



THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

Volume LIV No.2 December20/January21

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 : Ms Bernadette Willey, 0487 755 085
Hon. Treasurer : Mrs Karen Manning, 0419 596 261

Meetings 1st Tuesday of month, February to December (except July and August) at Scotch-Oakburn College, Senior Campus, Penquite Rd Newstead

Program:

February

Sunday 28
Skemps Day – Insect Hunt

March

Tuesday 2
Meeting - Insects

TBC
Field Trip - Perth area re possible Ptunarra Brown Butterfly, expressions of interest to
Jeff Campbell, Ph. 0432 470 311 or email: campbelljeal@gmail.com

Sunday 28
Skemps Day - Clean up along Skemp Creek

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

General Meeting - 1 December 2020

At the last meeting for the year, President Prue Wright thanked members for the following presentations. Jeff Campbell showed photographs of European native orchids he had taken during an overseas trip a few years ago. Rob Michelson's presentation was of fungi and flora taken at reserves around Tasmania, and members' photos from activities during the year were compiled by Karen Manning and presented as *The Year That Was*.

Life Memberships were awarded to Noel and Karen Manning. The President read out a history of their membership and contributions to the Club and then presented them with their Life Membership certificates. Karen was then given a beautiful bunch of native flowers from the Skabo's garden.

Thank you to members who contributed to the supper, which was enjoyed by all.

Skemps Report – December 20 to January 21

Thanks to our many volunteers the usual tasks of cleaning, mowing, minor repairs, weed spraying, cleaning of the drain along Skemps Road, fire wood collecting, splitting and stacking as well as track clearing have been continued to be dealt with. Thistle and foxglove have been de-headed and dug out on many parts of the property and roadside. Based on the Statham's talk (October) last year on weed control on Deal Island we have set up an old half water tank to store thistle to rot down as we did not have enough room in our FOGO bin for the amount we were collecting. Volunteers include Jeff, Joseph (new member), Karen, Prue, Rob, Roy and Tom (T) while our enthusiastic Tuesday volunteer Bernadette has a job and has not been able to join us these last two months.

As well a few bigger jobs rate a mention. Karen has been using the Gravograph to make extra plant signs and used the Internet to source instructions for all our powered machinery and safety data sheets for herbicides used on the property. She then printed and laminated them and put them in three folders for user reference. Jeff and Rob took out a few dangerous spars leaning over tracks and Jeff has been working on a major clean-up of the old home site. Karen and I have put a few hours into removing one of the hot water cylinders which once again split due to over-heating of the other cylinder with the solid fuel stove. This also involved isolating the pipes from the other cylinder and checking the system for leaks.

One of the biggest tasks worked on was the improvements to the Loop Track, including advising the Corrective Services team who did great work starting this job. Team leader Terry made a few excellent suggestions on how to go about the work and had his team start by slashing to clear the track while Roy did some chain sawing to complete the clearing. We all then worked on steps in the steep areas making some with treated pine boards and others by laying down old tyres back filled with rock and dirt while other areas were levelled.

Two existing board walks were lifted to get them above the wet areas, many rough areas of the track have been dug out to make them easier to walk and channels dug in the boggy areas to redirect the water away from the track. This seems to work well with these areas drying out in just a few days. We look forward to having this track much more accessible in the near future.

If you can volunteer or have ideas for improving Skemps please contact me or your committee.

Noel Manning

Meeting Tuesday 3 November – Guest Speaker Dr Kerry Bridle – *Natural Values in the Midlands*

Prue introduced Dr. Kerry Bridle and her talk which she described as her take on what the von Bibra's were doing on their property Beaufront, one of three properties owned by them in the Midlands.

Kerry started by showing an image of the property which she described as comprising 12,500 hectares with about 1/3 being native forest with some plantations, with another 1/3 open

grasslands and grassy woodlands (including 756 ha under a conservation management agreement) while the rest is sown pastures, crops and irrigation. There are about 39,000 sheep, for wool and meat, 240 yearling heifers and steers, and 1,100 hectares of irrigated land (for poppies, cereals, fodder crops, canola, Lucerne, rye grass and clover).

When Kerry started at the property in April 2019 she first went to LISTmap and the Natural Values Atlas to see what was there. Values listed were concentrated in lines representing rail, road and other development showing plant, carnivore, marsupial, reptile, invertebrate, fish and feral. She noted the forest areas were dominated by eucalypts including black peppermint (*E. amygdalina*), on different soil types, a little bit of *E. ovata*, a lot of *E. pauciflora* in a poor state, some *E. delegatensis* and a large area of *E. viminalis* suffering from dieback. She noted an obvious feature of the tree community was the sparse coverage of old trees with shrub free grasslands between and no young trees. As well as other small communities, some rare and others not, there are naturally saline wetlands, fresh water wetlands and dams.

