

THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

Volume LVII No.4 April/May 2024

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 : Andrew Smith, 0402 893 378
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:

August

No General Meeting this month

Thursday 8

Field Trip – Platypus House at Beauty Point

Saturday 31

Skemps Day – Track clearing on the property

September

Tuesday 3

Guest speaker: Dr Scott Bell will talk about his 3 month voyage with Sea Shepherd -
(Meeting in the Don Wing Lecture Theatre)

Thursday 5

Monthly Short Walk – Punchbowl and Queechy Lake Reserves

Saturday 21

Open Day at Skemps – Great Southern BioBlitz

October

Tuesday 1

Annual General Meeting followed by short General Meeting

Thursday 3

Monthly Short Walk – Old Mac's Farm – Wetlands and river walk

TBC

Field Trip – Tom Gibson Reserve for Wildflowers

Sunday 27

Skemps Day – Walk and talks, exploring the property

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

Skemps Report, February and March 2024

These two months started badly with the ride on mower becoming unrideable out near the boom gate. A split pin must have fallen off then a part holding the blades up fell off and was badly bent as the moving mower pushed it into the ground. It took two walks back to the container before I could get the blades to stay up so I could ride the mower back to the Centre. I then went home to get our trailer to bring the mower to town for repairs and we all mucked in to get it onto the trailer, not an easy task without proper ramps. Rob used his impressive pump to sort a slow leak in one tyre of our trailer. The mower was back at Skemps in two weeks for immediate use.

Then the Gravograph played up and I brought it home for Andrew to check. He bought a new belt to replace the worn one that was giving static shocks to the user and it is working fine.

Jeff, Karen and Rob have been working on Marion's Acacia Walk, adding more trees as we obtain them, watering them regularly and adding bigger cages to the earlier planting that are growing so well. Once we know that all the trees are doing well, we will sort out quality signs and this short walk will remind people of Marion and at the same time inform them about Tasmanian acacias.

February ended with another problem. A water leak had emptied two tanks during a dry spell, so I isolated the pipe to the outside toilet and 3/4 filled the main tank from the others. It took two weeks to find the leak as there were no big wet patches to explain where about 7,000 litres had gone. Jeff found a broken pipe behind the outside toilet and the water had all gone into the hole under this building. I found a replacement part at the tip shop then luckily the mini drought broke, just long enough to get all the tanks refilled. There does seem to be a leak in the header tank in the barn and this will not be an easy fix.

Five of us went to the Federation Corridor last Tuesday determined that these pickets would not defeat us. The trick seemed to be lots of wriggling, a good soaking and then make sure the picket puller was lifting straight up. This worked and the others were removed with one left to mark the bleed taps on the water lines from the settling tank. All the ones that gave us trouble were in a few inches of clay at the bottom, and this seemed to cause the issue somehow.

After removing the pickets, we were still left with the chicken wire on the ground and tangled in grass making it difficult to remove. While Jeff suggested leaving much of it on the ground Rob had a better idea. He tied a tow rope to the wire and pulled it out with his 4WD Prado. What a sight as the longest strand came out easily over half the fence in one go. With Robs help I used the grinder to cut this large section into more manageable pieces and we moved them together so they would be easy to see and avoid if these are still there when the next visitors are about.

Geoff and Karen did an impressive job on a section of the wire that required the removal of native grasses that were tangled through the wire.

Weed spraying and weed pulling, cleaning, firewood splitting, raking drains along driveway, cutting back tree ferns near roof water tank and various minor repairs have been done as usual and as predicted the small patch of slender thistle on the NW boundary is proving to be an issue.

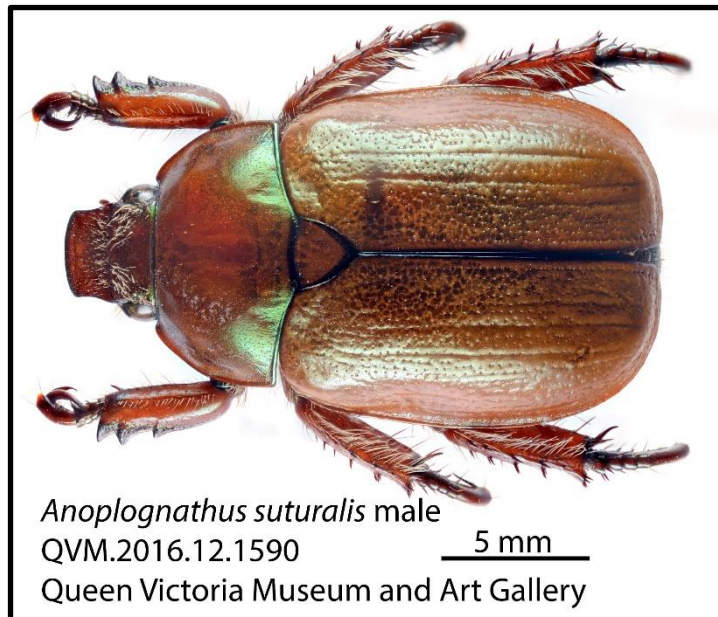
With all these dramas we have neglected the trails so if you can help by walking a trail, please contact me and I will add your name to my Tuesday text message list. Noel Manning

Simon Fearn April 2024, *Will the real Christmas beetle please stand up.*

Andrew introduced our presenter, Simon Fearn, who would talk on Christmas beetles with Andrew asking if it was correct he had found 600 or 800 insect species in his garden. He confirmed the number was actually over 1,000.

