



THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

Volume LV No.5 June/July 2022

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

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

Program:

August

Tuesday 2

Social Evening – Riverside Hotel 6 for 6.30 pm – RSVP to Tom Treloggen

Saturday 6

Field Trip – Brushy Rivulet Reserve, Birralea Road, Westbury – meet 10am at the Westbury Hotel – please confirm attendance with Helen Tait

Wednesday 17

Field Trip – Casual outing to Kate Reed Reserve wetland for birdwatching – please confirm attendance with Helen Tait

Saturday 27

Skemps Day – Continue tree maintenance on Skemps Creek

September

Tuesday 6

General Meeting – Threatened Species Day - Guest Speaker to be confirmed

Saturday 10

Field Trip – Narawntapu wetland and beach walk – meet at 10am at Rangers Station

Sunday 25

Skemps Day – Members day

October

Tuesday 2

Meeting – Club night – “Let’s talk about your favourite native orchid”

Saturday 8

Field Trip – Powranna Reserve for wildflowers and native orchids

Saturday 15

Annual General Meeting – at the John Skemp Field Centre

Saturday 29

Skemps Day – Macroinvertebrate monitoring on Skemps Creek

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

Skemps Report:

Our first Skemps Work Day for this period, saw our annual Test and Tag done by Nic from ETCS. While during the first such event last year all items past the testing, including an ancient all metal drill, this year saw the old angle grinder taken out of service with a damaged power cord.



The big tree fall is proving to be a tough job to finish while yielding a lot of firewood. Often the pieces are too twisted to easily split and the universal splitter is called into service, Jeff's name for the chainsaw. This wood is dry and burns well so the trailer shed is quickly filling with much needed stove size firewood though we have had to rearrange the shed and cull or move items in it to accommodate so much wood.

Using cut offs from a friend's new fence I made sign posts for the acacia walk and these were treated at the pointed end to help them survive in ground. Karen and Caitlin used the Gravograph to make the signs using the red sign material and then hammered them in, the red signs stand out nicely on this quickly progressing walk. A sign was also made for Al Pegler's photo in the Centre which was then installed.

Caitlin, Jeff and Karen continue to sort paperwork and posters in the library for a thorough cull and all have mucked in to move and stack firewood.

Caitlin (pictured right removing foxglove) and Karen have been all over the property on the hunt for foxglove and other weeds and also worked on sorting the stuff behind the barn ready for a tip run. A number of large tree guards were found here and these will be put aside for the acacia walk. Karen has the Patersonia Map on her Avenza Maps App and is able to accurately note where weeds and wasp nests are for continual follow-up.



The biggest job is improving the Centre to meet the council standards for the occupancy certificate and we have stated with the bench tops. These were made with floor boards and the cracks need to be filled and the top sealed with a quality varnish and for some high use or wet areas, Laminex will be used. We have also started to restore the solid fuel stove by cleaning off rust and resealing it.

While Jeff and I used the chainsaw to clear a major blockage on the Forest Trail I failed to find the second fall seen by Rob during an earlier inspection, eventually realising that Tony and I had moved this by hand during the fungi hunt.

There is a blockage needing attention at the highest point of the Bedfordia track to be dealt with soon. Karen recently found a dead eastern barred bandicoot near the Centre which has been bagged, tagged and taken to the museum.

While most trails have been inspected for blockages and other issues it would be appreciated if members could adopt a track to regularly check. This would involve a walk on the chosen track every other month with secateurs and a hand saw clearing small blockages along the way and reporting larger blockages requiring further clearing. If you can help with track monitoring or in

any other way please contact me or another committee members and I will add your name to the text message contact list.
Noel Manning

Meeting: Tuesday 7 June – Introduction to Ferns with Roy Skabo

At this meeting, member Roy Skabo conducted a workshop on identifying ferns using the recently published *FernFlip* by Rob Wiltshire and Paddy Dalton from the University of Tasmania. Roy also confirmed the final details relating to our weekend walk with Dr Lee Bowkett at Briseis Race looking at the ferns.

For the workshop, Roy visited Skemps earlier in the day and collected specimens for the exercise. Each specimen was numbered and he had noted specific detail that would be required to assist in our identification of the fern e.g. it was epiphytic, therefore growing on another plant.



Members worked in pairs with a microscope, loupe and a *FernFlip* to identify the 12 species of fern provided and completed the accompanying sheet placing the appropriately identified fern under the correct number, getting a nod from Roy when we had them all correct. Andrew and Caitlin were the first to identify all the species.

This was a typically well organised exercise by Roy with someone asking if he had been a teacher, which was confirmed to be the case.

During supper we were shown images by Brian O’Byrne who was presenting the Puggle this month. His question was, “What is the common name of this species?” His image was of a Tasmanian Spotted Snow Skink or Ocellated skink taken on the summit of Little Hugel in the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park.