Kerry told us that with her background in ecology, which is very conservation focused, her philosophy is to look after what we have, improved what we have and if we haven't got it we put it back and we do it in that order.

She noted that there were 173, mostly native, plant species found on the property with five listed under the state Threatened Species Protection Act and one on the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, although she knew of two, these being the *Leucochrysum* (grassland paper daisy) and the blacktip spider-orchid. During a recent survey only four plants of the orchid were found and these were under wire to protect them from grazing.

Of the threatened native fauna the property has the tussock skink, many healthy Tasmanian devils, spotted-tailed quoll, eastern-barred bandicoot, masked owl, eastern bettong and five wedge-tailed eagle nests. Kerry was excited to find Eastern quolls which were thought to be gone from the midlands.

She also mentioned the forester kangaroo which she wanted to know more about and wondered if it could be managed better than just by hunting.

The talk moved onto the many surveys and projects done on the property. Of these surveys Sarah Lloyd had done bird surveys in 2011 and 2013 at nine sites. She returned in 2019 and was horrified at the reduction in numbers although this was state wide and not due to farm practices on the property.

Deer have been studied to see what they are eating as part of a deer exclusion program, especially their impact on young trees. There have been multiple UTAS studies of birds as well as studies of bats, frogs and invertebrates. There is a preference for surveys to use the same areas to produce a better understanding of changes. Kerry would also like a study on the wedge-tailed eagle to see if the birds are affected by night hunting or other farm practices.

A PhD student, Ben French, has been using indigenous burning practices to understand the impact on native animal behavior trying to find the ideal size of the burns for the best outcome. While a recent fire got out of hand and damaged some trees and is more expensive to implement, it is also better for the environment.

Kerry wondered what was achieved ecologically by a small strip of trees along the Macquarie River when the ideal was a 20 to 25 metre wide planting. The larger area provides proper habitat and a useful corridor to other habitats for native animals. Narrow corridors are also problematic for farmers as floods can destroy a fence when it is so close to the river. The narrow corridor along the river was difficult to establish as escaped sheep and deer damaged the trees and it took three plantings to get the trees in for the area she talked about.

Beaufront is in the biodiversity hot spot known as 'the duck', a duck shaped area of the Midlands with the tip of the beak west of Bicheno, the top of the head around Longford and Evandale, the end of the tail near Hamilton and the tops of the legs are around Brighton. There are

good connectivity opportunities in this area as the wide Macquarie River valley has native forest on the ranges to the east and west of it. It is difficult to get farmers to give up productive land worth \$1,000 per hectare so the river was an obvious starting place for the corridors, especially as the river is a natural boundary between properties and farmers do not want their livestock crossing to other properties. While in the past restoration efforts concentrated on putting back vegetation the modern approach is to see how the native animals use the landscape to better manage it for them. Bettong and eastern-barred bandicoots need ground cover provided by tussock grass while eagles need perches.

Tasmanian Island Ark, a collaborative project hosted by Greening Australia and supported by UTAS, Bush Heritage Australia and Tasmanian Land Conservancy worked on the corridors with the 'Reconnecting the Midlands' component resulting in 250,000 native plants being established and 6,000 hectares of new habitat being created.

Beaufront ended up with about 24 kilometres of fencing involving 100 hectares of land and paddocks that were too large were divided up making them more useful for animal management. Kerry talked about the win/win of the projects with trees providing shade and shelter, fences that stay up and extra areas of biodiversity for the future.

A student was looking at noise deterrent for deer management using a motion detector to set off noises including wolf, dog, sheep, human and another that Kerry could not remember. It worked with Kerry describing the deer as frightened of everything though to our amusement she added that possums are frightened of nothing.

Her talk was backed up with an impressive Power Point presentation showing images and maps of the property and more detailed explanations of many aspects of her talk.

After 15 minutes of questions and answers Noel thanked Kerry for her presentation and led the acclamation.

Noel Manning

Field Trip – Wednesday 4 November – Northern Midlands with Dr Kerry Bridle

Eleven members and a guest joined our 3 leaders at Ross for our field trip to Beaufront following the talk by Dr Kerry Bridle at our meeting the night before.

