



THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

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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 Forteath

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 months to be advised. Held at Scotch-Oakburn College, Senior Campus, Penquite Rd Newstead

Program

Saturday 20 June Briseis Water Race, meet on roadside at Branxholm Pool at 11 am.

Sunday 28 June Danny Bosanquet will look at Eucalypts on the property with members and talk about Wedge-tailed eagles

Saturday 18 July Currie River Dam, east of George Town starting at 10.30am. Contact President Prue for further details

Sunday 26 July Skemps Day and a General Meeting. Meeting commences at 1.30 pm

Marion Simmons



It was with great sadness we learned of the passing of our beloved friend and mentor Marion Simmons in April.

It is extremely difficult to separate the contributions that Marion and John (her late husband) made to the Club over the long period of their membership which began in the early 1960's. They were an ideal couple and supported each other in almost all their activities. If John was doing something then Marion would be behind the scenes helping and vice versa. Marion together with John took on the position of Newsletter Editor in 1975. The Club history for the period 1989-1999 had this to say about Marion –

“Marion Simmons, an accomplished botanist, Committee and long-time active member, has continued to provide an outstanding supportive role in Club activities. She has been involved in plant identification, publication preparation,

flower and photographic displays and any other activities including typing, graphic design, floral artistry and the provision of a photocopying service for the Newsletter. She is the author of *Growing Acacias* and *Acacias of Australia* Volumes I and II and her expertise in this field has brought international recognition”.

Marion was a member of the General Committee from 1970 to 2010, was also on the Public Relations Committee, Programme Manager and responsible for advertising Club information to the media. Marion also willingly and ably filled in when requested as Secretary, Supper Hostess or other tasks. Marion was involved with the Club's first edition of *A Guide to Flowers and Plants of Tasmania* and then with later revisions. Members involved in the fifth edition of the book published in 2019, were appreciative of Marion's advice and assistance in proof reading of the final submission.

In 2009 her latest book *Wattles of Tasmania* was released.

All the accolades and awards they both received were well earned. Marion was awarded her Club Life Membership in 2000, a well-earned belated award. *Acacia simmonsiana* was named in their honor in 2002 and they were both awarded the OAM in January 2004.

We are extremely grateful for all the help, support and friendship so freely given to members by both Marion and John, and miss them terribly.

Jeff Campbell

LFNC member's snippets from Covid19 lockdown

Margaret sent an image of an Earth Star fungus (*Geastrum triplex*) growing on the edge of a path in her Riverside backyard.

(image MK)



Matthew kept busy with bushwalks around the Launceston area, and noted plenty of fungi. In his garden he found a large clump of *Armillaria luteobubalina*, a fungi that infects ornamental trees and shrubs in gardens and parks. He was pretty thrilled to have a visit to his garden from a Collared Sparrowhawk and able to observe it from his window. That must rate as a more unusual garden visitor.

Steve dug up a “large green frog” when excavating in the garden. The Green & Gold frog, *Litoria raniformis*, can grow up to about 90mm. Habitat for them is still fast disappearing so please make your garden frog friendly by adding old bush logs and rocks, and try to keep a damp area for them. Just because you may never see any frogs in your garden does not mean they are not there!

Irmgard was finding plenty of fungi and also some “bunny orchids”. I am sure she will have some beautiful photos to show us later.

Peter W. has been out and about too – particularly to the Carr Villa reserve, where he was finding plenty of fungi and some orchids too.

Rob went out to the Eden Rivulet Tramway, where some of us have been before with him. The fungi were up to their usual standard – as were Rob's photographs below! It's a great place to visit if you ever get a chance, though Rob says the track is getting overgrown in places.



Coral fungi (left) and *Mycena interrupta* (right) (images RM)





Kay had masses of fungi on her back lawn early on, but when she went to St Helens recently for a night she took a walk in the Blue Tiers, and did not find much at all.

***Trametes versicolor* (image KB)**

Noel, Claire and Karen took advantage of the good weather and isolation to clean up their gardens. They come across a wide range of insects which disappeared very quickly once disturbed, but these two stayed long enough to be photographed.



Katydid (image KM)



Green Mantis (image KM)

Roy made good use of his time by visiting the Launceston Reserves and updating his lists of flora for each Reserve. Recently at the shack at Binalong Bay, Roy and Louise observed 4 Spotted Quail-thrush in the garden! The one pictured is a male (as usual, far more colourful than the female). Roy noted that they have seen these birds in the undergrowth several times over the last 10 years, and each time it has been in June or July.



Roy and Louise also had time to watch a pair of Bassian Thrushes hopping about on the track below their shack. Bassian Thrush are a secretive bird, about the size of a blackbird, but these thrushes are distinguished by the mottled feathers front and back. They stick to the undergrowth, and so blend into their surroundings.