For a chocolate frog, Karen had snow skink, Louise had spotted snow skink and after some prompts Jeff suggested ocellated skink. Karen & Noel Manning

Spotted Skink (*Niveoscincus ocellatus*)

by J K Melville,
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Field Trip: Saturday 11 June – Fern Foray along Briseis Water Race with Dr Lee Bowkett

After a rendezvous at Branxholm we drove, in convoy, the short distance to the beginning of the Briseis Water Race track.

The day was magnificent and the ferns were abundant. One hundred metres along the track



our fern expert, Lee Bowkett called us to a halt and started our lesson on fern ecology. (Lee had studied the epiphytes of *Dicksonia Antarctica* for a PhD at the University of Tasmania several years ago).

He pointed out the leaf litter which had fallen on the crown of a tree fern, something which would have been ignored by us, and explained that this material is important to the plant; it eventually composts, falls to the ground and provides nutrients for the fern. He also noted several small plants growing on the trunk of the tree fern including a *Tmesipteris obliqua* or forked fern, a primitive

fern relative and a small plant which was probably a *Pittosporum bicolor* whose roots would eventually reach the ground below the fern. Epiphytic trees and shrubs are a major source of recruitment in rain forests and wet sclerophyll forests. Plants which start their lives well off the forest floor are much less subject to herbivory than those which germinate in the soil.

As we proceeded along the track we identified numerous species of ferns including another tree fern, *Cyathea australis*, easily differentiated from the *Dicksonia* by the very rough, rasp-like stipe bases of fallen fronds.

A fern of particular interest, *Todea barbara* (austral king fern) (pictured right with Andrew - KM) was found growing along the water race. This is one of the few Tasmanian fern species which grows a trunk. It is fairly uncommon and Lee had not seen it before.



The only filmy fern we found was *Hymenophyllum cupressiforme*, not growing, as it usually does, as an epiphyte but covering large areas on the rocks which made up the water race. We examined the

only coral fern seen along the track, discovering that it was *Gleichenia microphylla* rather than the more common *G. dicarpa*. *G. microphylla* has fairly flat rather than pouched pinnules and each pinnule has more than two sori.

We found two orchid species in flower and the leaves of at least two other species. *Corybas aconitiflorus* flowers were spotted in several places along the track and numerous plants of a *Pterostylis* species were found growing, with flowers not fully developed, on a large moss-covered boulder.

Fungi were not in huge abundance although numerous species were observed and photographed.

Lunch was taken in a pleasant area without tree cover, where we could enjoy the sunshine, and then the return walk, of just over one and a half kms, was undertaken. Roy Skabo



Corybas aconitiflorus - KM



Schizophyllum commune - KM

Skemps Day: Saturday 25 June – Fern Foray at Skemps

This Skemps Day was a fern foray to further develop our identification skills of these interesting plants.

It started to rain as we left the Centre intending to walk the Loop Track. Instead we headed around the back of the building and under cover of the eaves to look at the ferns along the embankment. Jeff pointed out the differences between the soft tree-fern, *Dicksonia Antarctica* and the rough tree-fern, *Cyathea australis* which were almost growing side by side. We also saw a soft water-fern, *Blechnum minus* and a mother-shield fern, *Polystichum proliferum* which had bulbils in the mature fronds.

With the rain persisting we adjourned back inside the building for a short time and when the sun came out headed to the Loop Track to look at the ferns growing in that area, passing a huge scrambling coral fern, *Gleichenia microphylla* on the way there, along the creek. (Image below, KM)

Entering the Loop Track we came across hard, soft and fishbone water-ferns growing in the wet boggy areas, with kangaroo and the common fork fern seen growing as an epiphyte on many of the *Dicksonia* trunks.

After lunch members used the microscope to look at the range of spores of differing colours and shapes on the undersides of the ferns.

On the Loop Track today we located 10 of the 22 ferns recorded on the property.

Members noticed and commented today, that the plants in “Marion’s Walk” have had identification posts installed with their scientific and common names, and that the plants themselves were coming along nicely.



As it was cold outside and the fire was so inviting we sat around and discussed the proposed social event with many of those present registering their interest to attend. After a quick clean, we locked up and headed for home.
Karen & Noel Manning

Field Trip: Saturday 9 July – Exploring Kate Reed Reserve

Eleven members met at the top of the Kate Reed Reserve and walked in a loop around the reserve, down to the wetter lands and back up to the velodrome.

The land carries basically a vegetation community typical of *Eucalyptus amygdalina* (black peppermint)-*E.viminalis* (white gum)-*E.ovata* (swamp or black gum) on dolerite soil. The make-up of this community is typical of this type of light woodland with an understorey of *Allocasuarina verticillata* (drooping she-oak), *Bursaria spinosa* (prickly box), *Acacia dealbata* (silver wattle), *Banksia marginata* (silver banksia), *Bedfordia salicina* (Tasmanian blanket-leaf), *Notelaea ligustrina* (native olive) and *Exocarpos cupressiformis* (native cherry).

