

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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| Patron | : | Professor Nigel Forteach |
| President | : | Mr T Treloggen, 68 Mulgrave St Launceston, 0408 341 397 |
| Vice President | : | Ms J Handler, 52 Entally Rd Hadspen, 6393 6603 |
| Hon. Secretary | : | Mr N Manning, 46 Robin St Newstead, 6344 2277 |
| Hon.Treasurer | : | Ms K Manning, 46 Robin St Newstead, 6344 2277 |
| N'letter Co-ordinator | : | Ms K. Manning |
| Librarian | : | Ms T McGlynn |
| Committee | : | Ms Campbell, Mr Geeves, Ms McGlynn, Mr Ralph, Ms Wright, Mr Warren |

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

PROGRAM

FEBRUARY

- Tuesday 3** **General Meeting ~ Guest Speaker: Nigel Forteach,
*Life of Four Springs Lake***
- Sunday 8** **Skemp Day ~ Working bee, track maintenance**
- Saturday 14** **Field Trip ~ Four Springs Lake with Nigel Forteach**
- Saturday 28** **Skemp Day**

MARCH

- Tuesday 3** **General Meeting ~ Guest Speaker to be confirmed**
Field Trip ~ To be advised
- Saturday 21** **Skemp Day**
- Monday 23** **Social Night ~ Steve's Grill at the Centennial,
Wellington Street, Launceston
(see details this newsletter)**

Committee members are still working on the program which should be available shortly to view at <http://www.lfnc.org.au/meetings.htm>

SKEMP REPORT

Grant is doing an excellent job with the mowing and regular work sees the fire wood supplies replenished. Of major concern is the track maintenance, while tree falls on the tracks are usually reported and dealt with quickly, overgrowth of fern and bracken is an issue.

I recently walked the main track from the Skemps Road only to realise that none of the Tuesday mob need to regularly walk this track and it was very overgrown. In two places ferns had completely blocked the track for ten or more metres which is a safety issue in the snake season.

I took to it with the brush cutter while Karen and I were there over Christmas as people were in soon after and this is a popular track.

It would be appreciated if members could assist with track works when they are visiting the property, by volunteering to monitor a track for falls and assist by clearing overgrowth and debris.

John recently blocked gaps in the barn wall to stop small birds from getting in, nesting and making a mess. He seems to have been successful although the birds have moved to the shed where he keeps the weed poisons.

Late in January we had a break in at Skemps involving vandalism and theft. Having jimmied a window to the Centre the back door was smashed to allow access. A motorbike was taken in and by doing burnouts damage was done to cork tiles and many marks left on the tiles and carpet. All outside doors, except one, were forced open with damage to either locks or catches.

Luckily Rob was on his way and picked up some hardened chain and another lock to secure the container. Using old locks plus locks which survived the onslaught and much work by Grant, John, Rob and myself saw the place secured against the honest people and many of the marks removed from the floor.

We lost the new chainsaw, a good quality chain sharpener, an old machete used for weed slashing and all the matches stored in the storage shed.

This event is very disappointing and will take the workers away from other essential tasks at Skemps. So once again if anyone can join us on a Tuesday to help out it would be most appreciated.

There will be a working bee for track maintenance at Skemps on Sunday 8 February and we would appreciate any assistance you can offer. Noel Manning

SIGHTINGS DECEMBER

Peter L. had seen a white browed scrub wren at Dilston. Tom T. had seen an eastern spinebill at Skemps. Alison reported a pademelon and a large blue tongue lizard which had squeezed under a gate at Peacehaven to get into an enclosed courtyard. John had seen a yellow-rumped thornbill at Punchbowl. Alma reported that a red bottlebrush near her home at Bridport was full of various birds from dawn to dusk. Tony had seen four echidna and a wombat on his way home from Zeehan, Phil J saw a wedge-tailed eagle at Gawler and a snake and wrens while Phil A saw a black cockatoo and fire-tail finch at Gawler. Prue saw a snake swimming at the rhododendron gardens with stripes down the side of its body.