From the meeting point we returned towards Launceston, turning left before the highway to a spot on the riverbank. We were joined by a group of architecture teachers and students from UTAS and another group from the Campbell Town High School. Following a talk on the replanting along the riverbank and other subjects we crossed the highway and stopped on a slight rise to look at *Leucochrysum albicans* a grassland paper daisy which is endangered/rare which was scattered either side of the road. We found so many other plants there, we spent quite some time finding and logging them. We then continued along the road for quite a way, spotting various plants along the roadside as we went.

We carried our lunch up the nearby hill, botanizing slowly along the way. Quite a view to the south became visible when we reached the top.

Following lunch we continued around the hill and back to the vehicles and then botanised the adjoining hillside to finish off an interesting day. Many thanks to Kerry and the owners of the



property, Kerry invited us to return as a group in future, first contacting her to set it up.

Jeff Campbell

Thank you to Prue and Ann for the list of sightings for Beaufront

ASTERACEAE - *Cymbonotus preissianus*, southern bears-ears; *Euchiton collinus* now (japonicas), common cottonleaf; *Leptorhynchos squamatus*, scaly buttons; *Leucochrysum albicans*, grassland paperdaisy; *Lagenophora stipitata*, blue bottledaisy; *Solenogyne dominii*, smooth flat-herb

LILIACEAE - *Arthropodium minus*, small vanilla-lily; *Bulbine bulbosa* or *glauca*, bulbine-lily; *Burchardia umbellata*, milkmaids; *Diplarrena moraea*, white flag iris; *Hypoxis* (now *Pauridia*) *vaginata*, yellow star; *Wurmbea dioica*, early nancy

ORCHIDACEAE - *Microtis unifolia*, common onion-orchid; *Microtis arenaria*, notched onion-orchid; *Thelymitra imbricata*, sun orchid; *Thelymitra* sp. sun orchid

GRASSES/SEDGES ETC - *Austrostipa* sp. ?*mollis*, speargrass; *Juncus falcatus*, sickleleaf rush; *Luzula densiflora*, dense woodrush; *Lepidosperma* sp. ? *inops*, swordsedg; *Lomandra nana*, dwarf mat-rush; *Lomandra longifolia*, sagg; *Poa rodwayi*, velvet tussockgrass; *Rytidosperma* sp, wallabygrass; *Schoenus* sp., club sedg; *Themeda triandra*, kangaroo grass

EVERYTHING ELSE - *Acaena echinata*, Spiny sheeps-burr; *Acaena novae-zelandiae*, Buzzy; *Bossiaea prostrata*, creeping bossia; *B. riparia*, leafless bossia; *Crassula sieberiana*, Australian stonecup; *Cryptandra amara*, pretty cryptandra; *Dichondra repens*, kidneyweed; *Drosera peltata* ssp. *auriculata*, sundew; *Geranium potentilloides*, cranesbill; *Gonocarpus tetragynus*, common raspwort; *Hibbertia riparia*, erect guineaflower; *Hypericum* sp., st johns wort; *Lissanthe strigosa*, peachberry heath; *Lobelia pratoides*, poison lobelia; *L. gibbosa*, tall lobelia; *Myosotis australis*, southern forget-me-not; ?*Oxalis perennans*, grassland woodsorrel; *Pimelea humilis*, dwarf riceflower; *P. linifolia*, slender riceflower; *Plantago varia*, plantain; *Pratia pedunculata*, matted pratia; *Pteridium esculentum*, bracken; *Rumex* sp., dock (smaller than the common dock ? native or weed); *Senecio linearis* var., fireweed groundsel; *Veronica gracilis*, slender speedwell; *Veronica* sp., speedwell; *Wahlenbergia* ?*gracilis*., bluebells

TREES – *Acacia* ?*dealbata*, silver wattle; *A. ?mearnsii*, black wattle; *Acacia melanoxylon*, Blackwood; *Allocasuarina verticillata*, weeping she-oak; *Banksia marginata*, silver banksia; *Dodonaea viscosa*, broadleaf native hop; *Eucalyptus viminalis*, white gum

SNAKE - *Drysdalia coronoides*, white lipped snake

BIRDS - *Alauda arvensis*, eurasian skylark; *Anthus australis*, Australian pipit; *Aquila audacious* ssp *fleayii*, wedge tailed-eagle; *Artamus cyanopterus*, ? dusky woodswallow; *Cacatua sanguinea*, white cockatoo; *Chalcites lucidus*, shining bronze cuckoo; *Circus aeruginosus*, swamp harrier; *Cracticus tibicen*, Australian magpie; *Dacelo novaeguineae*, kookaburra; *Hirundo neoxena*, welcome swallow; *Manorina melanocephala*, ? noisy miner (calling); *Pardalotus striatus*, striated pardalote; *Passer domesticus*, house sparrow; *Platycercus eximius*, eastern rosella; *Zanda funereal*, black cockatoo

SPIDERS - *Ocrisiona leucocomis*, (family Saltididae) jumping spider; Wolf spider burrow

FROGS - *Litoria ewingii*, southern brown tree-frog

Reported on Eremaea Birdlines

Tina McGlynn reported the following as an interesting and unusual bird observation.

