



THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

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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 : Dr Nigel Forteach

President : Mrs J Handler, 52 Entally Rd Hadspen, 6393 6603

Hon. Secretary : Mrs P Wright

Hon. Treasurer : Mrs K Manning, 46 Robin St Newstead, 6344 2277

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

Program:

February ~

Tuesday 7 - General Meeting guest speaker Dr Nigel Forteach, *Birds here and there*

Saturday 18 - Field Trip - Hollybank Pond for bird watching

Saturday 25 - Skemp Day

March ~

Tuesday 7 - General Meeting guest speakers Helen and Mick Statham, *Nature of the Melaleuca area and the Deny King Heritage Museum*

Sunday 19 - Field Trip – Steppes area

Saturday 25 - Skemps Day

Monday 27 – Social Evening – Venue to be advised

April ~

Tuesday 4 - General Meeting guest speaker Simon Fearn, *Will the real Christmas beetle please stand up: what is a Christmas beetle and why big mandibles matter.*

Friday 14 to Sunday 16 - Federation Weekend at Ben Lomond – Hosted by Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club (details of accommodation cost, program etc. to be advised soon)

Sunday 30 - Skemps Day – Water monitoring and tree decline monitoring

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

Skemp Report, December 16 - January 2017

MOWING: After years of owning a new ride on mower when the grass just seemed to have given up growing, a wet winter and good summer rains have seen the mower out every Tuesday we have been at Skemps this January. It would have been out over the New Year but I just cannot get to grips with starting the ride on while Grant struggles with the push mower. Years of dealing with my old two stroke Victa from the early 1970s means that I can pull quicker, harder and more frequently than most and the Briggs Stratton powered four stroke starts easily for me. My suggestion is to just give it a good long tickle as most manuals do not say any harm comes from doing more than recommended. Reading the manual works for blokes sometimes!

CONSTRUCTION: John's new cupboard is well built and well used and has given more room in the library although John is as protective of the space in this new cupboard as Tina was of library space, therefore much has been moved to the storage area outside.

VOLUNTEER GRANT: We have received monies for a volunteer grant from the government to provide equipment for use by volunteers at Skemps and to defray the cost of attending there and Karen will be unhappy if we have to return any unspent portion of it so please submit a claim for travel allowance for your volunteer duties for the Club which includes travel to Skemps and using your car for other Club volunteering.

NATURE TRAILS: As usual we ask you to keep an eye on the nature trails and the property generally. Please report any blockages or weeds seen at Skemps. Foxglove seems to be a bigger issue this year than I remember from the past.

Noel Manning

Puggle

December ~ Roy Skabo presented this month's Puggle – his question for a chocolate frog was – Who can name the Eucalypt species found at Skemps? Karen broke the following silence and won the frog with 5 – *regnans*, *obliqua*, *ovata*, *brookeriana* and *dalrympleana*. Roy added that there are two more, *viminalis* and *delegatensis*. *Ovata* was incorrect but John added that there is also a small *amygdalina*, making 7 in all.

Sightings

December ~ Ann has just come back from the Blue Tier area and noted hundreds of dead trees. Karen saw about 15 potato orchids in a small garden bed off St Andrews Church in the city. John noted that there has been no more sign of the oddly coloured Rosella that both he and Sarah had noted last month. Daphne and Peter noted a blue tongue lizard on their deck and 3 different cuckoos in their garden. Roy Skabo noted 18 yellow tailed black cockatoos feeding on *Monotoca glauca* at north Binalong Bay. Prue noted over 120 black swans off Little Swan Point and Tom T has noted blue wrens at Narawntapu National Park.

Library Report ~ Tina reported that the Burnie Field Naturalists newsletter had been received and said that she was looking forward to having more space in the library and thanked John for building the "little cupboard".

A Guide to Flowers & Plants of Tasmania 4th Edition ~ Copies of the guide can be purchased from the Club's Treasurer, Karen who can be contacted on 6344 2277 to make arrangements. The cost to members is \$22 each.

