



THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

Volume LIII No. 1 October/November 2019

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 : Mrs Prue Wright, 0438 410 192
Hon. Secretary : Mr Phillip Brumby, 0407 664 554
Hon. Treasurer : Mrs Karen Manning, 0363 442 277

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

Program:

December

Friday 27

Field Trip – Rockpool survey at East Beach, 6.30 pm start

January

Friday 17 to Sunday 19 January

Ben Lomond National Park (see page 8 for further details)

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

Annual General Meeting – Sunday 6 October & Tuesday 5 November

The Annual General meeting was held on Sunday October 6th at Skemps and on Tuesday November 5th 2019 at Scotch Oakburn College.

On Sunday, October 6th 2019 a number of matters including Confirmation of the minutes of the 2018 AGM, The Presidents Report, The Treasurers report were received.

Following the Treasurers report Rod Holden proposed that prior to the Election of Officers being conducted that members present should be briefed on the statutory and governance requirements of officers and ordinary members of committee. After a lengthy briefing by Rod it was agreed by those present that the Annual General meeting should be suspended until a special general meeting could be conducted to ratify a new constitution for the club.

On Tuesday, November 5th the annual general meeting was reconvened at 7.30pm. An election for office holders and ordinary committee members was held as for all but the Treasurer position there were more nominees than positions. Roy Skabo was elected as the returning officer.

The following officers were elected President Prue Wright, Vice President Phillip Brumby, Secretary Phillip Brumby, Treasurer Karen Manning; ordinary members elected were Helen Tait, Stephen Grieve and Rhys Manning.

Nigel Forteath was unanimously reappointed as was our Patron and Jeff Battersby was appointed as the Club's Auditor.

Special General Meeting – To Ratify a New Constitution

The Committee of Management with the guidance of Rod Holden and others identified that the constitution was outdated and in need of renewing.

Following a range of consultations, a draft new constitution was developed and presented to members.

A special general meeting to ratify a new constitution for the Club was held on Tuesday 5th November 2019 at Scotch Oakburn College. Following member discussion, the constitution was endorsed.

New Members

We would like to welcome Kay Bailey, Bernadette Willey, Tom Astbury and Matthew Cloudsdale to the Club and look forward to them attending our meetings, field trips and Skemps days.

Skemps – Water Monitoring – Sunday 27 October

A sunny morning at Skemps today. Noel and John headed off to collect the water sample, while Karen set up the trays and other items required to remove the water bugs into the trays for identification. While waiting their return, some local visitors arrived and were shown over the building and taken for a short walk along the grassland to where we had seen echidnas from the building and a good spot to point out areas of interest on the property.

Once the sample had settled we set about removing the bugs and sorted them into the trays. Once we were satisfied that we had found all the bugs, John and I worked through the identification key and used the microscope to confirm a few of the bugs, before putting them back in the bucket for return to the creek. Today we found:

Acarina – Mites

Amphipoda – Sideswimmers

Coleoptera – Water penny, Diving beetle and Beetle larvae

Diptera – Chironomid, Craneflies, Blackflies

Ephemeroptera – Mayflies

Hemiptera – Water strider
Plecoptera – Stoneflies
Trichoptera – Cased and free-living caddis

The total grade for our find was 46.0, divided by 8, the number of taxa present, gave us a Signal 2 score of 5.8. We are pleased to advise that this score indicates excellent water quality, with little or no environmental degradation.

Karen Manning

Field Trip – Tuesday 29 October – Rock pool Survey at East Beach

Where has all the Rock Pool Life Gone? The evening of Oct 29th was our first of a planned series of surveys of the rock pools at East Beach. The aim is to survey the same pools over 3 months – on the day after New Moon – and approximately at the same time of day, with the tide height at approximately the same level.