Spotted Quail-thrush (image RS)

Helen was pleased to discover some tiny *Mycena viscidocruenta* down in her garden. She had the opportunity to visit her “block” in the Eastern Tiers for a few days and do some walking and Where Wedgie watching. “I had a wonderful day out with the excuse of exploring the high plateaus and the cliffs on the southern side of the upper Little Swanport River. It was a blustery day and I didn’t see any eagles flying but I heard them on several occasions. The plateau country is mostly pretty, open grazed native woodland and the extensive stands of white gum, with just a few big old black peppermints, are quite beautiful. After the rain following years of drought the bare ground is now covered in mosses and tiny plants”. Helen joined a Zoom raptor information evening with Nick Mooney – Nick was discussing Sparrowhawks and made a call interpretation of one. Helen’s poor little pet quail in the background started a long set of alarm calls in response! Must have been a pretty genuine interpretation from Nick!

Tom T pointed out that the Magpies in town were “reclaiming their territory” from the wires and the fences – I must say they have been doing the same here – singing at the tops of their voices from the tops of the trees. There can surely not be a more Australian call than that of the Magpie. Some would argue the Kookaburra, but for all year round . . . Eastern Spinebills and Crescent Honeyeaters are busy in Tom’s garden again. It’s always reassuring to be seeing the regulars.

Bernadette for about a month had a flock of Silvereyes visit the garden each day to feed on ripe figs. When the food source ran out they eventually moved on, but now Bernadette is amused by a family of Ringtails living in a clump of Bamboo near the house. Mother Ringtail ventures out each evening, along the power line and then into the trees down the path to feed. Unfortunately it has not been a good time for the baby ringtails of the family.

Jeff had a flock of 60 plus black cockatoos doing a flyover recently. He says some had a rest in the nearby eucalypt, some attacked the radiata pines at the gate and the rest kept on going. He notes that the parrots have gone quiet lately (at Leighlands) though I have heard them around Gravelly Beach quite a bit, they seem to be checking the holes in the Eucalypts for nesting spots already. Jeff also notes a family of wrens about recently.



I have been seeing plenty of silvereyes about Gravelly lately, so it seems that many do not bother migrating to the mainland. Although we have been rather confined lately we have had many beautiful days of sunshine and I for one never cease to be amazed at what can be found virtually at my doorstep. The magpies have gone quiet, but the Golden Whistler has just begun his daily call, and I know the Eastern Spinebill will be about just after lunch. Out the front in a tall *Baloskion tetraphyllum* is an amazing spider web/nest. I have seen it before here, a couple of years ago, and before that many years ago at Yorktown. It is very big, round, beautifully made, with the nest in the centre and an opening at the base. The opening is like an inverted funnel – which makes it very hard to google, as whenever I put the words “funnel” and “web” in one word, of course all I get is funnelweb. All in all it seems to have been a pretty good season for fungi – but still I have not been able to photograph the

Omphalotus nidiformis actually glowing in the dark. What is the secret?

Spider web (image PW)

Cheers

President Prue – with thanks to all who sent me their little snippets over the last 3 months.

Calling all Flame Robin observers!

The Central North Field Naturalists is initiating a project to gather information about Flame Robins in Tasmania. While the Flame Robin is the main focus of the project, we are also interested in information about the endemic Dusky Robin as records indicate that this species is also declining.

We would like records from all over the state, so please inform your networks.



Flame Robin - Photo by B. Silver

Thanks, Sarah (co-organiser with Richard Donaghey and Hazel Britton)

Flame Robins are conspicuous birds that are relatively easy to identify. They have complex seasonal movements so to assess their population we would like your help to find out where they are at different times of the year.

To understand the abundance and movements of Flame Robins, we would like to gather data on numbers of adult male and brown-plumaged birds and whether they occur singly, in pairs or in groups and flocks. We would also like to know if both sexes occur in a group, or if males and female-plumaged birds occur in separate groups.

Please record your observations on the spreadsheet (link below). Not all columns need to be completed, but please record as much information as possible.

[Spreadsheet](#) and [information](#) on filling in the spreadsheet.

<https://www.disjunctnaturalists.com/robins/index.htm>

Join Bush Blitz scientists on a virtual expedition!

For the last decade, Bush Blitz, Australia's largest nature discovery program has taken taxonomists to remote parts of the country to document plants and animals. This program is a partnership between the Australian Government, Parks Australia (through the Australian Biological Resources Study), BHP and Earthwatch Australia.

Bush Blitz participants have helped to discover more than 1700 new species and made thousands of species records. There are an estimated 580,000–680,000 species in Australia but three quarters of this biodiversity is yet to be identified and scientifically described.

With species discovery expeditions currently on hold due to the pandemic, the Bush Blitz team has organised a virtual expedition. The Backyard Species Discovery project encourages all Australians to contribute to our knowledge of Australian biodiversity while practicing their social distancing.



We can't promise you'll find a new species but this is a great way to make a valuable contribution to science and brush up on your ID skills with the help of Bush Blitz scientists. All you need is a digital camera and internet access - the Bush Blitz team will guide you through the rest. For more information about Bush Blitz, and how to join this virtual expedition, visit the Bush Blitz website <https://bushblitz.org.au/introducing-an-expedition-for-everyone/>.

Image Paula Banks

Additional Information

Club Outings:

- All outings generally 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 \$11 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 0407 664 554 or bookings@lfnc.org.au regarding availability and keys.

Field Centre Phone Number: (03) 6399 3361

Postal Address: PO Box 1072 Launceston 7250

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