Simon started by telling us the subject interested him as while other states have multiple species known as Christmas beetles (mostly in the genus *Anoplognathus*), Tasmania has only one- *Anoplognathus suturalis*. This beetle is rarely seen. The species commonly recognised in Tasmania as a Christmas beetle is actually a stag beetle- *Lamprima aurata*. He then told us that beetles are incredibly diverse in size, structure, shape and colour, with a number of adaptations, such as horns, antlers and huge fore legs, and there is little known about the ecology of over 90% of them.

The first slide shown had two circles of beetles with the largest in Tasmania facing off with the largest from the rest of the world, appearing to be over three times the length of ours. Simon would be concentrating on the scarab beetles which includes the stag, passalid, hide, dung, rhinoceros, chafer, Christmas and flower chafer beetles. While we have only one passalid, the east coast of the



mainland has many, the flower chafers are mainly a tropical group, though we have one small one, and male stag beetles are distinguished by the large mandibles with which they fight.

The further north you go the greater the number of species to be found and the more colourful the beetles are. While some species are found all the way to Melbourne most do not get to Tasmania. Many are tropical species that moved south at the end of the last glacial event though most did not cross Bass Strait while some do get here by accident hitching a ride on planes, boats or the wind. Simon described a recent insect hunt at Beechford on a night with a warm air mass coming over Tasmania from the mainland and he was seeing moths and locusts that had crossed Bass Strait. According to Simon his pinpoint of light had been seen by these animals that included a moth not seen in Tasmania before and in Simon's words 'our very cold winters prevent them from setting up shop basically'.

Accompanied by a picture he told us the only true Christmas beetle in Tasmania was *Anoplognathus suturalis* which we would only see if went looking in the warmer eastern, coastal, woodland habitats. These are not an urban beetle instead their larvae, a white grub, feed on the roots of native grasses such as *Poa*. The adults feed on a variety of vegetation including eucalypt leaves and blossom, *Leptospermum* (tea tree) and they really like *Bursaria spinosa*, though even if you know where and when to look these are often hidden deep in the flower. They are not seen in the west of the state, have not been recorded on King Island, yet are common on Flinders Island. While the stag beetle we know as our Christmas beetle is seen in urban areas.

Speaking further on our false Christmas beetles, Simon told us there were around 35 stag beetles in Tasmania and he started this part of the talk with the distinctive *Sydnessus cornutus*. Known up the east coast of Australia, only 10 to 15 mm and with a very restrictive flying time they emerge in mid-February for a couple of weeks and though common these are rarely seen. The larvae live in rotting wood infested with brown rot fungus. All stag beetles have large mandibles mainly for fighting with other stag beetles, including for access to females or places attractive to females, though some use them to attack plants.

Moving on he told us there are three species of *Ceratognathus* in the state, active both day and night, with the similar sized *C. niger* covered in small tufts of hair looking like orange spots.

Simon then spoke of the ancient genus *Lissotes* which evolved in Tasmania and there are 20 species here with four on the mainland and while a few have a wide distribution most have very restrictive habitats making some quite rare. Every species has evolved slightly different mandibles as populations have become isolated in valleys, mountain tops or other restricted habitats.

Lissotes crenatus had been missing for over 200 years since being collected by Peron on the 1801 to 1803 French expedition captained by Baudin. Staff at QVMAG, using a translated copy of the ship's log, were able to establish where he had spent a week on King Island and did an insect survey there finding this to be a common species on the island. Simon noted that when you hear that a beetle has not been seen for a long time and is considered rare or extinct it may be that we do not know where or when to look. The talk moved to *L. launcestoni*, a wide spread animal, found in dry forests including most Launceston reserves. Larvae of beetles live in rotting wood preferring the humus layer between the wood and the ground, wood that has been down for at least five to six years, and although these consume the wood they derive their nourishment from the white rot fungus.

Simon said an interesting aspect of stag beetles was the size variation between males. Depending on the nutrients available to the larvae, they could be very large alpha males, dwarf males, or something in between, and the bigger males with their larger mandibles win the battles. With the flightless *Lissotes* beetles, the larger males stay close to where they hatched and fight for territory and females while the smaller ones emerge sooner and use their relatively longer legs to move further and faster looking for territory and females. Simon suggested these varied strategies allowed stag beetles to survive the harsh Australian conditions such as after droughts or fires.

Slides demonstrated the 'C' shape of the fully grown golden stag beetle larvae in his oval cell in the wood and at full growth it is from 35 to 40mm long. The next slide showed the fully developed male beetle which will wait in the tree, just under the surface, for warmer weather, emerging around Christmas, hence the name. After emerging these will fly to the



top of the smooth barked *Eucalyptus globulus* or *E. viminalis*, their favourites, looking for terminal shoots. Cutting the shoot with the mandible allows them to feed on the sap.

In other habitats, such as coastal areas, beetles will use different plants including *Ozothamnus turbinatus*, coast everlasting, the climbing vine *Clematis aristata*, mountain clematis, and *Allocasuarina verticillata*, she-oak. An image showed a mating pair with the much larger male completely covering the female to prevent access by other males. As the female has small, nonfunctioning mandibles the male chops off the head of the undeveloped plant to allow access to the female for feeding. One image showed many males or couples on a small *Allocasuarina* at the Bridport Wild Flower Reserve.

