



THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

Volume LV No.6 August/September 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 1st Tuesday of month, February-December (except Jul & Aug) at Scotch-Oakburn College, Senior Campus, Penquite Rd Newstead

Program:

October

Tuesday 2

Meeting – Club night – “Let’s talk about your favourite native orchid”

Saturday 8

Field Trip – Powranna Reserve for wildflowers and native orchids

Sunday 16

Annual General Meeting – at the John Skemp Field Centre (please note change of date)

Saturday 29

Skemps Day – Macroinvertebrate monitoring on Skemps Creek

November

Tuesday 1

General Meeting – Midlands’s landscape - Guest Speaker to be confirmed

Saturday 5

Community Volunteering – “Catch it in the Catchment” with Tamar NRM – Club site at Kings Meadows Rivulet, meet at 9.30am behind Kings Meadows Hotel

Friday 11 to Sunday 13

Weekend Field Trip – Based at Snug – Snug Falls, Peter Murrell Reserve plus more, date and details to be confirmed – contact Helen Tait 0429 293 647 for further information

Sunday 27

Skemps Day – Spring Clean at the John Skemp Field Centre

December

Tuesday 6

General Meeting including “The Year That Was”, please bring a plate of supper to share

Saturday 10

Skemps Day - Christmas Get-together at the John Skemp Field Centre

Wednesday 14

Field Trip – Casual walk in Trevallyn Reserve for wildflowers

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

Skemps Report: August/September

Work progresses on updating the Centre with the bench on either side of the stove covered in laminate. The old solid fuel stove has been refurbished with the top resealed and the fire box lined with new fire bricks although it takes longer to get the water up to a reasonable shower temperature.



Big Bertha has gone, replaced with a modern free standing Scandia brand wood heater recently installed with a new stainless steel flue kit all up to modern standards and including a child safety surround. It has a good size fire box capable of holding most of the firewood cut for the old heater and it will burn overnight with one refill. We attended two Wednesdays as well as the usual work Tuesday to get some of this done as well as visiting suppliers on other days looking for items or parts.

What a job getting this 203 kg wood heater into the Centre. Bunnings' staff used a fork lift to put it onto



our trailer and it survived the journey to Skemps. Then our problems started with Jeff, Karen and I barely able to move such a weight. Jeff removed the packaging and I removed the top plate and door as well as the baffle and the packet of fire bricks sitting loose inside. We still struggled to get it onto a bench seat and then slide it into the building and over to the fire place.



Andrew has made the kitchen bench top more stable especially in the breakfast bar area. The cracks will be filled and this will be a food grade standard bench top when lacquered.

In the Centre we have added to our rogues' gallery with a picture of Al Pegler put up at Diane's request. During the library cleanup a picture of Winifred Curtis was found. Thanks to Helen and Karen these pictures hang in donated frames. Winifred's Urn gum, *Eucalyptus urnigera*, has been tidied up along with the sign. There appears to have been an ant nest near this plant and it would seem an echidna looking for a feed has nosed the

plant sign out of place, which has since been secured.

As part of the library cull, posters have been donated to a very appreciative Carl who manages the Myrtle Park camp ground so he and visitors can



identify the wild life and plants seen in the area. We hope the Club can have an ongoing relationship with him and his family into the future.

There seems to be a mini mouse and rat plague at Skemps and their liking of plastic has seen serious damage done, especially in the poisons shed.

Thanks to Andrew, Caitlin, Helen (with her dog Toby), Jeff and Karen the usual jobs of weeding, track clearing, plant watering, cleaning, sign making, maintenance tasks and the cutting, splitting and stacking of fire wood have been kept up to date.

As usual we are always looking for volunteers to assist at Skemps. If you are able to help please contact me and I will add your phone number to the text message list. Noel Manning

Social Evening: August Tuesday 2 – Riverside Hotel



After a successful lunch at Grindelwald in July it was decided to have another Club get together on the evening of Tuesday 2nd of August, with members arriving between 6 and 6.30pm ready to order. There was lots of chatting and catching-up while we waited for our

meals, which were enjoyed by all 15 attending. After dessert a copy of the poem "*Once in a lifetime snow*" by Les Murray was shared around the table, bringing discussion and then elephant jokes from the 60's kept everyone amused for some time before heading home. Thank you to those who attended.