This has been our first opportunity for 3 years as the lowest Low Tides have not co-operated with daylight hours/weekends, etc. Until 2016 we made annual visits to East Beach or Bakers Beach, since 2010. Each year we came across more and more creatures that intrigued us – perhaps as we became more adept at hunting for them. Apart from an abundance of seaweeds, we have found that there are many more species of crabs, worms, sea stars and even barnacles than we ever dreamed of. Most years we found a blue-ringed octopus or two, we discovered what a nudibranch is and found how beautiful sea slugs can be.

But back to Tuesday 29th. A small group of us turned up, along with our friend Darcie Leong from NRM who brought with her a quadrat which we normally use for the saltmarsh monitoring. This is one metre square, with 10cm squares within. It gives us the opportunity to contain our area of search, and also to check that we are in the same area next time.

The pool was a little above the normal area – that seemed to be covered in sand and just “not right”. We laid the quadrat across the chosen pool in the rocks and started to peel back the layers of seaweed. First the common kelp, then others – some we could identify, others not. But where were the Star fish? Anemones? Crabs? There were none! – not even the notorious introduced Porcelain Crab (NZ Halfcrab). There were a few Sea Squirts amongst the seaweeds, and Black Nerites clinging to the rocks. A couple of immature Chitons, a Ribbed Top-shell or two, a Lined whelk and a Striped conniwink. A couple of large Limpets, and, when we turned over a rock before leaving, a scuttling crab and 3 very large Chitons. Very little else. And so so disappointing.

On the 28th November at 8pm the tide will be even lower (33cm). This shouldn't affect the pool we were surveying as it was above the low tide, but hopefully we can find some of the usual animals lower down as well.

Prue Wright

Marine plants: *Caulerpa flexilis*, fern caulerpa; *Caulocystis uvifera*, grapeweed; *Chaetomorpha* sp., green tangleweed; *Cystophora expansa*, expansive Cystophora; *Ecklonia radiata*, common kelp; *Hormosira banksia*, Neptune's necklace; *Liagora wilsoniana*, southern liagora; *Phyllospora comosa*, crayweed; *Posidonia Australis*, southern strapweed; *Ulva australis*, southern sea lettuce

Seashells: *Austrocochlea constricta*, ribbed top-shell x8; *Austrocochlea* sp., x1; *Bembicium narum*, striped conniwink x1; *Cellana solida*, orange-edged limpet x6; *Cominella lineolata*, lined whelk x1; *Nerita atramentosa*, western black nerite x36; *Sypharochiton pelliserpentis*, snakeskin chiton x7

Miscellaneous: Crabs (tiny) x3, *Herdmania fimbriae*, ascidians x12; Bryozoan (crusty ring around the stem of a seagrass) and a pink sponge



Herdmania fimbriae, ascidian (KM)

General Meeting - Tuesday 5 November

Guest Speaker – Dr. Darcie Leong

Wetlands & Macroinvertebrate Monitoring

Prue introduced Darcie who would be talking about the macroinvertebrate water monitoring in the Tamar Estuary, an ongoing study by Toni Furlonge who had since moved on.

Darcie started by telling us that there was a monthly check of water quality with the parameters being temperature, pH, electrical conductivity, turbidity, dissolved oxygen, nutrients and metals. Also, that Toni had recently added a bi-annual check of biological content, macroinvertebrates and algae.

The health of the waterway is gauged by the presence or absence of key species with different bugs assigned a sensitivity grade, 1 for most tolerant up to 10 for the most sensitive to pollutants. A chart gave us a small sample of these bugs in four categories, very intolerant, moderately intolerant, fairly tolerant and very tolerant of pollutants and this is done under the Australian River Assessment Scheme (AUSRIVAS) which has been going for 25 years.

The sampling is State specific, usually done in autumn and spring as the summer and winter tend to be too extreme and is done in the riffle and the stream edge and sometimes in the deeper slower moving pools. There is also an important multi page habitat assessment form looking at the substrate composition, noting the percentage of silt, gravel and cobble, including using a ruler to measure the size of the rocks with the presence of cobble with bed rock covered in moss being important. Other factors are the percentage of riffle, run and pool in the sample area, the bank and stream width and an assessment of the riparian vegetation.