The bottom third of the mandibles are for cutting while the forward two thirds are for fighting, including picking up other males and throwing them off a twig or by angling his head, pushing the mandible under the smaller animal and tossing it off. Trees with active, larger males will have many defeated males on the ground below. From a posting on Facebook, Simon attended a garden and photographed a lilac with a mating couple on it. The image showed four leaves that had been cut off the main stem with the sap dripping out from the wounds. The male was showing a typical defensive posture by rearing up with Simon suggesting it considered him to be a gigantic male and a threat to its mating as Simon took the image.

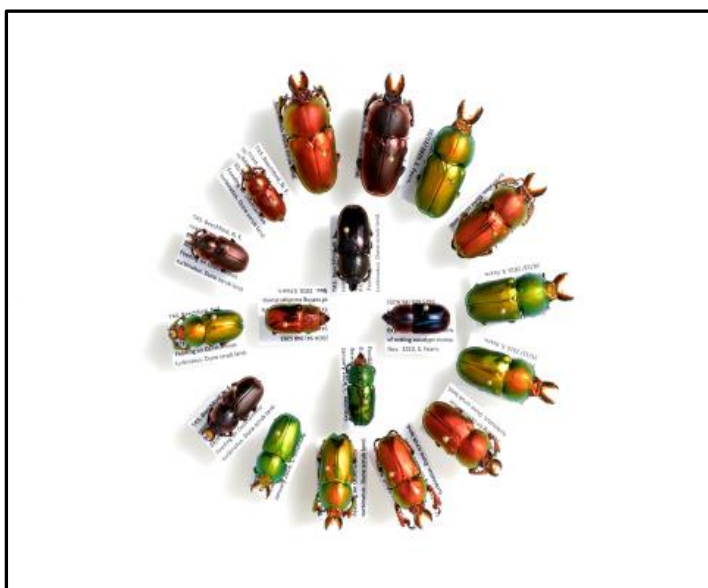
A look at the wing size between alpha and smaller males found that, as with the smaller *Lissotes* males having comparatively larger legs, the small stag beetles have comparatively larger wings allowing them to fly faster and further in search of even smaller males to defeat.

A slide with around 90 of these stag beetles showed the wide range of colour variation which Simon thought could be linked to variations in temperature, humidity or soil chemistry. The only known factor in this is that the darker purple ones are only found around the coast and in Launceston you only find the bronze or green ones. There does not appear to be a genetic difference as colour variation is well within flying distance of other populations and to confuse matters more, green ones can also occur on the coast.

A slide showed the huge colour and size variations in Tasmanian stag beetles with the largest 35mm while the smallest was only 12mm and as you move north up the Australian coast there are regional colour variations as well. While the females show the same range of

colours, their size does not vary that much.

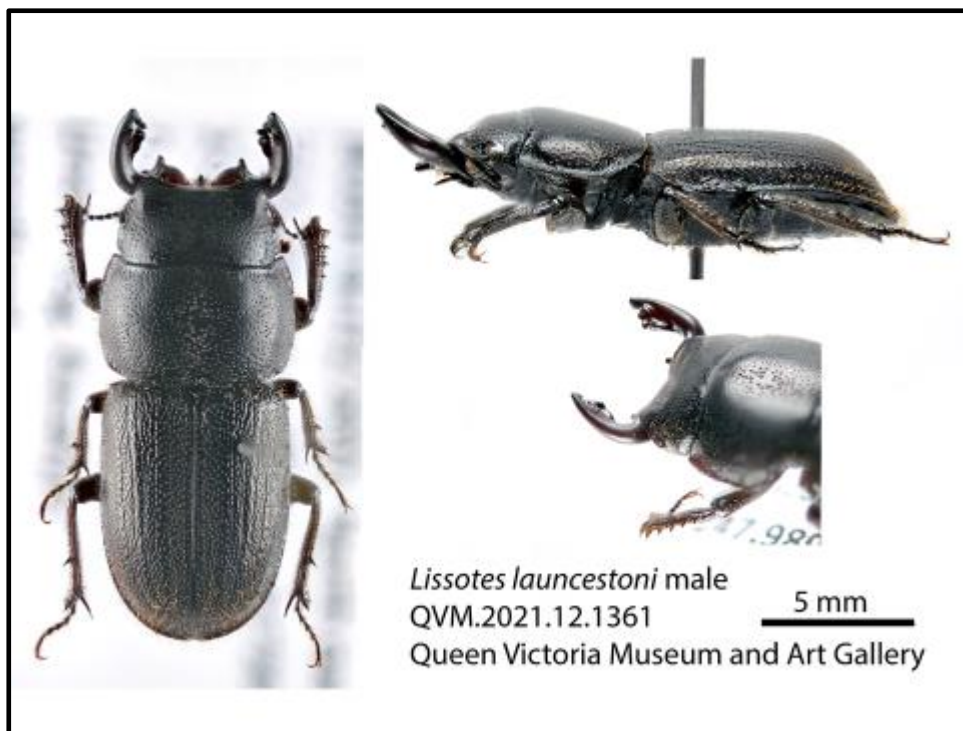
A series of slides showed beetles from the mainland and the mandibles were bigger the further north you went with Simon telling us the mandibles on those from north Queensland are maybe 5 times as long as the Tasmanian ones. Thousands of specimens had been checked in many collections and the mandibles measured showing a clear increase in size as you moved north up the Australian coast. There was no clear reason for this although Simon wondered if it



was the quick turnover of nutrients in the warm wet conditions of the tropical north, and in

his words ‘the tropics is just a revved up cycle of death and decay’. A slide of an animal from the Atherton Tablelands was, at 45mm including mandibles, as big as they get. There was laughter when we saw the very closely related species from Papua New Guinea as the huge mandibles were more than half as long as the body, a formidable looking creature.

