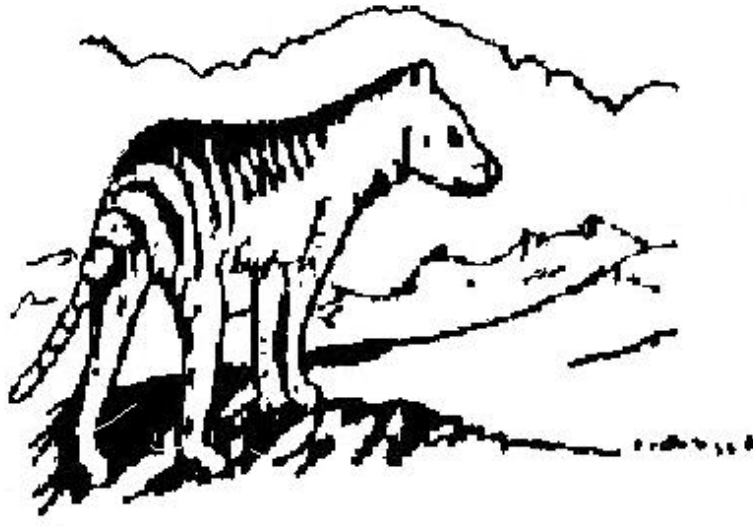


THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

Issued to members of the Launceston Field Naturalists Club as a contribution to club activities.



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

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February/March 2011

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- N'letter Co-ordinator** : Ms K. Manning
- Librarian** : Ms T McGlynn
- Committee** : M Clarke, L Mockridge, J Simmons, M Simmons,
R Skabo, P Warren, N Manning

Meetings 1st Tuesday of month, Feb-Dec at Scotch-Oakburn College, Penquite Rd Newstead

PROGRAM

APRIL

Tuesday 5 **Speaker: Debbie Searle** - *Water Monitoring*

Sunday 10 Skemp Day: Water Monitoring

MAY

Tuesday 3 **Skemp Memorial Lecture, Speaker Mark Holdsworth** -
Orange Bellied Parrot Recovery Program

Sunday 22 Skemp Day: Fungi

JUNE

Tuesday 7 **Speaker: Karen Richards & Chris Spencer** - *Leeches*

Sunday 12 Field Trip: To be advised

Sunday 18 Skemp Day: Tree Planting

JULY

Tuesday 5 **Speaker: David Seymour** - *Geology of the Mathinna
Group*

Sunday 10 Field Trip: to be advised

Sunday 24 Skemp Day: Tree Planting

Above correct at time of printing. For short notice changes to
program visit <http://www.lfnc.org.au/meetings.htm>

COMMITTEE/GENERAL MEETING

Skemp Report

John Simmons reported that the floor of the barn was finished and the painting had been started. Painting of the workshop and outdoor toilet has commenced. The grass around the Centre which was a fire hazard has now been mowed by Grant Hansson, Peter and Daphne Longman. John Elliott had slashed rushes and long grass round the outbuildings. Peter Warren has sharpened the latest batch of plant stakes to be used in the second stage of re-vegetation on Skemp Creek.

Puggle

February - Prue Wright showed several images of Tasmanian birds and asked members to identify the bird that was not a threatened species. John Elliott correctly identified the Striated Pardalote.

March - John Elliott asked how many Orange-bellied Parrots were thought to be living in the wild. Maureen Johnstone correctly answered 40.

Sightings

February - Alma McKay had seen a flock of green rosellas (*Platycercus caledonicus*) near High St. Maureen Johnstone reported that 22 pelicans were still feeding in the Trevallyn tailrace. Shirley Anthony had found a stick insect in her dining room. Alison Green had seen a snake (possibly a tiger snake) at Liffey Falls.