On the more shady south-west facing slope, we found *Olearia argophylla* (musk), *Zieria arborescens* (stinkwood) and *Pomaderris apetala* (common dogwood) down by the rivulet. As well as species of creepers *Clematis*, *Billardiera* (appleberry) and *Cassytha melantha*, (dodder-laurel) and we would expect to see *Comesperma* sp. (blue love creeper). Cropping by invasive deer can decimate this creeper.



Who is living in this tree hole (Image KM)



Tom and other members collected rubbish along the track (Image left KM)

At ground level *Dianella* sp. (flax lily), *Monotoca* sp. (broom heath), *Epacris impressa* (common heath) in flower, *Styphelia humifusa* (native cranberry), *Hibbertia* sp. (guinea flower), *Lomandra longifolia* (sagg), plus poa grass and a variety of rushes were everywhere.

Ferns included *Asplenium flabellifolium* (necklace fern), *Adiantum aethiopicum*, (maidenhair fern), and *Pteridium esculentum* (austral bracken) was in abundance.

There were various mosses and lichens that we didn't attempt to identify, and a number of fungi, species of *Ramaria*, *Mycena*, *Hygrocybe* and *Laccaria*, and *Heterotextus miltinus* and *Oudemansiella gigaspora*.

The disappointment of the day was finding that a dense infestation of *Ulex europaeus* (gorse) and *Erica* (Spanish heath) covered much of the reserve. While this

requires major works to remove it we thought that it would be well worth while tackling some of the outlying smaller incursions asap.

Noel, Karl and I noticed a rather fluffed up Kookaburra and wondered about its condition. We heard the 'crooning' of a bronze-wing pigeon, a loud honeyeater up high and I think some brown thorn-bills, blue wrens, forest ravens and possibly a golden whistler.

A Bennett's wallaby made a fleeting appearance, and there was much evidence of bandicoots and echidnas digging for food.

Tom T and I followed the boardwalk at the bottom of the reserve for a while and decided that it would be good to come back here for a quiet afternoon midweek walk and some bird watching. Karen and I have pencilled a date in August but this is flexible depending on who is interested in coming along.

After lunching back at the car park we finished the outing around 1:30pm as the day cooled and rain threatened. Helen Tait



Maidenhair fern (Image KM)

Social lunch: Thursday 14 July – Alpenrose Lakeside Bistro, Grindelwald

Today's social event was organised by Tony and Christine Geeves in lieu of one of our usual general meetings not held during the winter months. Originally we were attending a restaurant in Riverside however due to a family event, our booking was cancelled.

With short notice our organizer's contacted Alpenrose who were happy to have our large booking of 22 and the Geeves then contacted each member personally to advise the change of venue. The group included some members not seen for what seemed to be in some cases since the beginning of COVID.

At the Bistro we were seated in a large, sunny glassed room overlooking the lake, which also took in views across the golf course and children's playground. There was a bustle of activity as the waitresses took our orders and members settled in and chatted around the table whilst awaiting their meals.

Outside the ducks and other birds entertained through the window, with their reactions when dealing with the pedal boats and canoes on the lake, and pedestrians on the grassed area.

With our meals arriving the chatter dropped for a while as we tucked into appetising meals.

Further chatting took us into mid-afternoon as some enjoyed coffee or desserts before the day ended with Jeff thanking the Geeves, with us all making fond farewells and a trip home. **KM**

Skemps Day: Sunday 31 July – Tree Maintenance on Skemps Creek (National Tree Day)

Eight members attended our tree event at Skemps on a cool cloudy Sunday in late July with a cold wind. A fire was lit and we settled back for hot drinks and a chat before heading off to remove guards left on far too long.

I had a reasonably easy job with the removal of tree guards from the last three she oak's and headed back to the Centre, dropping off three guards along the way before working on the old solid fuel stove.

Those who remained said that removal of cages proved difficult and was a very slow process, especially with the bottlebrush and spiky violetbush, as the lower branches had wound in and out of the wire which needed to be carefully cut to pieces to free all the branches. The Blackwood's with no lower branches, were easier to remove the guards from.

With rain starting all returned to the Centre for lunch and drinks, and to warm up. Near the end of lunch Tom T spotted an eagle to the north which we watched gliding effortlessly on the thermals. Although further outside work was required the rain increased and this became impractical.

There was a short committee meeting to discuss improvements to the Centre with Andrew providing invaluable advice, suggestions and a promise to assist with works yet to be done. We left for home knowing that many tree guards still needed to be removed and happy with the progress on improving the Centre, whether works done or only in the planning stage. Noel Manning



Jeff removing tree guard (KM)



Sticks, plastic & guards removed (KM)



Treasures collected & photographed by Tom McGlynn near the creek

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 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/>

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