Simon told us the females are similar in size throughout Australia and the dwarf males of the north are very similar to the alpha males of Tasmania in both body and mandible size. The last slide showed the rhino beetles *Xylotrupes australicus* which extend south only as far as northern NSW and also display south to north clinal variation in increasing horn size.



From a member question during the 14 or so minutes of Q and A, Simon explained the identification code used by the museum for each specimen. Slide 11 had a *Lissotes launcestoni* male with the code ‘QVM.2021.12.1361’ meaning it was from the QVMAG collection, added to the data base in 2021, 12 is an internal code for an insect and the last means it is the 1,361 specimen registered into the collection in that year. These registration numbers, along with all the additional collection data for each specimen are uploaded to the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) and if someone wishes to examine this specimen it can be quickly found and there is much more information, including where and when it was collected, habitat, latitude and longitude and who collected it.

The golden stag beetles live for about three months with the males dying off first and the females looking for a tree stump to lay the eggs where she bores a hole near the base. Surprisingly, we learnt it takes three years from egg to emerging adult, two years from egg to fully formed larvae, they pupate around March and the adult beetle forms a few weeks later spending the winter and spring fully formed then emerges around Christmas. There is a three



to one ratio of males to females which drives the male conflict and the cycle is much faster in the warmer tropics.

His explanation to those who claimed there were not as many beetles today as there were when we were young was that we spent our childhood summers

playing outdoors and so it was mainly just a perception that there are less. Also, up until the eighties the Hydro did not treat their power poles so that every 30 metres on most streets there was a nursery for the beetle grubs and in urban areas trees are often cut down leaving stumps for the beetle eggs while forestry coups have dead limbs in amongst the growing trees providing food for the larvae and the emerging beetles, especially during that period before the growing trees shade the ground.

Simon pointed to a sample of the collection for us to examine, before Andrew gave thanks and led the acclamation.

Noel Manning

'Images in the above article supplied by QVMAG courtesy Simon Fearn'

Field Trip - April Friday 12 & Saturday 13 - Gowrie Park and Erriba

After an early start we headed down the Bass Highway for what proved to be a very interesting field trip arriving within 10 minutes or so of each other and our hostess, Kristen. She explained her fascination with Mount Roland, as by studying the mountain and its biodiversity, she got a feel for the area where she lived. She had Google Map pictures to let us see where the wildlife cameras had been set and to give us an idea of the terrain we would encounter, including topography and vegetation types.

<https://www.mountrolandlandcare.org.au/lifeonthemountain> is the internet site to see more about the mountain and what is there.

It must have been close to 10 am when we started our walk up the mountain on a cool, clear morning. Kristen and Janet would show four members and visitor Ian, from the Australian Plant Society Northern group, what was to be found on the mountain and Kristen would deploy one of the wildlife cameras. I asked Ian for information on a large conglomerate



boulder seen early in the walk, only to have him point out there was a sign with this information next to the rock. Disregarding my faux pas he then gave an interesting mini talk on the geomorphology of the area.

It soon became steep though most of us pressed on finally reaching the T junction with Mount Roland to the left and Mount van Dyke to the right. We lunched there and a troupe of Army cadets went past heading back to the car park after an exercise on the mountain. Wanting to get back to Launceston before dusk and the animals likely to be on the road, Ian returned to the car park, and I joined him. The other four headed off to finish the climb, encountering

another troupe of cadets further up the mountain and we think they were doing a map reading exercise. **(Conglomerate rock Image above & image below on Dennett's property KM)**

Andrew slept in his van in the O'Neills Campground, Helen in a tent in a fenced off area next to O'Neills Creek, while Karen and I were in a cabin at the Wilderness Village. As the night closed in, we started the walk to the campground to catch up with them only to see the van heading towards us, so we all returned to our cabin for pre-dinner snacks and drinks.

Saturday was cold as we prepared for the second part of our weekend. Having cleaned up we joined the others as they finished breakfast on a quickly warming day. While sitting around pencilling the names of plants seen the previous day, we realised we were running late to get to Erriba Rise, the covenanted property of John and Gail Dennett. Louise, Roy and Professor Ben Richardson, from UTAS Environmental Law Department, joined us at the property when we finally arrived. Ben was the guest speaker at the March plant society meeting and had driven up from Hobart to look at this covenanted property.

During the wonderful morning tea supplied by the Dennett's, coconut and cranberry cake washed down with fresh tea and coffee, John explained the origins of covenants and gave a detailed history of the property. We then headed off for a



walk, mostly around the non-covenanted portion, through a section being enthusiastically restored by their money and hard work and a mini perched wetland of melaleuca.

John was not wrong about how steep it was into the heavily forested gully that was under covenant and as we looked over the edge from a basalt escarpment it did not feel safe to stand on the hexagonal tops of the basalt columns. The walk continued mostly on a path edged with small rocks courtesy of Gail interspersed with painted stones decorated and placed there by visiting grandchildren and neighbouring children. We ventured into a poa field, rescued from a bracken wasteland, with the planting of 5,000 grass plants with another 2,000 planted elsewhere. A small burn had been done here to promote further growth and it was intended to do more burns later. As the walk continued, we noted many of the 4,000 trees planted over the non-covenanted parts of the property, including melaleuca in the wetland and *Acacias* (*dealbata*, *melanoxylon* & *mucronata*) hakea, dogwood, myrtles and sassafras, although the former is quite slow growing.

