

# 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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**December 2015 / January 2016**

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<b>Librarian</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Ms T McGlynn</b>
<b>Committee</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Ms Campbell, Mr Geeves, Ms McGlynn, Mr Ralph, Mr Elliott, Mr Warren</b>

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

## PROGRAM

### FEBRUARY

- Tuesday 2**                    **General Meeting ~ Guest speaker Frances Mowling**
- Sunday 14**                   **Field Trip ~ Butterflies and plants at ‘Dunbarton’  
Nabowla (contact Roy on 63346787 for details)**
- Saturday 20**                **Skemp Day - late spring clean**

### MARCH

- Tuesday 1**                    **General Meeting ~ Members night**
- Friday 11 -**                   **Federation Weekend ~ Gowrie Park**  
**Monday 14**                   **(revised information contained in this newsletter your  
response needed before 12 February)**
- Sunday 20**                   **Skemp Day**

### APRIL

- Tuesday 5**                    **General Meeting ~ Guest speaker Kathryn Pugh**
- Tuesday 12**                **Field Trip ~ East Beach at Low Head  
~ Rockpools and beachcombing**
- Saturday 30**                **Skemp Day ~ Water monitoring**

The full January to June 2016 program will be available soon

<http://www.lfnc.org.au/meetings.htm>

## COMMITTEE/GENERAL MEETING

**Skemp Report** ~ We ended the year by taking ownership of the old fire shed which now has our lock on it.

It is interesting that you can walk the property regularly and yet still find large weedy trees. Two sycamores were found recently near the creek crossing with their distinctive leaves poking above the native trees of the area. These have been dealt with and the trunks added to our fire wood stores. The sycamore is difficult to split so larger pieces will be cut to stove length before splitting.

Although this has been a very poor season for growth the ride on mower has had two outings since a recent major service while regular slashing has kept most tracks clear of undergrowth. During our Christmas visit Karen and I cleared a fallen tree from the entrance to the pipeline side of the Loop track.

We also removed a number of foxglove, including many hiding in the grass clumps just outside the Centre compound toward the Federation Corridor. We also dealt with those found in the lighter undergrowth between there and the Watergate track.

John keeps the Tyre track clear of weeds during his monthly water monitoring work. When he recently returned along the road he noticed that the Spanish Heath is spreading while noting that the thistles did not seem as bad as previous seasons. He has also cleared the grasses around the three new fire wood stacks to reduce a fire hazard.

Some water pipes are strained as they creep downhill and Rob and I had to repair our pipe where it comes out of the settling tank and then anchor it to a tree to take the strain off the fittings.

As usual, please deal with or report any issues on the trails you walk when on the property.  
Noel Manning

**Member talk** ~ At the December meeting Prue brought along a case moth in a jar to show members and followed with a slide show of the moth as it changed during the period that she had observed it as well as pictures of three kookaburra chicks in a tree hole.

### Sightings

**December** ~ On 1 December John saw his first tiger snake for summer near the old dairy at Skemps. Peter W had seen Bennetts wallabies eating his strawberries during the day. Peter R had seen wallabies also but they were eating dahlia leaves. Daphne had seen two bluetongue lizards trying to mate, the male was smaller than the female and a bluetongue was also observed drinking water as it dripped off her steps. Stephen had observed a wedge-tailed eagle gliding over the dam at a friends home, inland of Gravelly Beach. Peter L said he had been swooped upon by six noisy miners, he had also seen two woodswallows swooping onto pasture, one striated pardalotes nesting in a gumtree, two pardalotes in another nest and a black snake with a red belly at the Hoo Hoo Hut. Prue has seen two eastern curlews feeding on saltmarshes at Bakers Beach and Tom T had seen new holland honeyeaters at Warrawee at St Helens. Marion reported there is a new addition to the magpie family living in her garden at Legana.

**Library Report** ~ Tina reported that the Club had purchased a copy of *Estuary Plants* for the library. She also talked about Sarah Lloyd's new book *The Feathered Tribes of Van Dieman's Land* which she said was not a field guide, rather it was an introduction with 80 photographs, all but two of which were hers.

## **GENERAL MEETING ~ December ~ *The Year That Was* and Photographic Competition**

The general part of tonight's meeting was rather short with sightings, last minute announcements and a "show and tell" by Prue on a case moth she had found in her garden.