Wednesday 18 November 2020 - Pink-eared Duck at Queechy Lake

Pair of Pink-eared Ducks (first reported 7 October and one at least seen on each visit since) with 6 ducklings. Seen briefly on open water but they retreated to reeds. My first visit to the lake since 10th Nov, so can't say when ducklings first emerged. I'm sure the nest is on the willow island towards eastern end.

[Moderator's note: potentially a first breeding record for Tasmania]



Pink-eared duck (*Malacorhynchus membranaceus*)
By JJ Harrison (CC BY-SA 4.0)

Field Trip – Tuesday 12 January - Annual survey to East Beach near Low Head

Last year at East Beach the sands had risen to such an extent that the normal rockpools we visit were no longer there. Instead they had filled with sand and sea weeds (red, green and brown algae) were vigorously growing on and between the rocks.

It was much the same this year, except that there was far less variety of algae, and it was mostly the browns – *Hormosira banksii* (Neptune's necklace), *Cystophora torulosa* (Club-leaved cystophora), *C. retorta* (Open branched cystophora) and *C. subfarcinata* (Bushy cystophora). Hunting around we found a little *Caulerpa*, including a fan leafed one we had not seen before. There were only very small amounts of pink coralline, and a few sponges.

Crabs were still to be found under the rocks – but about 99.99% the introduced NZ Half crab. A few Sea Stars were clinging to the rocks, and plenty of Chitons (3 varieties) were found. Twice under rocks we found tiny sea urchins, too small to identify, but as a local fisherman told us that just off the shelf where he was spear fishing there are many introduced Red Urchins, and little else, so it was probably them. He also told us all the kelp and most of the fish had disappeared.



The marine worms were interesting (as well as the abundant filter feeding polychete spp.) – we found 3 different kinds under rocks, and then a fourth turned up in one of my photos of something else. We came across sea cucumbers hiding in the sand with just their “nose” poking out ready to squirt us – which they did as we tried to dig them out for a better look. One even “regurgitated” its innards before I could put it back – it turns out this is common with them – a bit like a sea star can lose a leg, then grow it back.

A peculiar find was a whitish “blob” with a small flat shell on its back. This shell had a “keyhole” opening towards the rear, and we later realised we had found an actual live Keyhole Limpet. The animal is around 3-4 times the length of the shell.

Helen waded a little deeper and found a lovely brown algae that grew in a rosette and looked very like the leaves of our Fagus trees – we have been unable to identify this as yet. While there she also picked up a very large live Tulip Shell.

The patch of green algae, Sea Grass (broad-leaf *Posidona*) is still growing vigorously and just above the surface at low tide. This is a very important feeding ground for many marine animals.

After an extremely hot day at home, the beach turned out to be a very pleasant place for a half a dozen of us to spend the evening.

Prue Wright



Cystophora subfarcinata, *C. torulosa*, *C. retorta*
& *Hormosira banksia* (Prue Wright)



Key-hole Limpet (Prue Wright)

Field Trip - Thursday 14 January – Arthurs Lakes

Four members arrived at the Longford meeting point for the field trip to the Central Plateau. Our first intended stop was at Jonah Bay on Arthurs Lakes but decided to explore an open area towards the end of Sandbanks Tier (**pictured right, image Jeff Campbell**) intending a short stop which turned out to be over an hour, causing a late morning tea. We were surprised by the cold wind and cool morning, expecting warmer conditions, although it did warm up later on. On our way in to Jonah Bay we stopped



to look at an *Olearia* which turned out to be *O. viscosa* and noticed one plant amongst the hundreds in the area was a different colour. A collection was made for propagation purposes. We proceeded on to Jonah Bay and spent quite a while in the open area. This site has the largest population of *Utricularia* one could hope to see. A late lunch was taken here and as time was moving on we decided to continue along the road towards the northern end of Arthurs Lakes

rather than back track and continue down the highway towards Deloraine. After a couple of short stops we headed back to Longford to end a very good exploratory day with lots of plants recorded.
Jeff Campbell