While the water bug assessment can be done in the office it is better done in the field and another chart showed a sample of the bugs we would expect to find and Darcie told us that caddis, stone and may fly larvae are the three families most sensitive to pollutants.

Once done the data is entered using the AUSRIVAS modelling software based on State, season and habitat and scored against the expected values of a similar, pristine environment. A chart showed the various values with 'X' being >1.14, more found than expected which may indicate a biodiversity hot spot or mild organic enrichment. 'A' 0.85-1.14, index within range of the central 80% of reference sites, 'B' 0.56-0.84, fewer families than expected: potential mild impact on water and/or habitat quality. 'C' 0.27-0.55, considerably fewer families than expected due to moderate to severe impact on water and/or habitat quality, 'D' <0.27, very few families collected: highly degraded with very poor water and/or habitat quality.

Darcie showed us maps with the six sites of the macroinvertebrate collection in the mid-upper and upper zones of the kanamaluka/Tamar Estuary and told us that five collections had been done in autumn and spring since 2017, the sites were Swan Point, Rosevears, Tamar Island, the Tailrace, Tamar Marine and the Yacht Club/Hallam's.

A slide showed seven of the macroinvertebrates commonly found at all sites and the next another four confined to specific sites. We were told that it took a minimum of 20 minutes to photograph these tiny creatures which were mostly from 2 to 8 mm in length and that while the tiny crab, with a body 4 mm across was as big as it would get, some were larvae forms of familiar bugs with the tiny *Diptera ephydriidae* being the larvae form of the shore fly and *Diptera tipulidae* a crane fly. The *Nereidae succinea*, a worm like animal of maybe 35 mm, had impressive jaws as it is carnivorous and Darcie wondered how the *Ostracoda cytherideidae* was found and photographed as it is a microinvertebrate, i.e. less than 2 mm and not visible to the naked eye, with this specimen being only 1.5 mm.

The next slide showed a special family and we were told that these pictures adorned the walls of Tony Furlonge's home. These were *Caprellidae carpella*, skeleton shrimp, and a male, female and juvenile were represented in the pictures.

Darcie then moved onto the conclusions reached from the data collected, even though she had not done the full work on this, using richness, the number of species found, and abundance, the quantity found. On the Y-Axis we saw the Menhinick's index which is a form of species richness that takes into account the size of the sample, the bigger the number the more diverse, while the X-Axis showed the year and whether autumn or spring.

There was a graph for each site with Swan Point and Tamar Marine showing an upward trend in richness and the others a decrease while Tamar Marine showed a downward trend in abundance and the others an increase which was the opposite to the richness places. Darcie suggested that in polluted areas the richness may go down while the abundance of the more resilient creatures would boost the numbers.

In conclusion to the talk Darcie said there was still much to be done, she was looking forward to entering the data onto the AUSRIVAS site and finding the results and she considered the Tamar Estuary to be important and worth monitoring for its health.

She then told us of the water bug app to be found at <https://www.waterbugblitz.org.au/> which would help us to identify what we found.

After seven minutes of questions and answers Steve gave the thanks and led the acclamation.

Noel Manning

Field Trip – Friday 8 November – Tunbridge Township Lagoon and Old Tier Rd

Tunbridge Township Lagoon, a property of about 16Ha, was set aside as a nature reserve in 1991 to protect the large number of threatened plant species which grow there along with a large diversity of other flora and an array of unusual invertebrates.

The lagoon, located in the driest part of Tasmania, is one of only four natural salt lakes in Tasmanian and has been harvested for salt in the past. As the water evaporates during the warmer months a crust of salt forms on its surface.

The salinity gives rise to a community of saltmarsh plants around its edge, plants which LFNC members have become used to seeing during surveys conducted by them along the edges of the Tamar estuary. One of these plants is *Wilsonia rotundifolia*, listed as rare in Tasmania, it occupies a 50m-wide band around the lagoon, along with *Selliera radicans*.