DECEMBER GENERAL MEETING

John Skemp Memorial Lecture ~ Dr Jennifer Lavers ~ *Trashing paradise the Natural (and unnatural) history of remote islands*

Judith introduced Jennifer as a marine biologist working in an honorary position in the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies at the University of Tasmania who was to talk on her visits to remote islands as well as plastic pollution in the oceans.

Jennifer started by telling us that she was *'incredibly fortunate that I get to go to some of the most remote, far flung, uninhabited, pristine islands in all the world'*. Islands unknown to most people and she has to explain *'where I am going, for how long, how I am going to get there and how in the world I am going to get rescued when something goes wrong, cause often it does.'* To the amusement of her audience she went on to explain that she missed her own wedding by 3 ½ days.

She hoped that we enjoyed the talk as she had rejigged it to include a little about only a few of the 43 islands she has visited. A slide with a map of the world included red dots to indicate where she had visited including Canada, north and south Pacific and many around Australia. We were treated to an interesting talk and a few slides on places we could never hope to visit. Although these islands presented difficulties with the amenities and the living arrangements I think most of us wished we could go there.

Her talk started with Ashmore Reef, known as a landing point for refugees and her craft was boarded by a Border Protection patrol. The 72 slides included the limited facilities offered in most places, herself and the other workers in action and many of the birds she encountered. Technical difficulties prevented the small movies embedded in the power-point presentation from playing so we watched these with supper.

During a ten day stay on Middle Island of Ashmore Reef Jennifer tagged birds to see where they go as a follow up to the Montara oil spill, considered the largest such event in Australia, which was only 165 kilometres from the reef.

Five slides showed some of the 14 seabird species of the island including the great frigate bird with young, the red footed booby and a juvenile lesser frigate stretching its wings to strengthen the muscles even though it was too young to fly. The last slide in the series showed a brown booby pair in a mating ritual with the male presenting nest building material that the female deems suitable. If she was happy with the offering it was added to the nest, if not she would honk him on his tail feathers and he would waddle off to look for something more suitable. Jennifer told us that the noise from the large numbers of birds on the island made sleep difficult.

The talk moved to Sandy Island starting with a slide of, in her words, the bustling metropolis of Windy Harbour, on the south coast of Western Australia, which Jennifer discovered was a fishing village only occupied for few weeks of the year. She had hoped to get a lift the five mile south to Sandy Island with a local fisherman and so she camped in the middle of the road and waited two days for someone to come along. Eventually a fisherman turned up and was surprised that someone wanted to go to this island with no power or water although he did take her and picked her up six days later.

Jennifer was there to study the flesh-footed shearwater, a large species of mutton bird, the numbers of which had been overestimated in a study by someone trapped on the island by bad weather. The original study suggested 300,000 breeding pairs to her 2,600 and the species is considered threatened by Bird Life International and will soon be on the endangered species list.

A slide showed the low sandy island from the spit, the next the fisherman waving goodbye followed by her tent at the edge of the water in a rock overhang which provided the only shade. In this slide we also saw a small solar panel which kept her phone charged and at one or two bars of reception it was her only communication with the outside world, while the last slide of this island showed her with the target bird in her lap.

The tide on the last morning lapped the back of her tent and half her food supply had been raided by the king skinks who basked in the glory of such a catch.

Jennifer's talk then moved to Bedout Island 96 kilometres north east of Port Hedland, Western Australia, and the first slide featured her fellow workers and travelling companions including her husband and the captains of the small boats which brought them across the 100 kilometres of rough open ocean in 4 ½ hours.

The island has a weather station and a metal light house. Jennifer was there during the dry season and there was not much greenery to be seen and we learnt that other than a few photos from the 70's and a two page report from 1984 little was known about the island. A photo showed a number of masked and brown boobies and Jennifer told us that the masked booby, *Sula dactylatra bedoutti*, may be an endemic species although the genetic work has not been done. Surveys suggest the population has declined from up to 400 pairs to as little as 90 pairs in 2002 and if endemic it is one of the rarest Australian birds and certainly the rarest sea bird and a photo showed nearly all the birds presently on the island which are down to 33 pairs.