March - Maureen Johnstone caught a brown house moth which Alison Green had identified. Jeff Campbell had seen black cockatoos (*Calyptorhynchus funereus*) feeding on Banksia cones in his garden, and a black-faced cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina novaehollandiae*) also in his garden. Karen Manning had seen three new holland honeyeaters (*Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*) in her garden. Prue Wright reported seeing a whip snake at Ben Lomond Village. Prue had also photographed a skink that looked different to lowland skinks; the image would be sent to Erik Wapstra for identification. Prue had also seen musk lorikeets (*Glossopsitta concinna*) at Swan Point. Marion Simmons also had seen musk lorikeets. Peter Manchester reported a perched basement (geological feature) was uncovered in recent earthworks at Eldonhurst Estate which revealed the first fossils of *Nothofagus johnstonii* for the Tamar Valley. Noel Manning had found a moribund post coital Goat Moth near the gasworks and seen a copperhead snake (*Austrelaps superbus*) near Tamar Island and green rosellas (*Platycercus caledonicus*) feeding on a *Corymbia ficifolia* in Robin St. Peter Warren had seen a Bronzewing on his way to Ben Lomond. John Elliott said that *Richea dracophylla* had been planted in the school garden outside. A shining bronze-cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx lucidus*) had flown into a window of his house and was taken out to Skemps. In Al Pegler's garden, a possible cuckoo chick was seen being fed. Peter Longman reported a Koel at Dilston.

GENERAL

Photo competition: Members were advised that the competition will be held During the August meeting. Any image of Tasmanian natural history could be entered, other conditions of entry later in this newsletter.

Flinders Island trip: Members were informed that if there was sufficient expression of interest by members in a trip to the Island late September or early October, further investigation would be made. About a dozen members indicated interest.

Calendar: It has been proposed to have another calendar this year, using images from last years photographic competition. Quotes are currently being obtained for the printing of them.

New Members

New members Phil Collier, Robin Garnett, Neil Hardstaff, Peter Manchester and Alanna Smith were welcomed to the Club in February and March.

GENERAL MEETING - SPEAKER Professor Nigel Forteath

A Biological Journey was the title chosen by Professor Nigel Forteath for his talk to the LFNC meeting on 1st February 2011. This included some of his special projects in Tasmania:- Seahorses, platypus and echidna, and invertebrate animals in Lake Pedder.

Experiments in breeding seahorses, particularly *Hippocampus abdominalis* (a species common in Tasmania) were located at Beauty Point, West Tamar. Prof. Forteath's original aim was to provide a source of farmed animals for use in Chinese medicine and so reduce the taking of wild seahorses. Unfortunately this plant was not accepted. However, following the great success of the breeding programme at Beauty Point, seahorse farms have been established in UK, Ireland and Mexico. These can boost populations of local species which have become rare.

The next phase at Beauty Point involved studies of the breeding of platypus and echidna. The threat to wild Tasmanian platypus infected by a fungus, *Mucor amphibiorum*, was then of particular concern. This work has added information about the behaviour of these two monotreme species.

During the 1990s there was a proposal to partly drain Lake Pedder to restore it to what existed before its outlet was dammed. Followers of the plan claimed that animal species unique to this lake would have been extinguished by its flooding in the 1970s. Prof. Forteath protested that a lowering of the water level now would threaten animals which had spread into the larger lake. Together with Professor Andrew Osborn he began field work to find out what does exist in the new Lake Pedder.

There are strict rules about the level of Lake Pedder now. Its water surface must be kept at 308 metres above sea level. Thus, unlike other “Hydro” lakes, it is very stable which is an advantage for its fauna and flora. The original beach still exists, 14 metres below the surface.

Sand-dwelling crustaceans endemic to the old Lake Pedder, the Maria complex and Lake Edgar have been dredged from sand several metres below surface in the new lake. One of these is *Colubotelson n. sp.*, a primitive isopod in Sub Order Phreatoicidea, soon to have a specific name published. Also still there is the Lake Pedder flatworm [Platyhelminthes], *Romankenkius pedderensis*, which had been declared extinct.

A new development is the presence of spectacular “sponge gardens” formed by a new species of sponge, *Radiospongilla pedderensis*. Not recorded from the original Lake Pedder it may have spread from the Serpentine River. Its green colour is due to the presence in its cells of a symbiotic alga, *Zoochlorella*. This partnership has not been proven for other freshwater sponges. The sponge itself is sensitive to ultraviolet light. A reduced depth of water overhead would kill it.

The aquatic larvae of a sponge fly, *Sisyra pedderensis*, feed on this sponge. These larvae pupate on wood which stands above water level. The adult insect is a lacewing [in Order Neuroptera]. In his laboratory Prof. Forteath has worked out the whole life cycle of this new species. Also new is a small wasp, *Trichomalopsis sisyrta*, which parasitises the sponge fly pupae.

Prof. Forteath has established three new species of mayflies from the current Lake Pedder :- *Loamagalanta pedderensis*, *Atalophlebia albiterminata* and *Menura ida*. In addition to being significant insects themselves, mayflies are an important food source for fish and other predators.