After last drinks with the Dennett's, we said our goodbyes and headed home after a very impressive weekend field trip thanks to Helen's hard work and her connections. We drove north to Forth then on to the Bass Highway at Devonport glad to have 100 kilometres of straight road after the narrow, twisting and hilly roads encountered after Elizabeth Town on the way there. We just made it to the Christmas Hills raspberry farm in time for a 300-gram tub of their raspberries dipped in dark chocolate. Yum.

Noel Manning

Macro-invertebrate Monitoring on Skemps Creek – Saturday 4 May



On a cool sunny Saturday the Tuesday volunteers did overtime for the autumn check of the creek health. As we enjoyed a cuppa and the warming sun we noted many birds playing on the grass. Noel also saw what appeared to be a quoll scat close to the western side of the Centre and many wombat scats were found, some quite fresh.

Noel and I grabbed the equipment required and headed to the Bottom Falls track to take our sample. At our usual collection point there was only a trickle of water making the sample collecting difficult. A little further up-stream, Noel managed to obtain a sample from an overhang of the bank and he also washed off a few larger rocks. While there was little flow after an extensive dry spell, the build-up of silt and evidence of rock movements suggesting a very strong flow at some stage since our last visit.

Walking back we found a small holly tree seen on a previous visit to the area and gave it the usual cut and paste treatment. During a post lunch walk I found a single Spanish heath dealt with by Roy and Noel some years ago which was making a



comeback, another job for the list.

Back at the Centre we set up the large trays to look for critters amongst the debris in the sample. We found cased-caddis, segmented worms, riffle and whirligig beetles, and dragonfly, stonefly and mayfly nymphs. Seven species were found and then Noel found some large versions of two nymph species which were among the more sensitive to poor water quality.

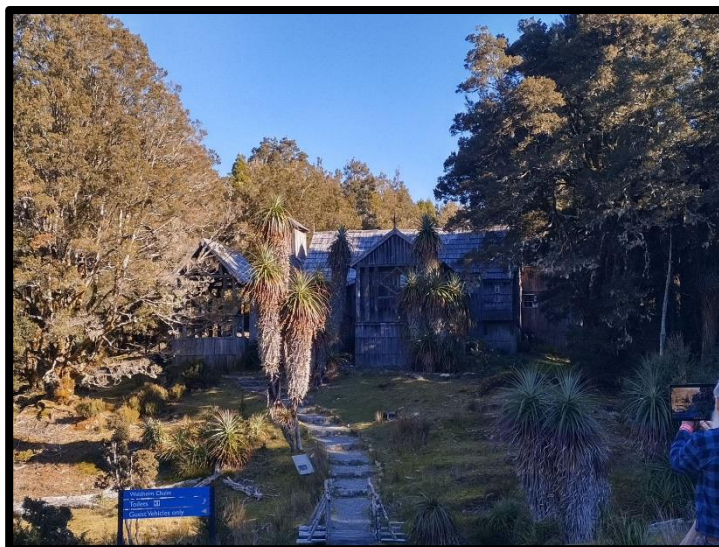
(Images page 9 & 10 KM)



Post lunch the clouds hid the sun and the day quickly cooled so we gave ourselves an early mark and headed home knowing the creek was in reasonable health. Karen Manning

Weindorfer Day 2024 – Sunday 5 May

LFNC received an invitation from the Weindorfer Day committee to attend the Weindorfer Memorial day held in celebration of outstanding Field Naturalists, Kate and Gustav Weindorfer. At short notice we made this the LFNC Field trip for May. Five members attended at Wilmot, and Tom T and I took the guided bus tour to Cradle Mountain.



We were very lucky to have a tour guide who is an ecologist and was; well versed in his subject, well experienced with guiding, and ethically connected to his work. It was a short visit but we learnt, or were reminded of, many facts and stories associated with the surrounding country and the mountains.

It was a perfect; still and clear day to visit this gorgeous place. Thanks to these original field nats who reached this place via wet and wild trekking, and their efforts to bring forth our first national parks, there is sufficient documentation of species present for Tom and I to take a holiday from recording, (we missed having note-taker Karen with us) for me to recall my honeymoon spent there a 100 or so years ago, and for us to just enjoy the sight of the wombats grazing on the alpine meadows there. The vegetation of iconic note was; the Pandani, the deciduous beech in its deciduous colour and the King Billy pine.

The Weindorfer chalet built of King Billy is now replaced by a replica. I remembered staying in the original Chalet as a child, as did another even older visitor whose father had known and worked with Weindorfer.

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Images page 10 & 11 supplied by Tom Treloggen

The new Viewing Centre built at Dove Lake provided a 'chocolate box' image of the mountain gained from behind the huge windows of a bunkered shelter. This structure has become necessary to cater for the thousands of people who constantly come to visit with modern day expectations of non-wild comforts contrary to the wild nature of this place, all a bit discombobulating for me.

However as they say in the bush - a good day was had by all and good things were preserved

Helen Tait

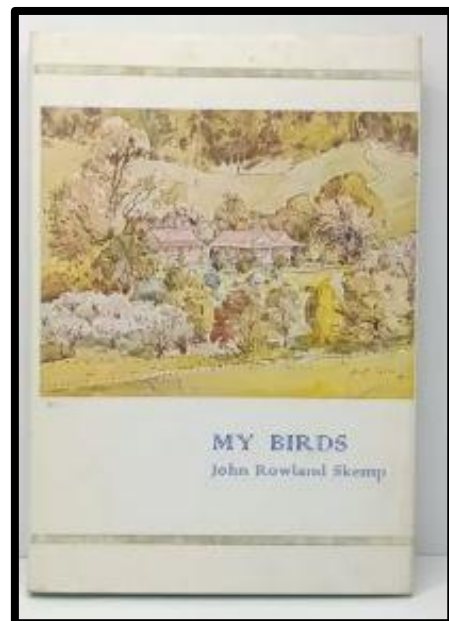
John Skemp Memorial Lecture - Tuesday 7 May - Member Speaker Geoff Shannon from Birdlife Tasmania

Andrew introduced member Geoff Shannon and his presentation for the John Skemp Memorial Lecture on turning our observations in nature into science.