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

After a short general meeting and announcements for the last meeting for 2014, we watched the '*Year that Was*' a slide presentation of members images from club events and activities during the year. The slideshow was put together by Prue Wright. It was great to look back and share our photographic record with other members, along with the interesting places we had been and the people we had met during the year. The program locations and topics had certainly been interesting, a big thankyou to Prue for her time and effort with the presentation.

We then enjoyed supper provided by members and cast our votes in the Club's annual photographic competition. When all the votes were in, our President Tom awarded a \$50 gift voucher to Prue Wright for her winning image of a *Tasmanalpina clavata*, a wingless grasshopper, a \$30 gift voucher to Lois Ralph, for her image of a flying duck orchid, *Caleana major* and \$20 gift voucher to John Elliott, for his image of a Tasmanian Devil, *Sarcophilus harrisii*.

A big thank you to members for providing their images, they were of a high standard and it was difficult to pick a favourite. Thank you also to members contributing to tonight's supper.

Karen Manning

CHRISTMAS @ SKEMPS ~ Sunday 7 December

Members arrived at Skemps to a warm sunny morning. Noel located a native tree to use for our Christmas display that was set up in the Centre and then decorated by Jill, Taylor and Judith. As members arrived parcels placed beneath gave it the right look.

The weather today also seemed to be appealing to echidnas, with many members reporting echidnas on road verges along the Tasman Highway on their way here, two on Targa Hill Road, one on Skemp Road and three more in two separate locations on the property.

With lunch an hour or so away, we walked along the paddock hoping to catch a glimpse of one of the echidnas but it was not about. We walked down to the Top Falls, continuing up past the test plantation that early club members installed in 1979, to the Scotch Oakburn adopt-a-patch. Walking along the roadway back to the Centre we broke up into smaller groups, a few stopping to look at the waratah trees down near the river with only one being heavy with its bright red flower.

We had an early lunch today as some members needed to leave for other Christmas functions. Using the gas BBQ we cooked the sausages left over from the previous weekend for all to enjoy, and Judith provided some coleslaw and potato salad.

Later we decorated the tables and prepared the food for afternoon tea and waited patiently for Santa to arrive, when he did it was with quite a clatter on the roof; he claimed that "he had a rough landing on the roof". Junior members helped distribute the parcels and then Santa was off again to his next stop. Vice President Judith then presented a membership kit to our newest junior member Taylor, which was followed by the draw for the two lucky door prizes with the winners being Christine

and Prue. Four junior members who regularly attended field trips were then presented with a field kit; a calico bag containing a bug catcher, specimen jars and bags, tweezers, magnifying glass, note pad and pencil. We hope these items will further encourage their interest in nature and they will continue attending future field trips.

We then enjoyed a hot drink and tucked in to the cakes, sandwiches and savouries provided by members. We could feel the temperature dropping and the predicted rain arrived just as the early leavers were going to their cars. The Centre was then tidied up and everyone left for home.

Karen Manning



Echidna at Skemps

SCOTCH OAKBURN COLLEGE (SOC) VALLEY CAMPUS VISIT ~ Wednesday 10 December

11 members visited the SOC valley campus along the Esk Highway west of Fingal to assess the accommodation offered for a future Federation Weekend as well as looking at what the area offered for field trips for such a weekend.

The Skabos were already there chatting with Ben Griggs, co-manager of the property, when the rest of us arrived at 11 am. Ben showed us around, opening doors to the different types of accommodation, while Judith took photos as a record of what we had seen. Ben also showed us the other buildings and gave information on the Valley Campus and the surrounding properties and what to expect if we crossed the river. Roy took notes and has contact details for property owners in the area if these offer suitable sites for a visit. He also offered to contact the Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club for a plant list for the property and to find out what their members did on two previous field trips to the Valley Campus.

The accommodation was excellent with many two or three person bunk rooms, some with double beds, a fully self-contained flat and two powered camp sites suit-

able for caravans. The bathroom/toilet facilities seemed small for the number of beds available, although there were two other bathrooms as well as two kitchens associated with three of the bedrooms.

A single building offered a small commercial style kitchen with an attached large home style kitchen, a modest (approximately 30 person) dining/presentation room with a connected outdoor eating and entertaining area. There were two barbecues and a wood fired pizza oven here as well.