We then watched a wonderful presentation put together by Prue called '*The Year That Was*'. The slide presentation was of member's images from club events and activities during 2015 and to really take us back into the moment (or set the scene), Prue had a CD of bird calls and forest noises running in the background. It was great to look back and reminisce the interesting places that we visited during the year. President Tom thanked Prue on behalf of members for her time and the effort she had made with the presentation.

Supper was next and what a delicious spread of food we were treated to by members whilst we chatted and cast our votes in the Club's annual photographic competition. When all the votes were in, President Tom awarded a \$50 gift voucher to Peter Ralph for his winning image of an *Ardea alba*, great egret, a \$30 gift voucher to Peter Warren, for his image of a *Drosera* species, sundew and \$20 gift voucher to John Elliott, for his image of a *Austrolestes annulosus*, blue ringtail damselfly. Congratulations to all.

Karen Manning

## **CHRISTMAS BREAKUP @ SKEMPS ~ Saturday 12 December**

It was a warm sunny day for our Christmas get-together at Skemps. Members arriving early decorated a limb from a recently fallen dollybush to give the Centre a festive feeling. As the morning progressed more people arrived and set off on walks and it was reported by those walking past the waratahs on Skemp Creek that they were in flower. The echidnas in the paddock were busy with activity and were a source of discussion and photo opportunities.

With twenty eight people for lunch, it was a long and noisy affair. The gas barbecue was fired up and a few people chose to sit outside in a shaded spot to enjoy their lunch in the quiet.

More walks were to follow before everyone arrived back at the Centre for a late afternoon tea. Before we tucked in, President Tom thanked everyone for coming and presented the five children present with their 'secret santa' gifts before the lucky door prizes were drawn with Peter W and Alison being the lucky winners. The variety of cakes, sandwiches, dips and fresh fruit were very enjoyable, thank you to all who contributed to this feast.

A few small jobs were undertaken, it was also decided that the carpet needed shampooing and there was discussion on what we could look forward to in the

coming year. With another years official Club activities coming to an end we cleaned up and set off home.

Karen Manning



*Blandfordia punicea*, Christmas Bells  
outside the John Skemp Centre

### **FIELD TRIP ~ Saltmarsh Wetlands Monitoring @ Bakers Beach ~ Sunday 17 January**

Members Tom and Tina, Noel and Karen, and Prue accompanied by her daughter Jo, met at the visitor centre at Narawntapu National Park on a rather warm afternoon for a follow-up visit to two saltmarsh monitoring sites.

As recommended by Vishnu Prahalad we were doing the follow-up to our initial visit last November. This monitoring was done late in the day to match the high tide around 6pm.

We started with the site near the visitor centre, first to observe the birdlife and then to note any plants that we had not seen during the first visit. Two plants were added to the previous list, a well grazed *Melicytus dentatus*, spiky violetbush and *Selliera radicans*, shiny swampmat. During both visits we had seen nine varieties of bird with a flock of 50 or more welcome swallows seen on this visit compared to the small numbers from November.

We then headed to the saltmarsh area on the western end of the National Park near a very popular camping site arriving around 5:30. Tom, Tina and Karen put on gumboots and with Noel headed out to the marsh area behind the spit to observe the birdlife as the tide came in. Prue and Jo stood opposite on the spit to note the birds not visible to the other group.

The tide came in quite fast and we were thankful for our gumboots. Noel ventured out onto the grassy flats looking for the eastern curlew that had been seen in November and to better identify others birds further out that way. Alas, the curlew would not be on our list today. Prue said that she and Jo had seen the curlew last week when they had visited the beach, so the November sighting was not just a one off as the bird had stayed in the area. We observed 12 species of birds today, one less than previously, with the number seen being significantly greater. The approximate numbers seen were 50 black swans, 40 pied oystercatchers, seven red-necked stints, seven white-faced herons and 25 red-capped plovers.

Happy with our observations and with the tide fast approaching its highest we headed back along the beach, noting fresh bike tyre tracks on the mudflat closer to the carpark. Noel was well behind us and was seen bush bashing to avoid the rapidly rising water in his walking boots.

With the temperature still quite warm and a slight breeze, we sat and ate our tea at the picnic area and listened to the birds overhead and the water lapping the beach, finally heading back to Launceston around 7.30pm.

