



# THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

Volume LVI No.2 December 2022/January 2023

**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 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of month, February-December at Scotch-Oakburn College, Senior Campus, Penquite Rd Newstead. Day meetings are proposed to be held in July & August at a venue to be advised.**

## **Program:**

### **February**

**Tuesday 7**

**Meeting: Guest Speaker - Geologist Ian Blayden - *Geology of the Tamar region***

**Saturday 11**

**Field Trip – Meet at 10am Beaconsfield Mine & Heritage Centre and West Head.**

**Saturday 25**

**Skemps Day – Insect Hunt with Prof. Nigel Forteach**

### **March**

**Tuesday 7**

**Meeting: Guest Speaker - Paleo-Botanist Ian Thomas – *20 thousand years of northern Tasmanian History. How geology, climate and people combined to make the landscapes through which you walk***

**Saturday 11**

**Field Trip – Gorge Walk to 1<sup>st</sup> Basin, meet at 10am in the Corin Street carpark at Duck Reach Power Station**

**Saturday 25**

**Skemps Day – Plant maintenance along Skemps Creek**

### **April**

**Tuesday 4**

**Meeting – Guest Speaker: To be confirmed**

**Day/Date**

**Field Trip – To Be Advised**

**Saturday 29**

**Skemps Day – Macroinvertebrate Monitoring on Skemps Creek**

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

## Skemps Report - December 22 to January 23

Weeding, mowing and wood cutting are our main tasks for these months. Caitlin and Karen, with the rest of us often joining in, work most Tuesdays at various places over the property either removing foxglove or beheading the flowers and I have sprayed these as well. It seems an impossible task as more flowers can be seen nearly every week.

It is surprising how fast the grass grows at this time of the year. With no mowing needed over winter I find I need to mow two out every three weeks. I cut the area around the Centre to reduce the fire hazard one week then the next the foot and car access trails to the further reaches of the property need doing again.

While the new heater is definitely better it also has a smaller fire box and Jeff still needs to recut some of the stored fire wood with every one mucking in to then get it back into long term storage or into storage at the Centre.

Wind and rain brought down a few spars late December and our family and Jeff put in a good half day on Christmas Day clearing these, moving and cutting some and the usual weeding, mostly on Targa Hill Road. We also did maintenance on Caitlin's Scandi Christmas tree, started new signs for the kitchen taps and sharpened the chain saw.

The ride on mower was loaded onto our trailer and taken to town for a much needed service with only a two week break before it was back working the grounds again.

One carbon monoxide and two smoke detectors have been installed in the main room of the Centre in the recommended position up near the ceiling. A ladder is needed to check these making it a time consuming task.

Caitlin and Karen have sorted the children's area of the Centre culling and checking the books, games and cards available to our younger visitors as well as adding new resources to the library catalogue and other library tasks.

Jeff dug a drain behind the Centre fire wood storage as he found the wood to be wet, while the Centre is frequently cleaned by Caitlin and Karen. There are always dead flies and wasps to be removed and recent high winds caused a lot of rubbish from under the roof to fall throughout the Centre.

With visitors expected over the coming weekend we spent nearly the entire day one Tuesday trying to find then clear the Mini Forest Trail, involving chain sawing, slashing and raking.

All this work leaves little time to check individual trails and when we do get to them we often find areas thick with ferns, sometimes so bad we need to down tools and look to see where the trail goes. If anyone can help it would be much appreciated if you could walk a trail, fix small blockages and report the larger ones. Noel Manning

## Skemps Day – Sunday 4 December – Hosting Junior Field Naturalists

Today we had a group of junior field naturalists and their parents arrive at Skemps to discuss a proposal for regular overnight visits and use of the facilities. They would visit Skemps to learn about nature and note the changes over the seasons.

There followed a discussion with Committee members where it was agreed that the proposal go ahead as discussed with members at a previous general meeting. We also agreed that the group would be welcome to join in future Skemps Days and possibly field trips.



Members then broke up into two groups and took our guests for short walks to get to know Skemps, what we did and what to expect from future visits.

