duggin, a volunteer at the Centre for 16 years, for a walk to Tamar Island, although we only crossed the second bridge to reach the last island before Tamar Island, as time and a cold wind were against us. John's interesting talk covered the geology, tides, animals, vegetation and modern human activity in the area, with farming having the most impact though there were also car tyres in the main pond near the Wetland Centre, a left over from a go cart track once located there. With no direct evidence, he also told us of the almost certain importance of the area to the local aboriginal peoples as a food resource among other things. He maintained our interest with his habit of either posing questions or directly asking us something.

An interesting and informative presentation helping us to better understand the kanamaluka /Tamar Estuary and the impressive Tamar Wetland, a wonderful resource of the Launceston area.

Karen and Noel Manning

## **Skemps Day – May Saturday 28 – Skemps Day – Fungi Hunt**

We were grateful to Peter for a warming fire at the Centre when we arrived with low single digit temperatures predicted for the day. After hot drinks and a chat, we booted up for a walk along the Forest Track to look for fungi.

Getting to our destination took some time as we found interesting fungi along the driveway to start our photo collection. The Forest Track did not disappoint with species seen from just inside the entrance. Tina, Tony and Christine did a lot of scouting around on and off track, checking out all the fallen trees and pointing out fungi of many colours, shapes and sizes to Peter, Tom, Noel and Karen who had cameras.

One we hadn't reported seeing for some time during fungi hunts was the *Podoscypha petalodes*, a frilly species of fungus, found this hunt growing as usual on the roots and around the base of a tree on the walking track.

With so much fungi to admire and photograph our progress was slow though better for the great work done by Rob in clearing the bracken and other ferns growing over the track. We eventually came to a fallen tree Rob found the previous Tuesday and with no time to remove it we safely negotiated the fall and moved on. The temperature seemed to drop and a light rain started so we decided to head back to the Centre, meeting Jill and her son Peter along the way who were

joining us for lunch and a chat. They were taken as far as the rather impressive *Cortinarius rotundisporus* found by Tony earlier in the walk, before we all headed back to the warmth of the Centre, a good decision with the rain settling in.

An excellent day with some great fungi found and as the afternoon was cold and wet we tidied up and departed early.

Karen Manning

**Species seen today:-**

*Bisporella citrina*, *Byssomerulius corium*, *Calocera guepinioides*, *Clavulinopsis amoena*, *Clavulinopsis sulcata*, *Cortinarius rotundisporus*, *Cortinarius* sp., *Heterotextus peziziformis*, *Hygrocybe aurantiopallens*, *Hypholoma australe*, *Hypholoma sublateritium*, *Hypholoma fasciculare* var. *fasciculare*, *Leotia lubrica*, *Marasmiellus affixus*, *Mycena epipterygia*, *Mycena interrupta*, *Mycena kuurkacea*, *Mycena* sp., *Mycoacia subceracea*, *Panellus longinquus*, *Podoscypha petalodes*, *Ramaria* sp, *Russula persanguinea*, *Ryvardenia campyla*, *Stereum illudens*, *Stereum ostrea*, *Trametes versicolor*, and possibly *Junghuhnia nitida* and *Pholiota squarrosipes*



*Mycena epipterygia*, yellowleg bonnet



*Hypholoma sublateritium*, brick caps

(Images Peter Warren)



*Podoscypha petalodes*



*Mycoacia subceracea*

(Images K Manning)