Karen Manning

## Area One

**Birds** ~ *Alauda arvensis*, skylark; *Anthus novaeseelandiae*, Richard's pipit; *Circus approximans*, swamp harrier; *Cracticus torquatus*, grey butcherbird; *Egretta novaehollandiae*, white-faced heron; *Haematopus longirostris*, pied oystercatcher; *Hirundo neoxena*, welcome swallow; *Larus novaehollandiae*, silver gull; *Sturnus vulgaris*, common starling

**Mammals** ~ *Macropus giganteus*, forester kangaroo

**Crustaceans** ~ *Mictyris platycheles*, soldier crab

**Flora** ~ In addition to previous report, *Melicytus dentatus*, spiky violetbush; *Selliera radicans*, shiny swampmat

## Area Two

**Birds** ~ *Calidris ruficollis*, red-necked stint; *Charadrius ruficapillus*, red-capped plover; *Colluricincla harmonica*, grey shrike-thrush; *Cygnus atratus*, black swan; *Egretta novaehollandiae*, white-faced heron; *Epthianura albifrons*, white-fronted chat; *Haematopus longirostris*, pied oystercatcher; *Larus novaehollandiae*, silver gull; *Malurus cyaneus*, superb fairy wren; *Pelecanus conspicillatus*, Australian pelican; *Zosterops lateralis*, silveryeye

**Fish** ~ Toad fish



*Macropus giganteus*, forrester kangaroo and *Egretta novaehollandiae*, white-faced heron on mudflat of saltmarsh area

**FIELD TRIP ~ Ben Lomond National Park  
~ Saturday 23 to Monday 25 January 2016**

Members J Elliott, Toby Lockhart (junior), C Manning, Karen Manning, Karl Manning, N Manning, L Ralph, P Ralph, P Warren, P Wright and T Treloggen were joined by visitors Prue Warren and Jo Chappell for a fine, hot and smoky Saturday start to our visit to Ben Lomond.

After lunch most of us took walks and before our evening meal Claire, John, Karen, Karl, Noel, Peter (W) and Tom went to Watchtower Lookout above Jacob's Ladder to spread the ashes of former member Ruth Upson, a challenging job in the varying winds. Words failed us so we privately remembered a wonderful lady and fellow field naturalist and took it in turns to spread her ashes, keeping some aside for Skemps.

While the Ralphs went home the rest of us settled down to the evening meal and a general chin wag noting that the smoke of earlier was being replaced by the low clouds.

The following day Prue Wright, Jo and Toby headed off for an early walk as they were leaving that day. The Mannings headed up the ski slopes and over the back of the mountain before turning left and circling around toward Little Hell. Having somehow chosen the most difficult route we arrived back at the lodge by 1pm for a late lunch and to find that Tina and Tom McGlynn had joined us for a day visit. As compensation for the difficult walk Claire found a white-lipped snake of about 30 cm and I have a picture for The Year That Was for 2016. When we arrived back at the lodge we learnt that others had seen white-lipped snakes as well.

Others also took walks and the McGlynn's, John and Tom headed home

leaving our shrinking group to their evening meal as an even thicker fog covered the mountain. As those down stairs tried to settle in for the night a possum was found in one of the toilets and had to be chased out the open window. Seeing a possum on the mountain was a first according to the regulars. Not much later that evening a possum tried to enter the open bedroom window which was quickly shut leaving nervous people wondering whether it had got in or not.

The next morning Noel saw what he thought was a flame robin although he described the chest as more orange than red.

After packing up and cleaning the lodge we headed home after another pleasant Ben Lomond weekend.