Thank you to Roy and Jeff for compiling the plant list

Plant list:

Acacia siculiformis, dagger wattle; *Acaena montana*, mountain buzzy; *Acaena ?x anserovina*, hybrid sheepsburr; *Asperula sp.*, woodruff; *Astelia montana*, pineapple grass; *Baeckea gunniana*, alpine myrtle heath; *Bellenden montana*, mountain rocket; *Brachyscome radicans*, marsh daisy; *Cardamine sp.*, bittercress; *Celmisia sp.*, snowdaisy; *Cotula australis*, southern buttons; *Craspedia glabrata*, little alpine billybuttons; *Drosera pygmaea*, dwarf sundew; *Empodisma minus*, spreading roperush; *Epacris petrophila*, central snowheath; *Epilobium curtisaea*, baldseed willowherb; *E. tasmanicum*, snow willowherb; *Eucalyptus gunnii*, cider gum; *E. pauciflora*, cabbage gum; *Exocarpos nanus*, alpine native-cherry; *Gastrodia procera*, tall potato-orchid; *Gaultheria sp.*, waxberry; *Geranium sp.*, cranesbill; *Gonocarpus serpyllifolius*, alpine raspwort; *Gratiola nana*, matted brooklime; *Grevillea australis*, southern grevillea; *Hakea lissosperma.*, mountain needlebush; *H. microcarpa*, small-fruit needlebush; *Haloragis sp.*, raspwort; *Hydrocotyle muscosa*, mossy pennywort; *Hypericum gramineum*, small st johns-wort; *Isolepis crassiuscula*, alpine clubsedge; *Isotoma fluviatilis*, swamp stars; *Lagenophora montana*, mountain bottledaisy; *Lepidosperma filiforme*, common rapiersedge; *Leptospermum lanigerum*, woolly teatree; *Lomatia tinctoria*, guitarplant; *Melicytus angustifolius*, spiky violetbush; *Muehlenbeckia axillaris*, matted lignum; *Olearia viscosa*, viscid daisybush; *Oreomyrrhis sessiliflora*, carrot caraway; *Orites revolutus*, revolute orites; *Ozothamnus hookeri*, crimsontip daisybush; *Pentachondra pumila*, carpet frillyheath; *Plantago gunnii*, bolster plantain; *P. tasmanica*, Tasmanian plantain; *Prasophyllum alpestre*, mauve leek orchid; *Pratia sp.*, lobelia; *Pultenaea fasciculata*, alpine bushpea; *Ranunculus ?pasquinus*, pressed-hair buttercup; *Richea ?acerosa*, slender candleheath; *R. scoparia*, scoparia; *Schoenus tesquorum*, soft bogsedge; *Senecio gunnii*, mountain fireweed; *Sphagnum sp.*, peat moss; *Stellaria pungens*, prickly starwort; *Stylidium ?graminifolium*, triggerplant; *Thelymitra erosa*, striped sun orchid; *Utricularia sp.*, bladderwort; *Velleia montana*, mountain velleia; *Veronica gracilis*, slender speedwell; *Villarsia reniformis*, *Wahlenbergia sp.*, bluebells.



***Olearia viscosa*, white form
(Image Jeff Campbell)**



***Olearia viscosa*, pink form
(Image Jeff Campbell)**



Thank you to Prue for these sightings at Arthurs Lake

Grasshoppers - *Monistria concinna*, southern pyrgomorph;
Austroicetes spp

Frogs – *Litoria ewingii*, brown tree frogs - Prue said hundreds (probably thousands) of newly morphed frogs

Skink – *Niveoscincus ocellatus*, spotted skink

Kay with complete snakeskin
(Image Prue Wright)



***Niveoscincus ocellatus*, spotted skink**
(Image Prue Wright)



Cushion plants
(Image Prue Wright)

Members Private Use of the John Skemp Field Centre

At the Club's Committee Meeting on 28 January 2021 all fees for the private use of Skemps, including visits by members, were increased, effective 1 February 2021.

The review of fees had been deferred from April 2020 due to the uncertainty during COVID. Since then there have been significant increases in insurances for the building and public liability, and the increase in fees will help to cover these costs.

Bookings for the Centre can now be completed online at <https://lfnc.org.au/bookings.htm>

If you would like to have family and friends visit or stay overnight with you who are not members, costs associated with their visit/stay can be viewed on the above page of the Club's website.

A copy of the new members' rates will be posted or emailed to all members.

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 \$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

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