The Skabos left for the east coast while the rest of us decided it was well and truly tea o'clock and settled down for a cuppa and a chat about what we had seen. Afterwards we walked to the river wondering how fit we would need to be to get anywhere once on the other side. We also discussed whether such a difficult and time consuming journey would benefit a field naturalists group.

Back at the cars we chose the Evercreech Forest Reserve, around 50 kilometres away, as our lunch destination. After lunch and a drink we did some of the walks armed with information from the two DPIPWE rangers cleaning and servicing the facilities. When I returned from the Evercreech Waterfall walk, where some impressive fungi were to be found, the Handlingers, McGlynn's and Prue had left while Jill and Tony were waiting in the car away from a light rain. We did the White Knights walk while waiting for John, marvelling at the size of the *Eucalyptus viminalis* there, then did the circuit walk which allows a view of the tops of the trees in the distance.

We agreed that we would not want to travel so far on a Federation Weekend based at the Valley Campus and that for a successful weekend we would need to find more field naturalists activities closer to the proposed base camp.

Noel Manning

FIELD TRIP ~ BEN LOMOND ~ Friday 16 to Sunday 18 January 2015

Departing Launceston on Friday the weather outlook for the weekend was not good and it was raining as we drove off. Continuing on nevertheless, we struck sunshine around White Hills which gave us a little hope that further out the weather was better. However, when Ben Lomond came into view from the highway, well where it should have been, all we could see was fog.

The drive into the National Park was pleasant, the wooded areas with the large lichen covered boulders are always a picture. At Jacob's Ladder we came across fog so thick we were unable to see whether there were any vehicles on the section of road that we were travel up, fortunately we didn't meet any and were pleased to arrive at the top.

Our host, Peter, had not long arrived at the accommodation, closely followed by Tom and visitor Stephen who were only there for the day. Noel, Rhys, visitor Caitlin and Karen unpacked their cars and headed upstairs for a hot drink and chat, waiting Karl and Claire to arrive. Ann had also been seen near Carr Villa, taking photographs, and was expected any time.

The fog did not lift and the wind became quite gusty, so there were no plans to venture far from the accommodation. After lunch we did walk up into the lower parts

of the ski slopes, but we couldn't see much and the wind made it rather difficult to walk, so we headed back to a warm fire having seen a white car arrive. Ann had finally turned up following her photo session on the lower slopes. Tom noticed Richard's pipits hopping around the dolerite boulders behind the building and Claire saw flame robins. Tom, Stephen, Rhys and Caitlin headed back to Launceston late afternoon while the rest of us settled in for the night and prepared our evening meal in the impressive kitchen of the ski lodge.

On Saturday morning Peter and Lois arrived very early to another foggy day with a few people still snuggled up in bed. Around morning tea Michael and Lyndel from "Kingston" arrived and were admonished for not bringing the pleasant weather we claimed we always took to them. Within ten minutes the weather improved, the fog lifted and the sun was shining for the first time since we had been on the mountain, although the wind did not abate.

Karl and Claire walked over to Hamilton's Crag exploring the dolerite mounds looking for caves and Ann left not long after to look for plants to photograph on the ski-run area under the Crag. Karl and Claire arrived back for lunch, had a quick bite to eat, and then headed off with Noel and Karen to walk up the valley to look at plants. We met Ann heading back from her walk who complained about the strength of the wind. It was very wet underfoot, with numerous small ponds filled with water surrounded by cushion plants and pineapple grass. Frogs could be heard calling and one was seen swimming. We crossed the valley to Hamilton's Crag about three quarters of the way along the valley to look at one of the dolerite mounds then worked our way back along the Crag till we were opposite the village. Walking over the rocks was made very challenging with the wind in our face and at times driven rain which was very uncomfortable.



Bennett's wallaby with joey

Later in the afternoon, Ann, Karl, Claire and Karen walked up to the Ben Lomond Alpine Hotel which we found very inviting with a nice warm fire going. We ordered drinks, raisin toast and banana bread, and sat chatting while enjoying a DVD playing on a large screen showing impressive images of Tasmanian scenery. Noel arrived later and ordered a stout while others had another round of banana bread. Back at the accommodation we were fascinated by the Bennett's wallabies feasting on the grass outside our bunkroom window. There were two small joeys that were very cute and many photos were taken.