Professors Forteath and Osborn have almost finished their Lake Pedder field work and have published some of their results, with more still to come.

Prof. Forteath ended his story as follows :- Flooding of the original Lake Pedder was a mistake but invertebrates which lived in its sand are still there. People have no right to kill off the significant fauna which now inhabits the new lake.

Throughout his talk excellent illustrations were delivered, with temporary delays, but equipment with a mind of its own. Patience with its tricks were rewarded by clear pictures. Thank you to Professor Nigel Forteath for a very memorable evening.

Alison Green

John Simmons thanked Nigel for his interesting talk on behalf of members.

FIELD TRIP - Saltmarsh flats at Port Sorell - Sunday 6 February

Nine LFNC members joined Central North members and at least one guest

for a field trip to Port Sorell to inspect the plants that live on the low sand mounds above the high tide mark where Marys Creek meets the waters of Port Sorell. It was a good group with 27 people in total.

Where is Pioneer Park, Port Sorell? A few members from the LFNC stopped at the shop on the corner of Wilmot and Rice Streets near what Google Maps indicates is Pioneer Park. As subsequent car loads of field naturalists spotted the seemingly lost band of LFNC members they stopped to join us and this became the defacto meeting point. Two locals did not agree and had Pioneer Park being south of where we were on the Panatana Rivulet or east near the waters of Port Sorell.

Eventually we moved to Panatana Wading Pool Family Park where those in the know, or who had not seen us earlier, were already waiting. Another move to the bridge over Marys Creek for the start of the field trip and at the interpretation site Phil Collier gave us information on what we would be looking for, including invasive weeds. Phil Collier was most helpful with the often subtle differences between the various plants we looked for. The round leaf pigface (*Disphyma crassifolium*) is much smaller with a round section fleshy leaf and more salt resistant whereas the other native pigface (*Carpobrotus rossii*) will be found further from the waters edge and has a larger leaf with the more familiar triangular section.

On the far side of the creek we left the bridge and started to search for and to identify the salt hardy plants on the sand mounds where the creek meets the waters of Port Sorell.

We returned to the wading pool park for a leisurely lunch and a pair of Black Swans paddled past.

Although some did not join us for lunch or the post lunch field trip we still had a reasonable group when we went to Squeaking Point Reserve. This was dry sclerophyll forest and we started with a coast hugging walking track with smaller trees such as the coast wattle (*Acacia longifolia*) being the most common before getting onto wide dirt roads which could have been fire breaks.

Unfortunately it was too late in the season to see many plants in flower. We did spot a beautiful hyacinth orchid (*Dipodium roseum*) and quite a few *Hibbertia procumbens* in flower. It is a beautiful area of dry forest and would be well worth a visit in spring.

After moving away from the coast there were so many intersecting tracks that some of us considered we would be lost if directed back to the cars without the Central North guides. A great field trip and all the better by catching up with friends from the Central North Field Naturalists.

Flora seen on the sand mounds included:

Apium prostratum (creeping sea-celery), *Argentipallium dealbatum* (white

everlasting), *Carpobrotus rossii* (native pigface), *Distichlis distichophylla* (Australian saltgrass), *Disphyma crassifolium ssp clavellatum* (roundleaf pigface), *Ficinia nodosa* (knobby clubsedge), *Hemichroa pentandra* (trailing saltstar), *Juncus kraussii ssp. Australiensis* (sea rush), *Lawrenzia spicata* (candle saltmallow), *Limonium australe* (yellow sea-lavender), *Sarcocornia blackiana* (thickhead glasswort), *Sarcocornia quinqueflora* (beaded glasswort), *Sclerostegia arbuscula* (shrubby glasswort), *Suaeda australis* (southern seablite), *Tetragonia implexicoma* (bower spinach), *Xyris tasmanica* (Tasmanian yelloweye)

The following birds were reported by Prue Wright and John Elliott

One (maybe two) sooty oystercatchers (*Haematopus fuliginosus*), between 60 - 80 pied oystercatchers (*Haematopus longirostris*); there are about 100 resident in the Port Sorell area which is considered to be about 1% of Australia's population, two satin flycatchers (*Myiagra cyanoleuca*) in the eucalypts and a small flock of dusky woodswallows (*Artamus cyanopterus*); both of which are summer migrants to our state and seen less because of diminishing woodlands and forests, masked lapwing (*Vanellus miles*), forest raven (*Corvus tasmanicus*), white-faced heron (*Egretta novaehollandiae*) and the three black cockatoos (*Calyptorhynchus funereus*) flew overhead twice.