Further from the edge of the lagoon, and occupying most of the reserve is a grassland dominated by *Themeda triandra* (kangaroo grass) and in amongst this grass is a cornucopia of native plant species.

The most spectacular of these is the beautiful *Leucochrysum albicans* subsp. *albicans* var. *tricolor* (grassland paper daisy), which grows in large numbers where the grass is not too thick.



After a couple of hours we had identified about thirty plant species including many of those on the Threatened Species List and, with rain just starting, we sat in the cars for lunch.

Those of us who had not been here previously were amazed that such a bleak place could be home to such diversity. Our next stopping place, along the Old Tier Rd, had been selected by Prue during a recce she had done a couple of weeks earlier. Where the fences stopped, about 7km from the highway, we entered a beautiful dry sclerophyll bushland where numerous grassy areas alternated with bare rocky ground. The bare ground is ideal for orchids and we were treated to an impressive display of several *Caladenia* species in flower and we noted a large number of *Thelymitra* (sun orchid) plants not yet in flower. The canopy was mainly *Eucalyptus pulchella*.



This was a delightful spot and will be well worth devoting a full day to, perhaps in late November when the sun orchids are open.

Congratulations to Prue for a well organised excursion which included a new site of considerable interest and beauty.

Roy Skabo

Images: Members at the salt lagoon & Grassland paper daisy (taken by Roy)

Flora seen at Tunbridge Lagoon - *Acaena echinata*, spiny sheeps-burr; *Bossiaea riparia*, leafless bossia; *Bursaria spinosa*, prickly box; *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*, common everlasting; *Chrysocephalum semipapposum*, clustered everlasting; *Convolvulus erubescens*, blushing bindweed; *Craspedia* aff. *glauca*, Midlands billybuttons; *Dianella amoena*, grassland flaxlily; *Dichondra repens*, kidneyweed; *Distichlis distichophylla*, Australian saltgrass; *Galium* sp., bedstraw; *Geranium retrorsum*, grassland cranesbill; *Leptorhynchus squamatus*, scaly buttons; *Leucochrysum albicans*, grassland paper daisy; *Linum marginale*, native flax; *Microseris lanceolata*, yam daisy; *Pimelea glauca*, smooth riceflower; *P. humilis*, dwarf riceflower; *Plantago* sp., plantain; *Plantago varia*, variable plantain; *Prasophyllum tunbridgense*, Tunbridge leek orchid; *Pultenaea prostrata* (in flower), silky bushpea; *Scleranthus diander*, tufted knawel; *Selliera radicans*, shiny swampmat; *Thelymitra* sp., sun orchid; *Themeda triandra*, kangaroo grass; *Veronica gracilis*, slender speedwell; *Vittadinia cuneata*, fuzzy new-holland-daisy; *V. gracilis*, woolly new-holland-daisy; *Wilsonia rotundifolia*, roundleaf wilsonia

Flora seen at Tunbridge Tiers - *Asplenium flabellifolium*, necklace fern; *Caladenia* sp., white & pink species; *Cassinia aculeata*, dollybush; *Comesperma volubile*, blue love creeper; *Dichondra repens*, Kidneyweed; *Drosera peltata* subsp. *auriculata*, tall sundew; *Eucalyptus pulchella*, narrow-leaved peppermint; *Hibbertia prostrata*, prostrate guineaflower; *Pyrorchis nigricans*, fire orchid leaves; *Glossodia major*, wax-lip orchid; *Lagenophora stipitata*, blue bottledaisy; *Lomandra longifolia*, sagg; *Luzula densiflora*, dense woodrush; *Poranthera microphylla*, small poranthera; *Pterostylis* sp., greenhood; *Senecio* sp., fireweed; *Thelymitra* sp., sun orchid; *Veronica calycina*, hairy speedwell; *Veronica gracilis*, slender speedwell; *Viola sieberiana*, tiny violet; *Wahlenbergia* sp., bluebell