Noel Manning



*Gentianella diemensis*, Ben Lomond snowgentian

**Flora** ~ *Abrotanella forsteroides*, Tasmanian cushionplant; *Acaena montana*, mountain buzzy; *Astelia alpina* var *alpina*, pineapple grass; *Baeckea gunniana*, alpine myrtleheath; *Bellenden montana*, mountain rocket; *Carpha alpina*, alpine strawsedge; *Celmisia asteliifolia*, silver snowdaisy; *Coprosma nitida*, mountain currant; *Craspedia glabrata*, little alpine bellybutton; *Craspedia macrocephala*, alpine billy-buttons; *Drosera arcturi*, alpine sundew; *Euphrasia collina* subsp *diemenica*, eyebright; *Ewartia catipes*, diamond cushionherb; *Gaultheria depressa*, creeping waxberry; *Gentianella diemensis*, Ben Lomond snowgentian; *Geranium potentilloides*, mountain cranesbill; *Leonema montanum*, mountain wax-flower; *Leptecophylla juniperina* subsp *parvifolia*; *Leptorhynchos squamatus* subsp *alpinus*, alpine scaly button; *Leptospermum rupestre*, mountain teatree; *Lycopodium* sp., clubmoss; *Meliccytus dentatus*, spiky violetbush; *Olearia obcordata*, heartleaf daisybush; *Oreomyrrhis ciliata*, fringed caraway; *Orites acicularis*, yellow bush; *Orites revolutus*, revolute orites; *Ozothamnus rodwayi* var *kingii*, silvery alpine everlastingbush; *Pentachondra pumila*, carpet heath; *Plantago tasmanica*, asmanian plantain;

*Richea scoparia*, scoparia; *Richea sprengelioides*, rigid candleheath; *Senecio gunnii*, mountain fireweed; *Senecio leptocarpus*, western groundsel; *Stylidium gramine-folium*, triggerplant; *Tasmannia lanceolata*, mountain pepper; *Veronica ciliolata*, Ben Lomond cushionplant; *Wahlenbergia saxicola*, mountain bluebell

**Insects** ~ Cicada sp; *Tasmaniocris tasmaniensis*, Tasmanian grasshopper (black grasshopper with red legs)

**Reptiles** ~ *Drysdalia coronoides*, white-lipped snake; *Niveoscincus* sp., skink

**Mammals** ~ *Macropus rufogriseus*, bennett's wallaby; *Trichosurus vulpecular*, common brushtail possum

**Birds** ~ *Hirundo neoxena*, welcome swallow; ? *Petroica phoenicea*, flame robin;

## **FEDERATION WEEKEND ~ March 11 - 14, 2016 ~ Gowrie Park (REVISED INFORMATION DUE TO RECENT FIRES)**

Launceston Field Naturalists Club is to host the next Federation Weekend. This has been planned for early in the year (on the long week-end in March 2016 - Friday 11 - Monday 14) to avoid clashing with the ANN in spring, but given poor initial response, and the possible disruption of the planned program (see below) due to fires, **this date may become a weekend club outing with revised plans for a Federation Weekend a few months later. It is important therefore to let us know by emailing [secretary@lfncl.org.au](mailto:secretary@lfncl.org.au) or telephone 63442277 as soon as possible (before 12 February), if you plan to come on that weekend.** Other clubs are similarly being contacted and a decision will be made **before mid-February.**

Given the time of year, planning evolved round a major theme of environmental interactions and drivers of diversity, but delving also into the undergrowth and into methodology of investigation and classification of what we find. Recovery and long-term effects of fire can now be added to the environmental interactions.

We will have the Gowrie Park Wilderness Village as accommodation and base, from which we can access excursions to a wide range of climatic zones containing a variety of geological features. These include open sclerophyll, rainforest, alpine and caves. The program was planned to include one day comparing diverse habitats in the Mole Creek area, and one day visiting Devil's Gullet and the associated alpine flora, with stops to compare the flora and associated micro fauna as we climb. It is possible these locations may need to be modified, following the fires.

### **Planned Itinerary for Federation Weekend:**

**Friday afternoon** arrive, byo dinner and refreshments.

**Friday evening:** welcome and informal discussion on objectives and method-ology.

**Saturday field trip:** look at the diversity on the climb to Devil's Gullet alpine area. (fire damage permitting)

Dr Frances Mowling, geomorphologist and botanist, will lead the field trip

discussions, but we would seek to maximise discussions with others with specialist knowledge or an interest in specific habitat types, so do let us know your interests.

### **Saturday dinner : BBQ**

**Saturday evening guest speaker:** Bob Mesibov. “*Taxonomy Ain't What It Used To Be*”.

Bob Mesibov is an Honorary Research Associate at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery. He has described or redescribed more than 170 species of native millipedes from NSW, Qld, SA, Tas, Vic and the NT, and is the compiler of the millipede section of the Australian Faunal Directory and the online catalogue, '*Millipedes of Australia*'. The talk will look back at the remarkable changes in oological taxonomy over the past 15 years, plus Bob's adventures chasing small creatures in out-of-the-way places.