One group walked the Forest Track finding lots of ferns, with Jeff pointing out and talking about some of the flowering plants and trees. Jeff also talked to the children about the many species of smaller plants and insects that are found in the mosses and showed them some native orchids. Bracket fungi and a sizeable slime mould were also seen.

The other group walked around the Loop Track seeing a variety of ferns, including the tall tree ferns, before crossing the John Lees Boardwalk and walking along the creek.

It was an enjoyable and successful day with enthusiastic young field naturalists and their parents giving positive feedback about the property and future interactions with the Club and the members.

Karen Manning

*Tubifera ferruginosa* (pictured right - KM)



## **General Meeting - Tuesday 6 December – Club night – *The Year That Was***

Members were reminded that the Club's Christmas at Skemps would be Saturday 10 December, that the barbecue would be lit for lunch and were asked to bring a plate of food to share for afternoon tea. There was also to be a casual walk in the Trevallyn Reserve on Wednesday 14 December. Jeff Campbell talked about the antics of 2 wattlebirds near his home and seeing an echidna near Skemps. Helen reported that she saw a newly dug platypus burrow entrance above one that had been destroyed in recent flooding on the South Esk near Hadspen.

Helen, Noel and Jeff spoke about the Club's involvement with a junior field naturalists group, hosting four visits to Skemps each year, one for each season, and their possible involvement with activities on our Skemp Days and perhaps suitable field trips.

Noel and Jeff also talked about the work volunteers have been undertaking on the property recently.

Appropriately the impressive 'Year That Was' presentation started with pictures of Christmas Bells (*Blandfordia punicea*) and Caitlin's Scandi Christmas tree, both at Skemps. There followed around 15 minutes of images reminding us of our activities for the year, the interesting places we visited including Tasmania's spectacular scenery and our plants and animals in the natural environment. It featured field trips, volunteer activities involving our members, Skemps Days, Skemps working bees and special member activities at general meetings.

This was followed by a hot drink and supper, with thanks to all members. Karen Manning

## **Field Trip - Wednesday 14 December – Trevallyn Reserve**

Members met in the Trevallyn Reserve carpark near the Village Green for lunch at the Hoo Hut and a walk in the reserve lead by Irmgard. The walk was weather dependent and fortunately luck was with us as the clouds lifted to a sunny day with a light breeze. Following our lunch we headed off with Irmgard, starting the walk along her favourite track towards the Trevallyn Dam.

Andrew arrived with a canine friend just as we were heading off although he was unable to join us as we were heading for tracks where dogs were not allowed. He walked with us until the

start of the dog track and was gone when we arrived back at the cars. As he had predicted the dog lacked the stamina to stay longer.

We could see the river below us through the trees with a strong, environmental flow from the recent rains. *Wahlenbergia*, *Viola* and *Hypoxis* were flowering on this early stage of the walk and the small red fruit of the *Exocarpos* littered the track, perhaps dropped by birds.

Taking yet another side track up the slope toward the horse paddock we moved away from the river to a large area covered in Resurrection fern. There was also a delightful display of fresh looking and vibrant coloured *Trametes* brackets extending about a metre along a fallen branch presenting another great photo opportunity.



Continuing further, we stopped to do a bit of bird watching from this higher point and collected some rubbish off track. On our way back to the car park, through a light forest dominated by species of acacia and eucalypt, I noticed a small group of onion orchids, our first and only orchids for the day.

From here our last walk was through a boggy patch and up a hill to another high point and although we were assured that this was a little used track we saw many from a school group returning to the Hoo Hoo Hut with some parents and younger children dragging their feet and bringing up the rear. Some had treasures collected along the way, such as sticks, feathers and flowers, or sported head garlands of intertwined dodder.

We continued on to a high point in the Reserve on this trail and could see houses in the suburbs on the other side of the river, and were then able to put in perspective

where the river below was trailing. On our return to the carpark we saw 2 wallabies, numerous forest ravens and some very friendly magpies.