Our armchair travel took us next to Henderson Island, part of the Pitcairn Islands Marine Reserve, just south of the Tropic of Capricorn in the centre of the Pacific, the island is considered to be the most pristine of the few raised coral atolls in the world. It is a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1988 and is 834,334 square kilometres in size.

Jennifer and her crew spent three months on the island dropped off and picked up by the Clamour II on its three monthly visits to Pitcairn. We were reminded of the mutiny on the HMS Bounty which established the small community on Pitcairn. When the island was discovered again some 20 years after the mutiny John Adams was the only survivor of the original mutineers. Pitcairn is home to 47 people, mostly 5th or 6th generation descendants of the mutineers, and in Jennifer's words '*it really has a host of social and environmental challenges that are on a scale that I was not mentally prepared for*' which she described as tragic and alarming. She then spoke of Henderson Island which she said is well known for the place where the survivors of the sinking of the whaling ship Essex went. The ship was struck by a sperm whale and is the inspiration for the story of Moby Dick and there are caves with coffins and bones from this wreck.

A picture of Pitcairn with one of their long boats in the foreground led to information on the environmental challenges facing the island including feral goats. Some parts of the island have been so denuded of trees that the island is falling into the water while other areas are a moonscape and she spoke of the skill of the islanders in the use of these long boats.

A slide showed the best of Henderson Island with a sheltered bay and sandy beaches while the reality was written in the top right corner. Nearest hospital: Tahiti, 2,300 km and nearest fresh water: Pitcairn, 130 km, and we would learn that the entire island is jagged coral which made getting about quite difficult, quickly ruined shoes, caused injuries to anyone who fell and made it impossible to use dogs to get the rats. A couple of slides showed the ubiquitous sharp coral jutting out of the sparse greenery.

A slide showed two men struggling up the beach with a cart loaded with supplies including some of the 3,500 litres of water taken with them followed by slides of the forest where they lived, their camp and the huge supply of tinned food which led Jennifer to swear off canned chicken. Others followed with images of a container of coconut milk powder sitting amongst a pile of coconuts with 'ummm...oops?' written on the slide and two of the crew sitting on the island in a beautiful setting with the water collection system in the background, although due to a very dry year in the area their supplies of water dropped to 200 litres at one stage for the seven people on the island. An image showed five of them walking along a beach and Jennifer told us that they were walking between 10 and 20 kilometres per day and she became quite fit.

Next we saw the Henderson Crake, *Acrocephalus taiti*, a flightless rail, and Murphy's Petrel, *Pterodroma ultima*, each on a nest with eggs followed by Jennifer and another person tagging what looked like the petrel. A map showed the extensive range of these birds including a 17 day trip of 13,052 kilometres reaching nearly all the way to South America.

The next image showed a Polynesian rat in a plastic bag, rats have been on the island for around 700 years, accidentally introduced by exploring Polynesians and this was the reason for Jennifer's visit to the island. In her words '*Our job was to catch the rats in non-lethal traps, attach numbered*

ear tags to their ears and then let them go, which as a biologist is one of the hardest things I ever had to do.' They tagged 800 rats using a network of 350 traps and she explained that if there was any chance to eliminate them it was important to know how far they travelled and whether it varied for males, females and females with pups. She described a video which would not play as being of a rat moving onto a nest and killing and dragging away the chick in it and she noted that she saw no chicks survive while she was there. During question time we learnt that the island was declared rat free in 2011 and then the following year National Geographic filmed a rat and the eradication program was declared a failure and Jennifer went there to find out why.

For the last of her island talks Jennifer combined Midway Atoll and French Frigate Shoals and she was based on Tern Island, which is manmade, looking little more than an air strip, and the sign in the corner of the picture said 'WELCOME to TERN ISLAND INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT POPULATION 4 ELEV. 6FT'. The island and airstrip was famous as a refueling stop for the bombing of Hiroshima. She went there with three Americans who she described as all lovely and probably not Trump supporters.