Geoff started by apologizing for the technical difficulties which prevented him from showing the PowerPoint presentation. He then told us that John Skemp was a good field naturalist as he recorded what he had observed, and this was shared as it went into a book written in the last months of his life.

The first 'naturalists' he mentioned were Gilbert White (1720-1793), Charles Darwin (1809-1882) who started out as a geologist and in modern times David Attenborough (1926-). All did impressive work with their observations, though importantly, passed on this work through letters, books or TV documentaries.

He said we all enjoy the outdoors and make observations though it is important to make accurate records to allow this knowledge to be shared along with the science behind it. He gave examples of studies into birds pointing to declines in numbers over time. This data can be used for political action if there are issues in the landscape for a particular animal.



While in the past people used diaries, the modern way was using computers and apps and he mentioned the following touching on the issues and limitations with these; iNaturalist, E-bird, Birddata, Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) and Natural Values Atlas (NVA).

Ideally when doing a bird survey there should be three people on a team; one to watch, one to listen and one to record.

After a short Q & A session Helen gave the thanks and led the acclamation. Noel Manning

Birds at the Ribbon of Blue – Saturday 11 May

As a follow up to Geoff's talk, Karen and I joined a walk along the Ribbon of Blue following the North Esk from Hobblers Bridge Reserve heading toward Henry Street. There were 10 of us ably led by Megan, a member of Bird Life Tasmania, whose impressive camera captured the images here.

While there was little to see close up, on the more popular parts of the track, we went north following the river and were soon rewarded with many close encounters of some of the 33 species seen. The numerous silvereyes, fairy wrens and other small birds flitted about or were only seen in the distance making them difficult to catch with the camera.

Some of the larger birds were more obliging. A Grey Shrike-thrush spent some time ripping bark from a eucalyptus, offering many photo opportunities, and was still working hard when we moved on. At a request from one member of our group it finally shared its rich and melodious song. A great egret sat on a dead tree not bothered by our proximity and posed for many photos. Told that raptors were nearly always seen a swamp harrier gave us a brief view as it swung by and later Megan photographed a brown falcon.

There was more than birds for the keen eye. At the end of a low hanging thin branch I spotted a small collection of intertwined bits and pieces forming a home of some sort, spider's maybe! It was about three centimetres long with no obvious opening.

At the junction with the main track two members left us and from then on we contended with many walkers, some with dogs and cyclists as well. We exchanged pleasantries, made way for the more energetic runners and cyclists and patted a few dogs.

Karen and I walked through to Glebe Gardens for a snack and drink with Joee joining us for the walk as she was expecting a lift at Henry Street.

A rewarding birding walk and we will be going on others in the future and next time I will remember the binoculars.

Noel Manning



Image supplied courtesy of Megan Byrd

Birds Seen or Heard: Australian Magpie, Australian Reed Warbler, Brown Falcon, Brown Thornbill, Cattle Egret, Chestnut Teal, Crescent Honeyeater, Domestic Goose, Eastern Spinebill, European Starling, Eurasian Coot, Blackbird Forest Raven, Great Cormorant, Great Egret, Grey Butcherbird, Grey Fantail, Grey Shrike-thrush, Laughing Kookaburra, Little Wattlebird, Masked Lapwing, Musk Lorikeet, New Holland Honeyeater, Pacific Black Duck, Rock Pigeon, Silvereye, Spotless Crake, Spotted Dove, Spotted Pardalote, Superb Fairywren, Swamp Harrier, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo, Yellow Wattlebird, Tasmanian Native-hen

Book Launch at Fullers Bookshop, Hobart - Thursday 9 May

Lucinda of Forty South Publishing gave the Acknowledgement of Country before introducing member Andrew who then introduced Nigel Forteath for the official launch of his impressive book, *A Photographic Guide to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Tasmania*. Kurt of Forty South, who had collaborated with Nigel on the design of the book, was also there making for a dozen or so enthusiastic people with three Fuller's staff in attendance.

Nigel started by expressing his pleasure at the rain experienced on the way down, so welcome after a three month dry spell, and Karen and I agreed as we had discussed this on the drive south hoping Launceston was getting its share. Nigel was soon into the introduction, in the cafe at the back of the store, with a screen showing the cover photograph from his book. He started with a brief history of his early life, studies and his introduction to the natural world that would occupy so much of his life.

Over the next 30 plus minutes we were given a brief overview of these interesting animals in Tasmania and elsewhere, some of their more noteworthy characteristics and habits, followed by pictures of the more standout ones from the book with a description of the interesting animals. During his research Nigel had taken 2,800 photographs.

There followed a short and enthusiastic Q & A session, showing the audience was hungry for more and, most importantly, keen to use the book to get students interested in the natural world, possibly with a citizen science project. The official proceeding finished with Nigel signing purchases before Andrew drove him home.

We spent the night in Hobart, happy with the success of the launch, and looking forward to the Launceston event the following week.