Saturday night was much colder than Friday night although we awoke to a fine day with an abating wind. It was however too late for further adventure and we were all determined to head home early, even though the day promised the best walking conditions. On the lower slopes of the mountain we saw two baby echidnas on the roadside. This is our sixth year on the mountain and the poor weather will not deter us from a future visit if Peter is willing to open the building for us.

Noel and Karen Manning

Seen at Ben Lomond

Birds ~ *Anthus novaeseelandiae*, Richard's pipit; *Corvus tasmanicus*, Forest raven; *Petroica phoenicea*, flame robin; *Strepera* sp., Currawong

Mammals ~ *Macropus rufogriseus*, Bennett's wallaby; *Tachyglossus aculeatus*, echidna

Frogs ~ *Crinia tasmaniensis*, Tasmanian froglet

Flora ~ *Acaena montana*, mountain buzzy; *Astelia alpina*, pineapple grass; *Bellendenia montana*, mountain rocket; *Craspedia alpina*, billy buttons; Cushion plant; *Cyathodes straminea*, spreading cheeseberry; *Ewartia catipes*, diamond cushionherb; *Drosera arcturi*, alpine sundew; *Gentianella diemensis*, Tasmanian snowgiant; ? *Lycopodium fastigiatum*, mountain clubmoss; *Meliclytus dentatus*, spiky violetbush; ? *Pterygopappus lawrencei*, sage cushion plant; *Richea scoparia*, scoparia; *Richea sprengelioides*, rigid candlestick; *Senecio gunnii*, mountain fireweed; Spagnum moss sp.

FIELD TRIP ~ VALE OF BELVOIR EXCURSION ~ Saturday January 24

Fifteen members of the APST and/or LFNC spent the day exploring this beautiful area which is owned by Tasmanian Land Conservancy. We had changed the date of the excursion from Sunday to Saturday because of the weather forecast and were rewarded with a magnificent day and an impressive array of wildflowers. The weather is particularly important in this area because many of the flowers are "paper daisies" which close up if there is no sunshine, markedly reducing the visual impact of the floral display.

We parked at the edge of the property and walked down a steep vehicular track for about 500m to an old farmhouse and then uphill through 200m of rainforest. At this stage we had reached the crest of what is known as Daisy Dome. The change from rain forest to open grassland was very sudden and the change in flora was equally abrupt.

As we walked up the grassy slope we noted numerous daisy species including *Coronidium scorpioides*, *Leptorhynchos squamatus*, *Celmisia asteliifolia* (silver snow daisy), at least one species of *Craspedia* and a number of smaller daisies, perhaps a dozen species in all. In addition to these we saw lots of the west coast version of the white flag iris (the endemic *Diplarrena latifolia*), and several other species such as a *Euphrasia* sp., a *Gentianella* sp., *Veronica gracilis*, *Rubus gunnianus* (the endemic alpine raspberry) a *Ranunculus* sp. and another subalpine endemic, *Gunnera cordigera* (tasmanian mudleaf) which is usually seen beside streams in subalpine areas.

Nearer the top of the hill we started to see the beautiful paper daisy *Leucochrysum albicans* var. *tricolor* (grasslands paper daisy) which is listed as endangered in both Tasmania and under Commonwealth legislation. In much the same area we found large numbers of another paper daisy, *Rhodanthe anthemoides* (chamomile sunray) which is listed as rare in Tasmania.

At about this time we found a white-lipped snake sunning itself in grassy hollow and someone pointed out a pair of brown hawks searching for prey a few hundred metres away.

After lunch in a sheltered site overlooking the floor of the Vale and surrounded by daisies and flag irises we walked along the ridge to the north and descended via an area scattered with sinkholes caused by the subsidence of the underlying limestone. Many of the sinkholes had quite interesting collections of plants including yet another threatened species, *Muehlenbeckia axillaris* (matted lignum) which is in the same genus as the very large vine one sees climbing up tall shrubs and trees in wet forests all over the state. This little ground-hugging plant was covered in red lumps which some people thought were fruit but which in fact were galls on the leaves. Many of the sinkholes also contained entrances to wombat burrows. One of the wombats obligingly made an appearance at about this time and allowed itself to be photographed close-up before wandering off to continue its grazing.