She told us of the white tern which is on the island and is quite tame and a picture of orphaned babies lined up on branches looking at the camera were cute. Unfortunately the movie of her feeding them would not play. The next slide showed the curious and quite tame Laysan albatross.

Jennifer moved onto plastic in the oceans starting with some frightening facts. There are 33 million beverage containers used each year in Australia, 1 million plastic cups every six hours on US flights, 1 million plastic bags worldwide every minute, 250 million tons of plastic enter the ocean each year and at least 690 marine species are negatively impacted. On a global average 25% of fish contain plastic and she wondered whether fish are safe for human consumption. Plastic digested by sea creatures spreads the chemicals these contain to the flesh of the animal and we are exposed to the same chemicals when we eat fish or mutton birds.

The fish her group caught on Henderson Island contained plastic and the island is eleven days by ship from the nearest city. Jennifer passed around two bags each with the plastic found in the stomach of one bird and the amount was surprisingly large. Other bags contained what was found in the stomachs of shearwaters from Lord Howe Island and Jennifer pointed out that the birds were the size of a silver gull and again the amount was large while pictures showed the plastic on the beaches of islands she had visited.

She challenged us to look at the pictures and replace products we could see on the beach with other products with no plastic before telling us of the polyethylene microbeads contained in face scrubs and tooth paste and that these microbeads find their way into the oceans. She was very critical of party balloons which waste our finite supplies of helium and when released into the air the balloons can find their way into the ocean. We saw images of dead animals with either balloons or balloon strings in their stomachs.

Pictures of six plastic containers showed how badly these had deteriorated in the environment with small bits having broken off and Jennifer assured us that there were bite marks where sea creatures had bitten into them and we knew that they had entered the food chain of fish and sea birds.

Jennifer described disposable plastic as an oxymoron as those two words just do not go together and plastic is not degradable and will persist in the environment for ever in her words. 12 images from Henderson Island showed plastic on the beach including disposable shaving razors and disposable cutlery, toothbrushes, net bags, plastic rope and plastic pieces of who knows what.

Jennifer is a member Two Hands, a group dedicated to cleaning up beaches and you do not spend hours on the job. Just as their motto states 'Thirty Minutes, Two Hands, One Beach, Clean-up yOUR World Anytime, Anywhere', it just takes consistent dedication and half an hour.

We eventually saw a trailer for the documentary A Plastic Ocean and were encouraged to find or host a screening.

We were told that she had stainless drink bottles, bamboo handled tooth brushes and 2017 Sea Bird Calendars for sale with all proceeds going to a fund to save the Lord Howe Island shearwater

and Jennifer told us that there were many products which avoided plastic, often hard to find, but worth the effort.

There followed nearly 20 minutes of questions and answers before Tina gave the thanks and asked members to show their appreciation. President Judith Handler then presented Jennifer with the John Skemp Memorial Lecture medallion.

Noel Manning

Annual Photo Competition results

Thank you to all members who contributed images for the competition. Results were:

1st with 12 points – Daphne Longman with a Banksia Moth Caterpillar

2nd with 11 points – John Elliott with a group of yellow stemmed *Mycena epipterygia*

3rd with 10 points – Peter Longman with a Green and gold Frog

Close runner-ups with 9 points each were Peter Ralph with the Aurora over Bridgenorth and Tom Treloggen with a St Andrews Spider and web.

CHRISTMAS AT SKEMPS ~ Saturday 10 December

Arriving at Skemps today it was a warm sunny day, weather just perfect for our last function of the year. A spindly pine tree was set up in the Centre and decorated with some baubles recently donated by the Peglers'. As more members arrived during the morning, some quick tidying up was necessary as John had removed some non-library items from the Library on Tuesday and had left them on the main room tables for relocation later in the day.

With the day looking so good, most members wandered off in different directions soaking up the sun and enjoying the bird and frog calls near the ponds, and plants in flower, especially the waratahs, yellow bottle-bush and tea-trees. A total of 24 members (5 junior) and four visitors attended today.