Noel J Manning

WORKING BEE - Saturday 26 February and SKEMPS DAY - Sunday 27 February

Seven members arrived at Skemps on the Saturday to undertake some much needed painting before the wet weather sets in. The first job was to unpack the trailer which was laden with plant stakes in preparation for the next lot of trees for the creek revegetation. Following this the grass growing in the area around the workshop and outdoor toilet was cleared in preparation for painting which was done by John E, Claire and Rhys. Unfortunately the paint ran out before the jobs could be finished.

Marion cleared ferns from around the Centre, and John S prepared the barn for the afternoon's work, while Noel dug a drain at the back of the outside toilet, made an early start on the seed collecting and set the BBQ.

Following a late lunch, we headed to the barn for some internal painting. All was going well until Rhys trod on a leech that had dropped off his leg. The splatter up the wall would have made Pro Hart proud although the yet to dry paint was removed during the clean up and had to be redone.

Five members stayed overnight. On Sunday nine additional members arrived to collect seeds of plants native to the property, which are to be grown

for planting in the future. Members set off in groups or individually in all directions around the property returning with their findings which were then removed from pods or extracted from cones, sorted, bagged and labelled.

Seeds collected: *Acacia melanoxylon* (blackwood), *Callistemon viridiflorus* (prickly bottlebrush), *Callistemon pallidus* (yellow bottle-brush), *Acacia dealbata* (silver wattle), *Acacia riceana* (arching wattle), *Banksia marginata* (silver banksia), *Stylidium graminifolium* (triggerplant), *Pultenaea juniperina* (prickly beauty), *Leptospermum lanigerum* (woolly teatree), *Coprosma quadrifida* (native currant), *Dianella tasmanica* (forest flaxlily), *Tasmannia lanceolata* (mountain pepper) and *Aristotelia peduncularis* (heartberry - collected 8/3/2011),.

GENERAL MEETING - Member's Night - Tuesday 1 March

At the first members night for 2011, we had a mixture of presentation from members. Rob Mitchelson started the evening showing images from a walk he did to the old Lake Pedder via the Sentinels just prior to the flooding. Peter Warren showed some mineral specimens and fossils. John Elliott had images from New Zealand and the British Natural History Museum. Prue Wright showed pictures of insects in her backyard. Noel Manning showed a picture of the Copperhead at Tamar Island. Jeff Campbell showed examples of wildlife seen in Glenys Mathison's backyard in Stanthorpe and finished with images of the recent floods in the area.

A big thank you to all who contributed to this evening.

FIELD TRIP - Trevallyn Nature Reserve - Sunday 6 March

On Sunday 6 March, thirteen club members and one guest met at the Hoo Hoo Hut in the Trevallyn Nature Reserve to look for plants, some of which had been listed on the schedule of threatened plants. Club member Roy Skabo was our guide for this field trip. He is also a member of the Friends of Trevallyn Reserve and knows the area very well.

We set off along the South Esk Track where we had views down into the river and across to Blackstone Heights. It was along this track where we saw *Scutellaria humilis* (dwarf skullcap) and *Haloragis heterophylla* (variable raspwort), both listed as rare plants. Roy told us that the seeds from the *Scutellaria* were collected for the Millennium Seedbank project last summer.

We left the track and proceeded uphill to a pond where we saw *Potamogeton tricarlinatus* (floating pondweed) and *Eleocharis sphacelata* (tall spikesedge) and a *Juncus sp.* growing in the pond, and *Gratiola peruviana* (southern brooklime)

growing in the muddy area around the pond.

Moving further uphill onto the flat, we came across another pond. Here there were many tadpoles of the Brown Tree Frog (*Litoria ewingii*) and also waterbugs; back-swimmers and water striders.

From here we crossed the Duck Reach Road and followed the Snake Gully track down the other side. On the level there was yet another pond and this one had tadpoles of the Eastern Banjo Frog (*Limnodynastes dumerili*), commonly known as the pobblebonk, dragonflies, damselflies and crane flies were also seen. Walking further along the gully we entered a marshy area covered in *Juncus* and other rushes, where we found plants including *Gratiola peruviana* (southern brooklime), the vulnerable *Gratiola pubescens* (hairy brooklime), *Centipeda elationoides* (spreading sneeze-weed), *Lobelia anceps* (angled lobelia) and *Hypoxis* lilies. We then followed the power lines back to the carpark area for lunch, but on the way an old log was turned over which revealed millipedes, cockroaches (small and large black and a small white), slaters (introduced European garden variety *Purcellia scaber*), a curl grub with an orange head and flat worms.