Many thanks to Irmgard for leading us today to an area that is special to her. Karen Manning

**Fauna:** Wallabies, forest ravens, magpies, welcome swallows

**Ferns:** *Cheilanthes austrotenuifolia*, resurrection fern;

*Pteridium esculentum*, bracken fern

**Fungi:** *Geastrum triplex*, earthstar; *Trametes versicolor*, turkey tail (image above left - K Manning)

**Grasses & Rushes:** *Dianella tasmanica*, flax-lily; *Juncus pallidus*, pale rush; *Lomandra longifolia*, sagg

**Ground flowers:** *Billardiera mutabilis*, green appleberry; *Brachyscome spathulata*, spoonleaf daisy; *Dichondra repens*, kidneyweed; *Drosera auriculata*, tall sundew; *Geranium potentilloides*, mountain cranesbill; *Goodenia lanata*, trailing native-primrose; *Oxalis perennans*, grassland woodsorrel; (*Hypoxis hygrometrica*, golden weatherglass or *Pauridia glabella* ? var, tiny yellow star); *Viola hederacea*, ivyleaf violet; *Wahlenbergia stricta*, tall bluebell.

Orchid

**Orchid:** *Microtis unifolia*, common onion orchid (image right - K Manning)



**Shrubs:** *Coprosma quadrifida*, native currant; *Ozothamnus* sp.

**Trees:** *Acacia longifolia*, Blackwood; *Acacia dealbata*, silver wattle; *Eucalyptus amygdalina*, black peppermint; *Exocarpos cupressiformis*, common native-cherry; *Notelaea ligustrina*, native olive

## Community Volunteering – Saturday 28 January – Ragwort Raid at Nunamara

Ragwort is a common environmental weed in Tasmania and is toxic to domestic livestock and humans. It has a head of small, yellow daisy like flower and the seeds easily spread the plant.

Seven Club members participated in the annual Ragwort Raid coordinated by Tamar NRM. We chose the Nunamara area and were allocated roadsides to check with the aim to remove and bag where possible or note the address or GPS coordinates of inaccessible incursions on private properties for follow-up.

Each group were given roads to check and spent 3 hours locating and removing ragwort before returning for a BBQ lunch provided by Tamar NRM. Four members returned to



Hunting Ground Road on their way home and removed leaf rosettes and a further six bags of flower heads over another 2 hours. This area still has many plants along the road and some on private properties.

This was another successful Ragwort Raid and we noted that there seems to be less than the previous year except on private properties where it appears to be getting worse. Noel Manning  
Images Andrew Smith

## Field Trip – Sunday 29 January – East Beach for rock pools

Five members met at East Beach at 11am to walk out with the tide for our annual look at the rock pools before lunch. It was very quiet today at the beach with the local Jazz Festival being held back down the road in George Town. We clambered over the rocks looking at the smaller rock pools as we went and along the edge of the water beyond the gently lapping waves. This was not a particularly low tide so the kelp beds were underwater and beyond proper inspection. At a particular rock pool, which we have used as a barometer of the health of this area and which was so full of life on our first few visits, has had very little of interest for the last three trips. This time we found that *Hormosira banksii* was growing in the pool and a surprising variety of

seaweed pieces had washed in. There were a few shrimp scuttling about (approx 5 mm in length), both the serpent-skin and southern chitons were under the larger rocks, and a small variety of sea shells, a sea biscuit, barnacles and limpets. It was also good to note that the Waratah sea anemones were still living in a rock pool high above the low tides and have continued to prosper in these areas since we first visited.



By the time the beautiful egg shell casings (pictured left image KManning) of a marine snail were spotted half a metre beyond the water line the tide was coming back in. The spot was marked and as we waited for the others to join us it became apparent the casings would be submerged by the time they arrived so the rock was lifted and a large stone placed under it to raise the end above the incoming tide. As the stone was put in place a large chiton fell off and curled itself up in a similar way to a slater.

Members eventually caught up and ventured over to inspect and photograph this interesting find. Unfortunately the stone placed under the rock made it unstable and as our two curious members trod on it, the rock moved and both ended up with wet feet. What we endure for our science or a great photo.