**Sunday field trip:** Diverse habitats in the Mole Creek area – open sclerophyll to rain forest (including undergrowth and caves.) This day will conclude with the opportunity for a Federation group specific cave tour (minimum 10, maximum 25, with preference given if necessary to those who have not previously done such a tour), which will include a more detailed discussion of spiders, Kaast formations, and underground issues.

**Sunday evening dinner:** Dinner at the function room of the Old Black Stump Restaurant, formerly Weindorfers Restaurant, at Gowrie Park Village.

To view the Black Stump Restaurant menu, <http://theoldblackstump.com.au/our-menu/> (For an organised function involving larger numbers and a dedicated function room there will be a more limited choice arranged beforehand, such as alternate drop, to facilitate timely delivery of meals.

**Monday:** Book out, with optional activities to be advised for those not travelling far. For planning reasons it is important that we hear promptly from those who plans to attend. We also look forward to hearing from any one attending who can lead brief field discussions on any of the flora or fauna groups we will encounter.

### **Accommodation:**

The Gowrie Park Wilderness Village has variety of accommodation options. We will have exclusive use of the bunkhouse, with large communal dining / meeting room and communal kitchen.

The **bunk-house** contains 14 bedrooms and 4 bathrooms, \$25 / adult / night. Bedrooms contain a mixture of bunks and single beds, but all providing 2 or 3 singles without the use of top bunks.

For those who may want a more **self contained option**, there are also 4 self-contained cabins that sleep 6 (queen + 2 sets bunks). These are \$110 night including linen, but will not be held, so first in, first served.

There is overflow **backpackers** accommodation if we fill up the bunk-house (\$35 / night, bring or hire linen).

**Powered & unpowered camping** sites also available.

Booking can be made directly with the park on 03-64911385 (**but be sure to mention LFNC when booking**). To view accommodation options online, go to <http://www.gowriepark.com.au/tasmanian-accommodation.html>

## QUEEN VICTORIA MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY EXHIBITIONS

### *On Albatross Island*

In 2014, artists Richard Wastell and Matthew Newton accompanied a team of scientists led by Dr Rachael Alderman on expeditions to remote Albatross Island, Bass Strait, home to over 5000 breeding pairs of Tasmania's endemic Shy Albatross.

The exhibition *On Albatross Island* will showcase Richard and Matthews' individual artistic responses to this unique environment while speaking to the important scientific based conservation work being done there.

When: until 3 April 2016

Where: QVMAG, Royal Park

Admission: Free

Information from: <http://www.qvmag.tas.gov.au/qvmag/index.php?c=324>

## DONATION REQUEST

The Tasmanian Land Conservancy has asked for support to protect Panatana, a 231 hectare parcel of land on the Rubicon Estuary, some five kilometres from the Narawntapu National Park.

“Pantana's complex and diverse environment has layer upon layer of vitally important habitat and is rich with life:

- Endangered swamp paperbark (*Melaleuca ericifolia*) forests cling to the shoreline of the Rubicon Estuary
- A cast of birds, from delicate robins and honeyeaters, to top-order white-bellied sea eagles and grey goshawks patrol overhead
- Diverse eucalypt forests and woodlands support coastal heaths and majestic stands of grasstrees
- On the forest floor, intricate fungi and lichens take charge in many colours and forms
- With tell tail footprints and scats, signs of the endangered Tasmanian devil (*Sarcophilus harrisi*), are dotted across Panatana”

Your donation will contribute to the protection of Panatana. Donate online at [www.tasland.org.au](http://www.tasland.org.au) or to find out more contact them on (03) 6225 1399 or go to [www.tasland.org.au/panatana](http://www.tasland.org.au/panatana)

## **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.
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, but should contact our booking manager, John Elliott on 6344 9303 or [skempbookings@yahoo.com.au](mailto:skempbookings@yahoo.com.au) regarding availability and keys.

**Field Centre Phone Number** - 6399 3361

**Postal Address:** PO Box 1072 Launceston 7250

**Internet site :** <http://www.lfnc.org.au>

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