



THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

Volume LV No.2 December 21/January 22

The aim of the Launceston Field Naturalists Club is to encourage the study of all aspects of natural history and to support the conservation of our natural heritage

Patron : Prof. Nigel Forteach
President : Jeff Campbell, 0432 470 311
Hon. Secretary : Noel Manning, 0458 030 767
Hon. Treasurer : Karen Manning, 0363 442 277

Meetings 1st Tuesday of month, February-December (except Jul & Aug) at Scotch-Oakburn College, Senior Campus, Penquite Rd Newstead

Program:

March

Tuesday 1

Meeting – Guest Speaker: Sam Jack - *The future of local saltmarsh monitoring with NRM North*

Saturday 12

Field Trip – Don Heads coastal walk and rockpools – meet 10am at Don River Railway picnic area at Don

Saturday 26

Skemps Day – Plant maintenance along Skemps Creek

April

Tuesday 5

Meeting – Guest Speakers: Justin and Jo Widdowson – *Caretaking at Deal Island*

Saturday 9

Field Trip – Mt Direction walk – birds, beetles and plants of our Tamar woodlands, meet 10am at Mt Direction picnic spot just off the East Tamar Highway

Sunday 31

Skemps Day – Macroinvertebrate monitoring

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

New Members:

We would like to welcome Margaret Broomby and Heather Summers to the Club. They both joined in December, with Margaret attending our last meeting for the year and Heather attending our Christmas get-together at Skemps. We look forward to you attending Club activities in 2022.

General Meeting – December Tuesday 7 – Members Night

The meeting tonight didn't go without a few hitches, an issue with the entrance gate at our venue left cars lined up on the roadway and the meeting starting later than usual.

Jeff advised those in attendance, that as well as the our Christmas get-together, there were two field trips that members could attend with APST over the December /January period, and there was also our annual visit to East Beach near Low Head late January.

Noel told members of an article in the *Tasmanian Farmer*, a free rural magazine, about the rediscovery of the New Holland Mouse on Flinders Island. He stated that it was rediscovered on the east coast in the past by John Simmons. Jeff stated that it was both cats and curious people who caused it to once more disappear from there.

The Year That Was slide show was well received and Jeff thanked contributors for their images and Karen for her efforts in putting it together.

Supper was enjoyed by all, with thanks to all who contributed.

Christmas Get-together at Skemps – December Saturday 11

It was an overcast day which did not deter members attending Skemps for the last get-together for the year. Everyone loved the Scandi Christmas Tree that Caitlin had made from fallen dogwood limbs and decorated with items that had been donated over the years.

After lunch the group walked to the Old Homestead site. Jeff talked about the Skemps family and then invited everyone to visit the interpretation booth which had images of how the area looked at the time.

The walk then continued up past the top pond and then up through the Zig-Zag Track where we came to the big tree which is visible from the Centre. There was some discussion as to whether it is correctly named. Exiting onto the grassland between the two bush areas we saw *Engaeus* chimneys and at the end of the next forested area we emerged into a paddock of the endemic *Epacris gunnii* which was in flower.

Arriving back at the Centre, we enjoyed cakes and other treats that had been brought along to share and chatted over a hot drink, before tidying up and heading home.





Images: Caitlin with her Scandi Tree (previous page), members at the Interpretation Booth (above left) and the *Blandfordia punicea*, Christmas Bells (right) outside the kitchen window at Skemps, has flowered again this year with 10 flower spikes – images Karen Manning

Skemps Report - December/January

Thanks to Andrew, Brian, Caitlin, Grant, Jeff, Karen, Matthew and Rob much has been achieved at Skemps beyond the usual weeding, cleaning and firewood.

For Christmas we had a special treat as Caitlin made a Scandi (Scandinavian?) Christmas tree. Three sticks of dogwood were attached at one end and splayed out to form a free standing frame and these were connected with other short pieces of dogwood. This was then decorated to make a Christmas tree which is so impressive we are reluctant to dismantle it.

Karen spent an entire day using the Gravograph to make plant signs for the Loop Track and if you have ever used this machine you will appreciate how much work went into this task.

A big eucalyptus just past the Wollemi Pine is providing plenty of small firewood though it is hard to get. It takes cuts from both sides to get through and you end up with heavy wheels of wood up in the bush which is difficult to move into the open. Sometimes these roll easily with one push while at other times go astray and need more work.