We continued downhill to a creek where we inspected the flora and then walked along the old Van Diemensland trail back to the old farmhouse and then uphill to the car park.

To round off the day we drove to Lake Lea where we hoped to see the tiny *Stackhousia pulvinaris*, another threatened species which in Tasmania grows only in the Vale of Belvoir area. We were unsuccessful in the search for this species, which later research indicated to be in peak flower earlier in the summer.

Roy Skabo

LFNC FACEBOOK GROUP

A LFNC Facebook Group has now been made, and we invite members to join the group. We have created this as a forum for sharing of photos and informal discussion, such as seeking a photo of a specific finding from a recent trip, or requesting identification of a plant, fungus, spider, insect or animal, for example, as well as more general Field Naturalist topics. We expect this to shortly have a link to the club's normal website, which will still contain the more formal

information for and about the club.

Taking on board the caution expressed in feedback from members and others with experience from similar sites, this has been set as a Closed Facebook Group, accessible to club members only. This means that anyone can find the group in searches, **but only current members of the group can see what is posted, or can post to the page.** We can change this later, if there is a consensus to do so, but this seems to be a good way forward at this stage as it allows members to post photos, knowing that these can only be seen by other members and not downloaded by the public at large.

There are two ways LFNC member can become members of this closed group. Initially this can be done by emailing the administrator (currently me). Please use this email address: jhhk@gmx.com. Once we have more members, those with an existing Facebook page can nominate their Facebook friends that are also LFNC members or with close links to the Club to the club Facebook group, but these need to be confirmed by the administrator, to ensure the club keeps control of membership. If you are interested, and want to have some input into how we use this, please email me (jhhk@gmx.com) so I can initiate the invitation.

Thank you, Judith Handler.

CLUB SOCIAL DINNER - Steve's Grill at the Centennial Hotel

This will be at held on Monday 23 March, 6.00pm for 6.30pm. Steve's Grill has relocated to Wellington Street in Launceston.

There is a grill menu and a comprehensive general menu. All main courses are served with vegetables or you can use the salad bar. A copy of the menu will be available at the General Meeting for members to view or visit Steve's website at <http://www.stevesgrill.com.au/Portals/0/Steve's%20Grill%20MNL%20V594%20.pdf>

If you would like to attend the dinner please RSVP to Noel or Karen on 6344 2277 or family_manning@yahoo.com.au by Thursday 19 March.

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY MEETINGS

LFNC members are welcome to attend APS meetings held on a Tuesday at Max Fry Hall, Gorge Road Trevallyn at 7.30 pm.

Friendly APS members are available to give expert advise on gardening with native plants. Their next meeting will be on Tuesday 17 February. For more details visit <http://www.apstasnorth.org/>

QVMAG EXHIBITIONS

William Buelow Gould: The Macquarie Harbour Botanical Drawings: September–December 1832

As a young man Gould led a life of drinking, gambling and petty crime. In 1827 he was charged with stealing and transported to Van Diemen's Land.

In Hobart he was convicted of forgery and sentenced to the Macquarie Harbour penal settlement. During the voyage a mutiny was planned by prisoners. Gould attempted to thwart the uprising. Governor Arthur rewarded him by assigning him to the Colonial Surgeon and amateur botanist, Dr James Scott, where he drew and painted plants collected by Scott.

While with Scott he was again sentenced to Macquarie Harbour for repeated drunkenness and absconding. He was assigned to Dr William de Little at Sarah Island, who encouraged Gould to paint from nature. Gould drew and painted plant specimens on hand-made sketchpads.

The exhibition includes works from the islands, inlets and rivers around Macquarie Harbour. The collection was purchased in England by the Launceston City Council in 1958

When: until 17 May 2015

Where: QVMAG Art Gallery, Royal Park, 1st Floor, Gallery 8

Source: www.qvmag.tas.gov.au

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, but should contact our booking manager, John Elliott on 6344 9303 or 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>

E.mail : secretary@lfnc.org.au