Tom Treloggen

Images Tom McGlynn



Field Trip: August Saturday 6 - Westbury Common, Brushy Rivulet Forest Reserve and Westbury Maze for coffee and cake

Nine members met at the Westbury Hotel before driving a short distance to the Westbury Town Common finding much of the grassed areas and walking tracks either waterlogged or under water and Quamby Brook in flood and spilling onto the Common.

Making our way as best we could, we noted a few small birds flitting about, a gaggle of ten white geese and native hens in the distance, and six or so wood ducks on the swollen river. Andrew saw small worms wriggling in a puddle and after some discussion as to whether we





would be saving or killing them if the water was drained away or if we removed them, they were left to their fate.

Helen had told us that there were two plants listed as vulnerable under the Threatened Species Protection Act 1995 located at the Common; *Persicaria decipiens*, the slender water pepper, an erect terrestrial or aquatic perennial that flowers from December to April and *Lythrum salicaria*, purple loosestrife, an erect perennial herb that inhabits

swamps, stream banks and rivers, which flowers late January to early March. We weren't going to see them in flower today, but we did see what was presumed to be stalks of the dried slender water pepper in one of the wet areas.

Even in the boggy conditions it was an enjoyable walk and we met families and dog walkers along the way, giving pats to the dogs and having a chat with their masters. One intrepid young fellow was out of his stroller putting his tiny gum boots to good use as he splashed his way through the puddles.



Andrew and Roy moved on to the Brushy Rivulet Forest Reserve while the rest of us went to the Egmont Reserve along the Birrale Road for an early lunch by a very swollen Meander River, firstly having to wipe dry the very wet picnic seat and table. As we finished lunch and were preparing to drive further along to meet up with Roy and Andrew, they arrived back to have their own lunch at the bridge reserve. Before saying our goodbyes, they told us that they had seen a patch of *Corybus diemenicus* at the reserve to look out for.



Alighting our vehicles at our destination, it was disappointing to see so much rubbish along this stretch of road and we collected some of the larger items before entering the Reserve. For the first part of our walk we stayed on an old car track that was not particularly muddy considering the amount of rain recently deposited. The track took us to the end of the property with a fence to our left and the sound of the river to the right and all but Jeff and Helen went to look at the fast flowing water, with

Helen finding a devil scat and Noel seeing it also. There were large patches of gorse and Noel looked around these to see if there were any wombat burrows with no luck. The riparian vegetation was quite thick and getting past was a challenge until we found a large fallen tree with a pathway around the root end.

Walking up from the river we followed the fence and ridge line back to the Birrale Road seeing *Acacia dealbata* in flower, the



Micrantheum hexandrum with buds, leaves only of orchids and finally a *Corybas diemenicus* (stately helmet orchid) with a flower.

Thanks to Helen for organising this field trip, we had a pleasant day at the two reserves and at her suggestion stopped at the Westbury Maze on the way home for coffee and treats. Yum.

Karen Manning

Birds: Sulphur-crested cockatoo, laughing kookaburra, striated pardalote, grey currawong, clinking currawong, white-faced heron, wood-ducks, welcome swallow, native hens, geese, blue wrens, magpies, wattlebird, masked lapwing and grey butcherbird

Trees: Black peppermint, White gum, Silver wattle, Silver banksia, Prickly box, Native cherry, Dogwood, Tree violet, Trident bush, Paperbark

Shrubs: Ant's delight, Dwarf riceflower, Common heath, Guitarplant

Climber: Southern clematis

Herbs: Native cranberry, Buzzy, Kidneyweed, Bluebottle daisy, Woodland butter cup, Ivy-leafed violet

Orchids: Bird orchid in bud, Stately helmet orchid (image right KM)

Ferns: Bracken

Lichens: *Cladia* sp., *Cladina confusa*, *Usnea* sp.

Environmental weeds: Gorse, Blackberry



Field Trip: August Wednesday 17 - Kate Reed Reserve birdwatching at the wetlands

Four members met at the Kate Reed Reserve to visit the wetland area for birdwatching and later met up with another member. The morning's weather probably was not ideal for birdwatching being overcast and quite cold, however we persevered along the trails and recorded scarlet robins, black currawong, forest ravens, grey shrike thrush, tawny crowned honeyeaters, black cockatoos, thornbills, kookaburras, golden whistlers, dusky robins and fantails, and saw two Bennett's wallabies.