Book launch at Petrarch's Bookshop, Launceston – Thursday 16 May

It was a welcome wet evening when we went to Petrarch's Book Shop for the Launceston launch of the book with 35 in attendance with Rhonda, of Petrarch's, giving the Acknowledgement of Country before introducing member Andrew, who was MC for the event.

With no screen to repeat the PowerPoint presentation of the Hobart launch we were treated to a more detailed history of Nigel's life, upbringing, education and early working life, including the fact that the varied places of his education always included a nearby river. Again he gave details of some of the animals in the book to pique our interest and we laughed at a couple of his amusing stories. He had done his PhD on the largest sand dune lake in Britain, Loch of Strathbeg and he was asked to help a flamingo stuck in the ice of the loch and he wondered what it was doing there.

During the Q & A he was asked how he was able to take such impressive photographs and we learnt that he had a portable freezer system and having cooled the animal for a two and a half minutes he had about two minutes to position it and take his pictures. His dining room was his laboratory for these studies and photographs and if an animal escaped the cat could always find it for him to retrieve and continue his work.

As well as the information on his photographic technique we also learnt that in the time of his studies the warming climate had allowed rare species at the start to establish in Tasmania. The launch was well received and Nigel spent some time autographing copies for an appreciative audience.

Noel Manning

Skemps Day – Saturday 25 May – Visit and review the Conservation Covenant areas on the property

On this clear autumn day several LFNC members* got together at Skemps to look at the conservation covenants on the property. The purpose was to understand the nature and purpose of these contracts, what are our obligations under the covenants and to get an idea of the species they are intended to protect and how these are faring.

Recently, many of our group heard Professor Ben Richardson talk about conservation covenants at a meeting of the Australian Plants Society Tasmania. Ben also joined in our LFNC excursion in April, when we visited John and Gail Dennett's property at Erriba; both Ben and John are lawyers with specialist knowledge of conservation law. John and Gail also have personal experience in managing a covenanted property. This provided context, insight and motivation to examine our own Skemps covenants.

There are actually two, very similar covenants, dated 2004 and 2011. Collectively, they apply to all of the property except the area of the centre building and the paddock it stands in. Two triangular sections along the Targa Hill road boundary are omitted from the first covenant, and these are covered by the second. Noel helpfully explained that these sections originally belonged to a Miss Imlach until her death in 2009. The club purchased these sections in 2010, and the second covenant was registered the following year. The vegetation on these sections is different from the adjacent sections, because they were once cleared for the timber and have been repopulated, largely by silver wattles.

The two rather dry looking documents:

TASMANIAN LAND TITLES OFFICE
Instrument Creating
Restrictive Covenants in Gross
Section 102 Land Titles Act 1980.
Section 34 Nature Conservation Act 2002.

Original 1999
C514664
ARC 019295

DESCRIPTION OF LAND			
Servient Tenement of the Register			
Volume	Folio	Volume	Folio
257097	1	204200	2
part - being the land marked "Conservation Covenant Area 1" and "Conservation Covenant Area 2" on the plan attached hereto			
253111	1	234728	1
part - being the land marked "Conservation Covenant Area 4" on the plan attached hereto			
97114	2		
whole - being the land marked "Conservation Covenant Area 0" on the plan attached hereto			

I/We Launceston Field Naturalists Club Inc.
Of RA 2, Myrtle Bank Road, Myrtle Bank.
in Tasmania being the registered proprietor of the land comprised in the above folios of the Register (the servient land) covenants with JUDITH LOUISE JACKSON being and as the Minister administering the Nature Conservation Act 2002 (the Minister) in accordance with Section 34 of the Nature Conservation Act 2002 to the intent that the burden of the covenants runs with and binds each and every part of the servient land and that the benefit is created in favour of the Minister to observe the stipulations set out in the attached annexure pages.

In witness I/We Launceston Field Naturalists Club Inc.
and the Minister have this day set our hands and seals.

Date: 20 February 2004

Land Titles Office Use Only
REGISTERED
14 APR 2004
NCC Version 2
THE BACK OF THIS FORM MUST NOT BE USED

TASMANIAN LAND TITLES OFFICE
Instrument Creating
Restrictive Covenants in Gross
Section 102 Land Titles Act 1980.
Section 34 Nature Conservation Act 2002.

D11473

DESCRIPTION OF LAND			
Servient Tenement of the Register			
Volume	Folio	Volume	Folio
50171	1	50171	2
part - being the land marked "Conservation Covenant Area 1" on the plan attached hereto			
whole - being the land marked "Conservation Covenant Area 2" on the plan attached hereto			

I/We Launceston Field Naturalists Club Incorporated of RA 2 Myrtle Bank Road, Myrtle Bank in Tasmania being the registered proprietor of the land comprised in the above folios of the Register (the servient land) covenants with the HONOURABLE BRIAN WIGHTMAN being and as the Minister administering the Nature Conservation Act 2002 (the Minister) in accordance with Section 34 of the Nature Conservation Act 2002 to the intent that the burden of the covenants runs with and binds each and every part of the servient land and that the benefit is created in favour of the Minister to observe the stipulations set out in the attached annexure pages.

In witness I/We Launceston Field Naturalists Club Incorporated and the Minister have this day set our hands and seals.