Grant turned up one day and I think he was unhappy with the length of the grass (due to generous amount of rain and the hot weather). He was quickly onto the mower and did the main area in front of the Centre and the path through our new acacia walk while I went to Nunamara for more fuel.

Thanks mainly to Karen and Caitlin the barn is looking very clean and tidy. A single sheet of laser light has been installed over the hand basin to keep it clean and thanks to Andrew the lights work. The battery has been replaced, the solar panels wired up correctly, a broken light replaced and the light in the dining area replaced with something more powerful. Birds and maybe possums can still get in and until this issue is fixed it will be difficult to keep it in good order. Andrew has also been working on the temperature indicator lights for the hot water cylinder attached to the solid fuel stove. We are yet to see if the red light comes on when the tank heats up.

With a greater demand for short wood for the solid fuel heater Jeff and Karen tidied up the trailer shed as well as sorting out the empty wood shed in readiness for refilling. Many tree guard

sticks have been collected from around the property and the reusable ones put aside and the rest cut up as starter sticks for the fires.

Jeff has made a firewood box which has been placed outside the back door so that wood need not be stored next to the heater.

If you are able to help out at Skemps on a Tuesday I would like to hear from you. Please contact me and your phone number will be added to the text message list, to receive a reminder on Mondays.

Noel Manning

**Jeff Campbell in the trailer shed
– image Karen Manning**



Field Trip – Saturday 18 December – Arthurs Lakes area

Four members who happened to be members of both Field Naturalists and Plant Society met at Longford on Saturday morning 18 December. It meant we only needed one vehicle.

Our first stop was at the Pump House Bay boat ramp on Arthurs Lakes to look for a particular plant which we failed to find. We moved on to the nearby camp ground for a late morning tea after which we went back up the highway, turning off on to Gunns Marsh Road and headed off towards Gunns Lake.

We had lunch in the bush near Little Gunns Lake and then went to the lake to botanise there. Damsel flies were there in abundance, busily mating, Aurora bluetail, Blue ringtail, Red and blue damsel and a green one, possibly Metallic ringtail.



We returned back towards Arthurs Lakes and stopped in a low lying area near Cowpaddock Bay where Roy came across a Tiger snake about a metre or so long which promptly moved into cover.

**Bellendena montana (left), Lobelia pedunculata
(above) – images Jeff Campbell**

Our next stop was just along the Jonah Bay road to check on the *Muehlenbeckia axillaris* found there last year and to do a rough count, deciding there were dozens and dozens of plants. We then moved on to Jonah Bay and were most impressed with the variety and numbers of the various plants seen last year.
Jeff Campbell



Utricularia sp (left) and *Muehlenbeckia axillaris* (right)
images Jeff Campbell

Field Trip - Sunday 30 January 2022 – East Beach

Members met at East Beach before 4pm to walk out with the tide to check on the rockpool we had been surveying for the last couple of years and also to look at changes in the general area. The carpark was very full and the beach alive with family groups enjoying the lovely weather.

Heading out to the small rocky headland we saw the usual brown algae in the receding tide. The rockpool we had previously surveyed was sparsely populated as it has been for all but the first (two) visits of our regular trips to this interesting sea shore.

Snakeskin chiton (**below right**) was seen under most of the rocks lifted, the egg capsules of the Tulip shell (**below left**) was seen on a rock, there were many sea cucumbers and little black nerites attached to the rocks. The Waratah sea anemones are still living in the rock pool high above the low tides.

Some small fish were seen in small rockpools caught out by the low tide.

Mediastrea calcar orange sea-star and *Mediastrea gunnii* red 6 armed sea-star and the tiny *Parvulastra exigua*, rockpool star. The New Zealand half crab was under most of the rocks we lifted, the good news is we are not seeing the rather large introduced purple sea urchin *Heliocidaris erythrogramma* which was abundant during earlier visits to the area. There was a smaller variety of shells, sea stars and crabs than in previous years. The garden of sea grasses and sea weeds in the low tide looked amazing.

Rhagodia candolleana the coastal saltbush on the walkway to the beach was abundant with red berries.

We enjoyed our tea in the undercover facilities across the road before heading home after an enjoyable day at the seaside.
Karen Manning



Additional Information

Club Outings:

- Are held during a weekend following the General Meeting. Until further notice, members should make their own travel arrangement to participate, contact the Program Co-ordinator 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 Co-ordinator 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 7259

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

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