Frog calls could be heard around the area, and presume we heard the "click-click-click" of the spotted marsh frog, *Limnodynastes tasmaniensis* and the "cree-cree-cree" of the Ewing's tree frog, *Litoria ewingii*.

Leaving the wetlands in the flatter area of the Reserve, we headed up along the Boundary Track, noting stands of small *Allocasuarina* both male and female, and the occasional fungus. On the hill above us, we could see the golden yellow blooms on the *Acacia dealbata* (silver wattle) pictured on the next page.

Continuing further along this track we started to hear the sound of traffic. The circuit had taken us up on a hillside and had us further along the highway than the Connector Park off ramp which then circled back and down a steep rocky descent.

The forest here was not as dense, but there were large areas of gorse being smothered by dodder and a number of yellow-tailed black cockatoos in the trees. Karen Manning



Skemps Day: August Saturday 27 - General maintenance on the property

Today was overcast and quite cold, however 6 members and 2 visitors attended the property. We noted a newly fallen tree at the Top Pond and watered the Blackwoods planted in memory of Al Pegler. Following the removal of the fencing around some of the plants in Marion's "Acacia Walk" larger guards were installed on the individual plants. This means the local animals will keep the grass down around the plants and will save members time by not having to weed them out. Jeff chopped up more of the wood from an earlier tree fall and broke up the wooden packaging from around the new wood heater. Noel and I rehung the bedroom curtains which were recently washed and completed other cleaning in the Centre. A short Committee meeting was held before heading home. Karen Manning

Visitors from NRE and Tamar NRM – Tuesday 6 September

We arrived to a fine cool day at Skemps warmed by the sun as we had a cuppa then lit a fire and tidied up in preparation for our guests.

Kirstin Seaver, a new recruit with Tamar NRM community programs, came along on the invite of Helen to meet us, view the property and network with those involved with conservation work around the Tamar region.

It was a pleasure to have Lauren Bird and Iona Mitchell from Land Conservation of NRE Tasmania (Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Tasmania - formerly DPIPWE) come to Skemps on this working bee day. They were here to familiarise themselves with the Skemps property in their role as stewardship assistance to land holders with conservation properties.

After warming drinks for our guests while admiring the new heater, Jeff gave an introduction to the property. We then set off along Skemps Road to the Bedfordia Nature Trail which I considered had the most to offer and would also cover two borders of the property.



Along the way we found a small patch of the blue metallic flea beetle, *Altica pagans*, which fascinated our guests who stopped for a photograph. We entered the Bedfordia Trail from the western end stopping to look at the basalt at the top, an old lava flow at the lower slopes of The Sidling. From here we again entered the forest eventually coming to the huge, multi trunked *Eucalyptus viminalis* another feature for our guests to admire and photograph.

On the way back to the road our guests were directed to the large Blackwood where two wombat burrows are located and they continued through the bush back onto Skemps Road while Helen and I finished the trail. Having lost the others we chose to do the East Trail then crossed the creek and followed it back to the Centre.

By the time we arrived at the Centre our guests and visitor had left for other appointments and by the time we finished out late lunch it was too late to do further work and we headed home in preparation for the general meeting.

We look forward to further appreciation of the LFNC property and our contribution to the conservation network of the Tamar Valley

Noel Manning (with Helen Tait)



General Meeting: September Tuesday 6 - Threatened Species Day

Sorry we did not have time to write this up, it will be available next newsletter.

Field Trip: September Saturday 10 - Narawntapu wetlands and beach walk

The natural shores and wetlands of the Rubicon estuary beckons for exploration by field naturalists. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to approach by kayak but that dream is yet to eventuate. Eight LFNC members were joined by Steve Broadbent to look over the estuary shoreline at the western end of Narawntapu National Park.

The area was in soft light with a calm full



tide and a misty mountain backdrop. Swallows were flying over the marshy land, several pairs of pied oyster catchers were resting along the shores and native hens were about with one observed swimming out across to a further spit. A white-faced heron and some shelducks were seen on the wing. *Tecticornia* bushes old and gnarled with the subtle and rich mixed colours were tenacious in their presence. Waders were

largely absent.