As we clambered gingerly over the rocks, ever mindful of our aging and frail bodies, a young fellow, about eight years old, came along moving easily over the difficult terrain with the nonchalance of youth.

Little black nerites were attached to the rocks and the flea mussel that live in dense populations on exposed rock platforms, were seen in many ridges in the rocks. Chitons were under most of the rocks we gently lifted and replaced, but less seastars. The anemone *Epiactis thomsoni* (pictured right, image KManning) is a new species for our list.



We saw three species of Echinoderms: *Meridiastra calcar*, orange sea-star; *Coscinasterias muricata*, eleven-armed sea star and the tiny *Parvulastra exigua*,

rockpool star, but felt there were fewer of them than in previous visits. A few New Zealand half crabs were found under the rocks which have been abundant in the past, but very few of the usual local crabs. The only evidence of the introduced purple sea urchin *Heliocidaris erythrogramma* was a broken shell with spines, which was also abundant during some earlier visits. The garden of sea grasses and sea weeds at the edge of the rocky outcrop in the low tide looked amazing closer up. (picture next page - KManning)

The changes over the years are a mystery to our enquiring minds though perhaps there are signs that the abundance of previous years is returning.

A couple of hours later, with our meanderings completed, we headed back to the car park for a late lunch in the recently completed picnic shelters. These overlook the water and provide much needed shelter from the sun or rain. We then headed home after another visit to this wonderful beach for our regular look at the littoral zone. Noel & Karen Manning



**Anemones** - *Actinia tenebrosa*, waratah anemone; *Epiactis thomsoni*, Thomson's anemone  
**Barnacles** - *Catomerus polymerus*, surf barnacle; *Chamaesipho tasmanica*, honeycomb barnacle  
**Chitons** - *Ischnochiton australis*, southern chiton; *Sypharochiton pelliserpentis*, serpent skin chiton (pictured below – KManning)  
**Crabs** - *Petrolistes elongatus*, NZ half crab (i)  
**Egg shell casings** of *Dicathais orbita*, common cartrut-shell  
**Lace coral** - *Celleporaria cristata*  
**Lichen** - *Caloplaca* sp., orange

lichen on rocks; *Lichina confinis*, circular black and grey lichen; *Symploca* sp., low black hairy irregular patches

**Marine worms and shrimp** - *Galeolaria caespitosa*, polychaete tube; *Palaemon serenus*, rock pool shrimp

**Seastars** - *Parvulastra exigua*, rockpool star; *Meridiastra calcar*, eight armed seastar; *Coscinasterias muricata*, 11 armed seastar

**Seaweed** - *Caulerpa brownii*, green algae; *Caulocystis uvifera*, grapeweed; *Celleporaria cristata*, lace coral; *Colpomenia sinuosa*, brown algae; *Corallina officinalis*, tufted coralline; *Cystophora retorta*, open-branched cystophora; *Cystophora torulosa*, club-leafed cystophora; *Durvillaea* sp., bull kelp; *Hormosira banksii*, neptune's necklace; *Leathesia difformis*, leatherweed; *Zonaria spiralis*, spiral fanweed and possibly *Cladostephus spongiosus*, bushy brown algae; *Exallosorus olsenii*, brown algae; *Jania microarthrodia*, ball coralline

**Sea urchin** - *Heliocidaris erythrogramma* (eastern form) – purple sea urchin (i)

**Shells** - *Limnoperla pulex*, flea mussel; *Nerita* sp., black crow shell; *Phasianella ventricosa*, swollen pheasant-shell



## 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, please contact the Program Coordinator (Helen Tait) 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. Email notification will also be sent.

**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. Please contact our Booking Officer, Andrew Smith [smithsinoz@dodo.com.au](mailto:smithsinoz@dodo.com.au) or by phone on 0402 893 378 regarding availability and keys.

**Field Centre Phone Number:** (03) 6399 3361

**Postal Address:** 23 Skemps Road, Myrtle Bank

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