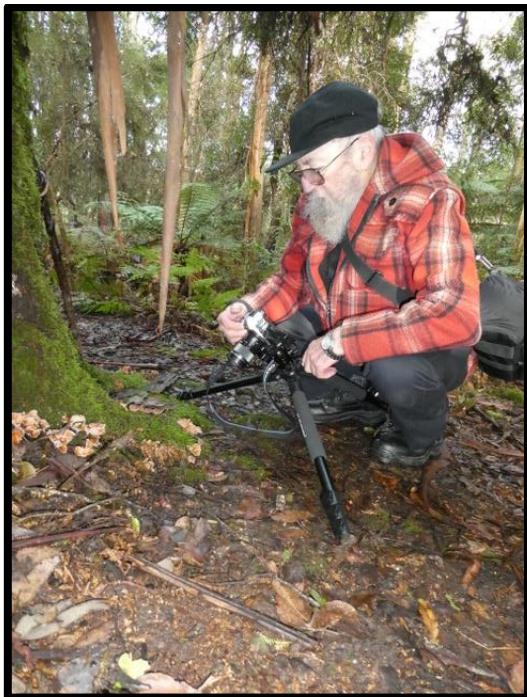


*Cortinarius rotundisporus*



*Mycena sp*

(Images N Manning)

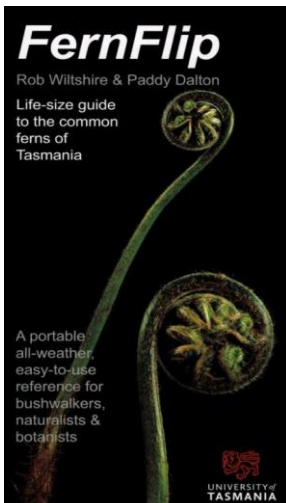


Peter Warren taking photo of the *Podoscypha petalodes*



Christine and Karen

(Images Tom McGlynn)



### FernFlip

The Committee was given the opportunity to purchase 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 the fern foray on Skemps Day later that month. Please see the Treasurer if you are interested in purchasing a copy.

## Skemps Report – April/May

The usual cutting, splitting and stacking of fire wood and weeding was done over this period. It is surprising how after all this time we can still find the odd holly and sycamore as well as the usual weeds. There has also been much slashing, spraying and general track clearing. I did not take much notice when Rob told me he would work on the Forest Trail one Tuesday only to find he had done a great job when we went there looking for fungi on the May Skemps Day.

Repairs by me included the sliding door in the barn, the back door lock at the Centre and a small cover in the oven of the solid fuel stove with another two major repairs done by Andrew.

With a sound knowledge of 12 volt electrics he sized up the problem with the temperature lights on the hot water tank and repaired them. He also found a second hand battery to install in the barn and reworked the wiring to get this up and running then replaced a broken light and changed another for something more powerful.

Elsewhere you will have read about the big fall on Skemps Road, the second for this report. The first was further along the road near the start of the Bedfordia Trail and was quickly cleared, mainly by Jeff and Rob, although it resulted in very little fire wood.

Jeff and I spent a morning near the Scotch Oakburn planting, removing the cage from around a eucalyptus species planted in memory of John Gee who died in 1977. We had to severely cut back the plant to remove the cage and worried we had damaged the tree. So far it is looking healthy and has some new growth. We removed star pickets from the area, one with great difficulty, as it was buried deep and sticking out at around 45 degrees. Caitlin and Karen found a new area of foxglove which they removed and also a small crack willow which has started growing on our side of the fence. This work was done in light, persistent rain with muddy ground. During one weeding episode Karen disturbed a small dark creature, probably a bandicoot.

Jeff has inherited the fire bug from John (E) who inherited it from John (S) and we have seen a few blazes of late. As well as burning carex and rush heaps, foxglove and thistle are left to dry out in a half section of rusty water tank and then burnt in the tank.

Jeff and Karen have picked up from where other members had started to sort and cull the Club's paper work, with a good amount done on a recent wet Tuesday. During this work Karen yelled out as she had seen something on the table behind where she was working. Thinking it was some sort of practical joke of mine she soon realised a small bat had landed on the table and then took off and circled the room a few times before finally disappearing.

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)  
[newsletter@lfnc.org.au](mailto:newsletter@lfnc.org.au)    [treasurer@lfnc.org.au](mailto:treasurer@lfnc.org.au)

Find us on 