Wallaby poo cover the grassed land between the Bakers Beach and the marshlands, and a number of large eastern greys were lounging about in pairs and small groups. We heard skylarks and pipits over the land. In shrubby interludes we saw thornbills and wrens, and from further

inland we could hear the calls of green rosellas, butcher birds, shrike-thrush and forest raven.

At the Bakers Beach point, washed up on the beach were some weird looking sea squirts with protective casings of shells and pebbles, and accumulations of tide-washed bright green algae and purple seaweed.

Blue wrens lunched with us near the ranger's station. Visiting the bird hide to the east some walked the track though the foreshore vegetation. The coastal wattle was in flower, likewise the *Leucopogon* bushes. The tea-tree forest with winter water around its white papered trunks was beautiful to walk through on the maintained board-walks. Reflected in the water were the paper bark colours and fine pond weed. Little brown birds were about and busy; thornbills, wrens, pardalotes and grey fantails. Others walking to the hide on the pasture track were pleased to spot a pair of black fronted dotterels/plovers. A pair of crested terns were hunting above the inlet and a white-bellied sea eagle flew seaward harassed by forest ravens.

At the hide we added black fronted dotterel, black headed terns, chestnut teal, fantail, dusky moorhen, forest raven, musk duck, thornbill, welcome swallow, and white-faced heron to our sightings list.

Overall a privileged day out in the field with friends. It was good to catch up with Steve, home from overseas where he had taken opportunity for bird photography; kingfishers and wading birds from NZ and elsewhere.

Of note is that the little banded plovers which we would expect to see here will be currently leaving Tasmania for their trans-Tasman migration to New Zealand for summer and that the little red-necked stints should be back soon from their breeding grounds in the far Siberian north. We will be looking out for them.



Drinks and treats on the way home at the Blue Berry Barn Cafe at Frankford were a welcome finish to a wonderful day.

Helen Tait

Birds

Saltmarsh near Rangers Station - clinking currawong, fantail, green rosella, grey shrike-thrush, magpie, masked lapwing and chicks, Tasmanian native hen, pallid cuckoo, pied oystercatcher, Richard's pipet, shelduck, skylark, striated fairy-wren, striated pardalote, white crested chat, white-faced heron

Bakers Beach Point - bronze wing, forest raven, masked lapwing, pied oystercatcher, silver gull, Yellow tailed black cockatoos

Ferns – *Dicksonia Antarctica*, soft treefern; *Pteridium esculentum*, bracken

Grasses – *Austrostipa stipoides*, coast speargrass; *Distichlis distichophylla*, Australian saltgrass; *Juncus* sp., rush.

Plants – *Acacia melanoxylon*, blackwood; *Acacia verticillata* subsp. *ovoidea*, prostate prickly moses; *Acacia verticillata* subsp. *verticillata*, prickly moses; *Banksia marginata*, silver banksia; *Bursaria spinosa*, prickly box; *Clematis microphylla*, small-leaf clematis; *Hydrocotyle* sp., pennywort; *Leptospermum scoparium*, common teatree; *Leucopogon* sp, beardheath; *Melaleuca ericifolia*, coast paperbark; *Melicytus* sp, tree violet; *Myoporum insulare*, common boobialla; *Urtica* sp., nettle

Saltmarsh - *Sarcocornia quinqueflora*, beaded glasswort; *Tecticornia arbuscula*, shrubby glasswort

WHAT'S ON

Queen Victoria Museum at Inveresk – HJ King: cameras and carburetors 27 August 2022 to 27 August 2023

HJ King was a founding member and the first President of the Launceston Field Naturalists Club. He is well known for his experimental photography and his love of motorcycles.

“He was an extremely talented amateur photographer, and used his photographs to document his outdoor explorations. He experimented with photographic processes, won prizes for his black and white photographs, and took some of the earliest Australian examples of civilian aerial photography”. From <https://www.qvmag.tas.gov.au/Whats-on/Museum-at-Inveresk/HJ-King-cameras-and-carburetors>

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 Coordinator 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 Coordinator 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 regarding availability and keys.

Field Centre Phone Number: (03) 6399 3361

Postal Address: 23 Skemps Road, Myrtle Bank

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

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

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