A great source of entertainment during our walk today was watching the antics of a few members who successfully, or otherwise, used the cheap insect net to catch butterflies and grass-hoppers.

After this enjoyable walk, lunch was eaten under the trees at the edge of the carpark. Many thanks to Roy for accompanying us today.

The following plants, insects, birds and animals were also identified by members during this field trip.

Plants:

Acacia dealbata (silver wattle), *Acacia mearnsii* (black wattle), *Acacia melanoxylon* (blackwood), *Adiantum aethiopicum* (common maidenhair), *Allocasuarina verticillata* (drooping sheoak), *Billardiera scandens* (apple berry), *Brachyscome* sp., *Bursaria spinosa* (prickly box), *Cassinia aculeata* (dollybush), *Cassytha* sp. (dodder-laurel), *Cheilanthes* sp. (rockfern), *Clematis aristata* (mountain clematis), *Coprosma quadrifida* (native currant), *Exocarpos cupressiformis* (common native-cherry), *Lomandra longifolia* (sagg), *Dried microtis* sp. (onion-orchid), *Notelaea ligustrina* (native olive), *Olearia* sp. (daisybush), *Ozothamnus* sp. (everlasting bush), *Pomaderris apetala* (common dogwood), *Themeda triandra* (kangaroo grass), *Wahlenbergia* 3 species

Insects:

Heteronympha merope (common brown butterfly), a green grasshopper, yellow winged grasshopper and a shield bug (Pentatomidae family), unidentified butterflies.

Birds:

Calyptorhynchus funereus (yellow-tailed black-cockatoo), *Platycercus caledonicus* (green rosella), *Malurus cyaneus* (superb fairy-wren), *Rhipidura fuliginosa* (grey

fantail), *Corvus tasmanicus* (forest raven), *Colluricincla harmonica* (grey shrike-thrush), *Coracina novaehollandiae* (black-faced cuckoo-shrike), *Artamus cyanopterus* (dusky wood-swallow)

Animals:

Macropus rufogriseus (Bennett's wallaby)

Karen Manning

CLUB SOCIAL EVENING - Monday 21 March

Twenty seven members attended the social get together at Steve's Grill at Riverside with most arriving during heavy rain. The choice of meals was extensive and the salad bar was very popular. It was lovely to see both old and new members chatting and generally enjoying the evening together.

LFNC PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

The judging of the photographic competition this year will be held at Scotch Oakburn College during the general meeting on 6 September. Entries must be submitted to the Secretary, John Elliott, no later than the August general meeting. Due to time limitations to erect the display of entries and judge them during a meeting, there will be a limit of three entries per member.

Members attending the September meeting will be asked to judge and vote on the entries; prizes will be awarded for 1st, 2nd and 3rd places.

Conditions of entry

- **Print size:** from approximately 10 x 13 cm up to 21 x 30 cm (A4)
- **Print medium:** colour and monochrome (black and white)
- Must be simply mounted on cardboard at least.
- **Prints topics:** Subjects are to be related to Tasmanian flora and fauna, forests and Tasmanian landscapes. Prints of cultivars are not acceptable.
- All entries to have been taken during the past 12 months.
- The competition is open to members only.

AUSTRALIAN PLANT SOCIETY MEETINGS

LFNC members are invited to attend APS meetings held on the third Tuesday of the month at Max Fry Hall, Gorge Road Trevallyn at 7.30 pm. The APS have guest speakers on topics relevant to the interests of the group and 'club nights' where members make presentations and show native plants. A gold coin donation would be appreciated. Their next meetings will be on:

April 19 - Eleanor Cave '*Early Botanists of Tasmania*'

May 17 - Members night

Additional Information

Club Outings:

1. 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 \$3.00. Sunday parking free.
2. You need to provide your own food and drinks for the outing unless otherwise specified. Morning tea is normally provided by the bus company on bus outings.
3. When travelling by car in convoy, each driver is responsible to ensure that the vehicle behind is in sight immediately after passing each cross road or fork in the road.
4. When car pooling, 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: Name tags are to be worn at 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. Contact our booking manager, John Elliott on 6344 9303 regarding availability and keys.

Field Centre Phone Number - 6399 3361

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