Date: 17th September 2011

SIGNED SEALED AND DELIVERED by the Honourable BRIAN WIGHTMAN being and as the Minister administering the Nature Conservation Act 2002 in the presence of:

Witness
Brenda Marshall
Address
57 ROBERT NEW TOWN
Occupation
ADVISER

REGISTERED
Land Titles Office Use Only
28 SEP 2011
NCC Version 2
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Vol. 50171 Fol. 2



Print name: A.V. Pegler
Position: President

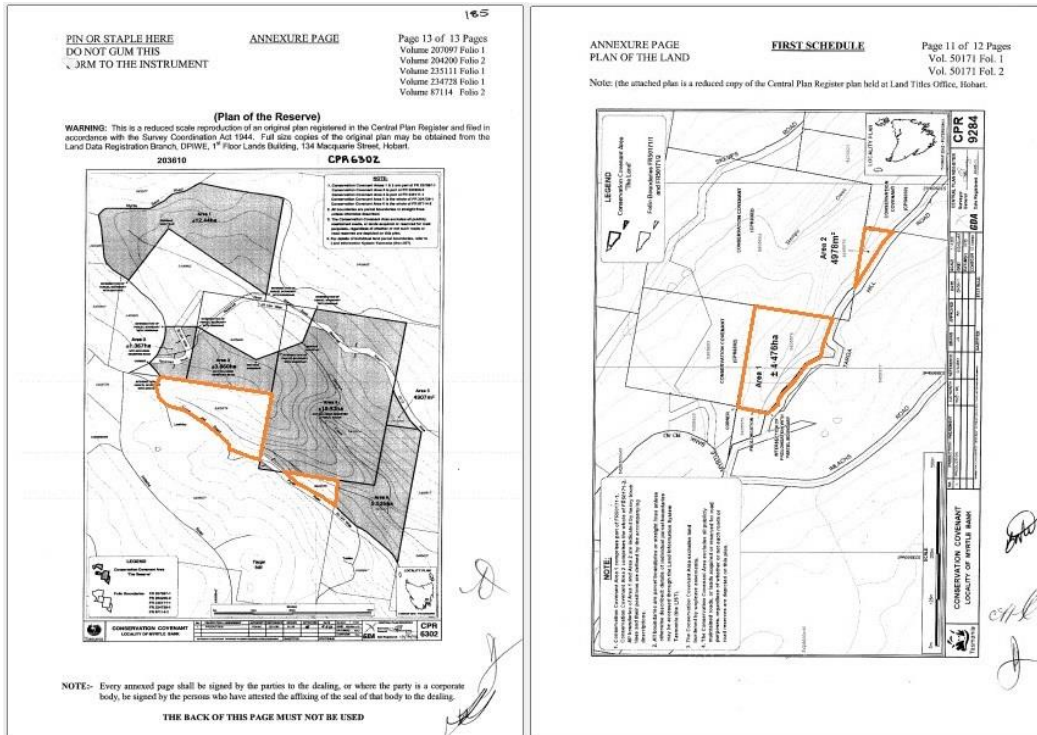
Print name: JOHN GRANT SIMMONS
Position: Club Property Manager

We noticed

Of the 15 pages in each document, most is given to preamble, definitions and disclaimers! The actual obligations of the owner (us) are very simple; in 'return' for \$6,000 paid to us in 2004, we are not to:

- Harvest trees or remove firewood,
- Clear vegetation,
- Remove soil,
- Introduce non-native species,
- Dump rubbish or effluent,
- Subdivide,
- Allow grazing,
- Light fires (i) or use unapproved chemicals

The areas covered by the two covenants; note how the 2011 area fills in the missing parts from 2004:



With the covenants is a Management Plan – this details what we intend to do to meet our contractual requirements. It also lists the species of concern and their status (note, not all necessarily occur on the property, however they are known from the vicinity and Skemps has likely habitat for these):



Skemps Snail



Engaeus orramakunna

Flora Species:	Common name:	Status:
Barbarea australis	native wintercress	endangered
Baumea gunnii	slender twig rush	rare
Blechnum cartilagineum	gristle fern	vulnerable
Isolepis habra	alpine club rush	rare
Pomaderris intermedia	lemon dogwood	rare
Pimelea pauciflora	poison rice flower	rare
Juncus amabilis	gentle juncus	rare

Flora Species:	Common name:	Status:
Fauna Species		
Engaeus orramakunna	Mt Arthur burrowing crayfish	vulnerable
Astacopsis gouldi	giant freshwater crayfish	vulnerable
Charopidae sp. 'Skemps'	Skemps snail	rare
Litoria raniformis	green and gold frog	vulnerable

With the covenants demystified, we talked about Skemps, what a wonderful asset it is and how we can use it to extend our knowledge of nature and encourage others to do so too. It offers wonderful opportunity for long term studies by members as well as outside researchers, for evaluating conservation and regeneration methods, and for socializing too. This all plays nicely into the club's strategy of becoming more engaged and more scientific in our activities.

Several specific projects were suggested, it will be wonderful if members pick up on some of these in the coming months – it would be nice to see a report on some of these in this newsletter in future months and years!

- Capture existing paper-records (including the wonderful Skemps herbarium) in iNaturalist
- Surveying the property for the species of interest and recording their presence and extent over time
- Regenerating some of the paddock areas
- Making Skemps available for researchers who wish to study species or systems at Skemps
- Setting up a Skemps project in iNaturalist

* Noel Manning, Karen Waldon, Andrew Smith, Helen Tait, Katie Fuller and Dave Allen.

Additional Information

Club Outings:

- Are held during a weekend following the General Meeting. 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/>

Emails: president@lfnc.org.au secretary@lfnc.org.au

program@lfnc.org.au newsletter@lfnc.org.au

treasurer@lfnc.org.au

Find us on 



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