Fauna seen at Tunbridge Tiers - *Cercophonius squama*, scorpion; *Pardalotus striatus*, striated pardalote; *Petroica multicolor*, scarlet robin; *Tachyglossus aculeatus*, short-beaked echidna

Catch it in the Catchment – Sunday 10 November

Kings Meadows Rivulet report - As part of the Catch it in the Catchment community clean-up event, nine club members and four community members registered to assist with our cleanup on the Kings Meadows Rivulet which runs into the North Esk and eventually into kanamaluka, the Tamar Estuary. We met at the

car park behind Kings Meadows Hotel for a short chat about how we planned to tackle this big task then headed off armed with gloves, bags, grabbers and nets.

Starting from where the rivulet meets Hobart Road we picked up rubbish along the walkway, the golf club spillway through to under the bridge on Blamey Road in Punchbowl, which was a great big effort for 13 people. We had obtained permission from the General Manager at the Kings Meadows golf course to access the spillway and around the pond edge to clean up, and appreciated his offer to close the fairway along this area until 10.30am to ensure our safety from stray golf balls. Most of us managed to get through without getting wet, using nets and grabbers to reach into the ponds and streams. We pulled out or picked up 49kgs of rubbish and filled 9 bags in total with 3 only filled with recyclables. One great thing was that we were working on a popular walkway between Kings Meadows and Blamey Road in Punchbowl and many people thanked us for our efforts and this made it all the more worthwhile.

Once finished we placed all the bags in our cars and took it to Riverbend Park where we could drop off the rubbish and recyclables. We then enjoyed a free sausage or burger provided by the Lions Club who were running a free BBQ to say thanks to all volunteers helping with the clean-up. Claire Manning

Swan Point report - The pleasant weather on Sunday 10 November saw 18 people at Swan Point at the combined LFN / Exeter Girl Guides site as part of the Catch it in the Catchment event.

Field Naturalists, Guides and their families and local residents walked along the foreshore and searched the bush for all sorts of rubbish. The dead rice grass was overturned to find those small plastic pieces that get trapped and float away at a future high tide. Cans and bottles were hunted out from the bush and 9 golf balls were found (and recycled!). A total of 17.1 kilograms of rubbish filled 4 bags (including one of recyclables).

Preventing this rubbish from entering the estuarine and marine environment is a start towards cleaning up and preventing impacts on the wildlife.

Thank you to all involved. It appears that the event was a success and we can all be involved again next year. Kay Bailey

Prue's bird list for the Swan Point area during the clean-up were:

70-80 Black Swan (this is over 3 times the number seen in the area for many, many months!), dozens of Chestnut Teal, 2 pair of Musk Duck, many Silver & Pacific Gulls, White Faced Herons, Pied Oyster Catchers + a nest with 2 eggs that a Guide came across on the Spit. (Several pairs nest in the nearby paddocks every year.) Silver Eyes calling and Green Rosellas. Not a bad "catch" for a morning's work!

Skemps Day – Sunday 24 November – Spring Clean at Skemps

Eight members arrived at Skemps to volunteer for the Annual Spring Clean today. As usual the kitchen cupboards and their contents were washed, culling items for disposal that were discoloured, chipped or broken. Windows around the building were cleaned on the inside and outside, window sills wiped and cobwebs brushed away. Plants along the back windows were trimmed back. The skulls and rocks on display were patiently cleaned and redisplayed by Tom McG. All rooms were vacuumed and the tile floors washed. Sheets have been replaced on all mattresses and the bed surface vacuumed of dust, grass and leaf litter. Bathrooms were cleaned and a few small repairs as required were completed.

Members retired for lunch outside, but ended up back indoors as the wind came up suddenly and was blowing the food off our forks. It was pleasantly warm back inside.

Cleaning continued into the afternoon and finally got to the point where furniture could be put back into position and cleaning implements could be put away. The day finally came together where we could have a last coffee and chat before packing up and heading home.

A big thank you to Robyn, Caitlin, Tom and Tina, Stephen, Tom, Noel and Karen for their time and hard work today.

Field Trip – Thursday 28 November – Rockpool survey at East Beach

Four members arrived at East Beach for the second of three rockpool surveys. Arriving a little later than previously, Prue had already set the transect up and was looking for a stick to move the seaweeds in the rockpool so we could note what was below the tangle of weed species. This evening we saw no kelp, sea lettuce or green tangleweed. The dozen small ascidians of last month was replaced by one very large ascidian. Variety and number of shells was similar to our last trip. We did however note that 15% of the grid was filled with dead seagrass which was up to 8 inches deep in places. One tiny green dwarf cushion star *Parvulastra exigua* was found clinging to the underside of a rock and a piece of brown sponge was floating amongst the seaweeds. Again it was disappointing not to see any anemones, crabs or sea urchins.

Christmas at Skemps – Sunday 8 December

Members are invited to participate in the final celebration for 2019 at Skemps. Please bring your own lunch and a plate of food to share for afternoon tea. The BBQ will be lit for those wishing to have a hot lunch. If you would like to participate in the Secret Santa, please limit your presents to under \$10. Please ensure that gifts for children are labelled with their name.

Field Trip – Ben Lomond – 17 to 19 January

Members are invited to attend this two day field trip to Ben Lomond National Park where we will be staying at the Borrowdale Ski Chalet. If an overnight stay is not for you, come for the day and explore this interesting area.

There are many walks varying in length and difficulty, great photographic opportunities of an unusual terrain and the wildflowers will hopefully be looking good. Please contact Peter Warren on 0409 685 835 or email pjwarrenjp@hotmail.com if you would like to reserve a bed in the bunkroom. You will need to bring a sleeping bag or sheets and blankets, pillows and enough food and drink for your stay, the closest shop is approximately 50 kilometres away. The temperature and weather can change quite quickly, so be prepared and don't forget your camera. See costs below.

As this visit is to a National Park, all cars need to display a current Parks Pass.

The cost of a day visit is \$3.75 and an overnight stay is \$7.50 per night/per person

One night and one day \$11.25, two days and one night \$15.00, and two days and two nights \$22.50

Membership Renewals

A friendly reminder that membership for 2019/2020 financial year are now due and payable by the end of December 2019.

Family membership - Two adults with any children under 18 years, subscription is \$55.00

Single membership - Adult or student over 18 years, subscription is \$35.00

Junior membership - Student under 18 years and not a member of a family group, subscription is \$5.00

Payments can be made by direct deposit to the Club's bank account at the Bank of Us.

Account Name: Launceston Field Naturalists Club Inc. Trust Acc

BSB: 632001

Account No: 100021969

Reference: Please use your last name to identify your payment

Cheque payments can be mailed to the Club at: P.O. Box 1072, Launceston 7250..

We are aware that members change their contact details, including address, home phone, mobile and email. If you have changed your contact details in the last 12 months it would be appreciated if you could email/mail the new information so your membership details can be updated.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL

Additional Information

Club Outings:

- All outings depart from Inveresk carpark (near Museum entrance) at 9 am unless otherwise specified. Internet site updated regularly to reflect short notice changes. Saturday all-day parking cost is \$4.00. Sunday parking free.
- Provide your own food and drinks for the outing and wear/take clothing/footwear suitable for all weather types.
- When travelling by car in convoy, each driver is responsible to ensure that the vehicle behind is in sight immediately after passing a cross road or fork in the road.
- When carpooling, petrol costs should be shared between all the passengers, including family of the driver, and based on other clubs the Committee suggested \$12 per 100 km. This is a guideline only.

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 our booking manager, Phil Brumby on 0403 845 000 or bookings@lfnc.org.au regarding availability and keys.

Field Centre Phone Number: (03) 6399 3361

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