Lunch was early so that the presentation *Year That Was* could be screened before afternoon tea. Irmgard who was unable to attend today had sent along a few of her power-point presentations that she had put together from images taken during club outings. There many ooh's and aah's as we watched these. Thank you to Irmgard for her contribution and also a big thank you to Prue who had put together the *Year That Was* from members images from each field trip and Skemps Day throughout 2016, a massive job well done.

We then moved on to the eagerly awaited afternoon tea, where there were lots of interesting goodies to eat and time to chat over a hot drink. Judith passed the children their "Santa gifts" and apologised on behalf of Santa who was unable to attend, as he was busy getting everything ready for the big day. This was followed by the "lucky door prizes" being drawn and the winners were Miriam and Stephen who each received a bottle of Ninth Island wine.

The other job of the day was to officially open and hand over the keys, of the new cupboard in one of the bunkrooms, which John had been working on for some time. Noel had draped some orange tape across the doors and Club Librarian, Tina officially cut the ribbon and declared the cupboard ready for use. The items that had been left out were placed in the cupboard, and according to John we should now not hear Tina grumbling about lack of space in the Library. For now anyway!

The day finished about 4.30pm with Noel, Tom and I locking up and heading home. It was a very enjoyable day and a lovely way to end our Club year.

Karen Manning

FIELD TRIP ~ Thursday 12 January ~ Saltmarsh wetland monitoring at Bakers Beach

Eight members, including junior Toby, along with visitor Jo met in the car park near the Bakers Beach ranger station on a pleasant if windy day for our third water monitoring of the area.

Armed with plant and bird lists from the previous visit we headed off noting that many swallows were swooping in the area and that the tide was still coming in. Two eagles flew along the waterway and soon disappeared while there were few other birds to be seen. A pair of pied oyster catchers, three forest ravens, a white-faced heron on the wing and brown thornbills and fairy wrens in the bushes. March flies were in plentiful supply along with other insects and some were caught and identified while Toby waded into the water and brought back a crab.

Two wary kangaroos watched us from our side of the water while 20 plus were seen across the water. After many goes at counting, the true number became apparent when they suddenly hopped away, perhaps to greener pastures. There were plenty of fresh wombat scats but only one animal was seen and even at a distance it appeared to have the mange and as with our previous visits there are many unused wombat burrows in the area.

Before we returned to the cars for lunch the tide had turned and I noticed with some amusement that the weight limit on the bridge was one horse at a time.

A few attractive dragonflies and many butterflies appeared during lunch and Ann was able to photograph them. One butterfly landed on her hat while she photographed others.

After lunch we headed to Bakers Point for the second monitoring and again there were few birds with no pelicans seen. This area is more exposed and the wind was stronger making it difficult to hold the binoculars steady.

Our first count was the black swans, a long way out on the water but within the counting area and there were approximately 40 to be seen. We moved slowly along the spit noting other bird species and updating the count along the way. We watched the red-capped plovers feeding on the sand flats and one was seen with two worms in its beak.

As we were leaving I noticed a woman using a hand thrown net to catch fish which reminded me of primitive fishing methods. From what I saw I do not think fish were on her menu that night.

We headed home after another friendly field naturalists field trip hoping that we have made a contribution to Citizen Science and Vishnu's ongoing study of these important and threatened yet little known habitats.

Noel Manning

Area One (Ranger's Station at Narawntapu)

Birds ~ *Acanthiza pusilla*, brown thornbill; *Anthus novaeseelandiae*, Australasian pipit; *Aquila audax*, wedge-tailed eagle; *Corvus tasmanicus*, forest raven; *Egretta novaehollandiae*, white-faced heron; *Haematopus longirostris*, Australian pied oystercatcher; *Hirundo noexena*, welcome swallow; *Malurus pulcherrimus*, blue-breasted fairy-wren; *Vanellus miles*, masked lapwing.

Mammals ~ *Macropus giganteus*, Forester kangaroo; *Vombatus ursinus tasmaniensis*, wombat.

Marine ~ Crabs ; Toad fish

Flora ~ In addition to previously seen plants, *Mazus pumilio*, swamp mazus.

Insects ~ *Tetrix* sp., marsh meadow grasshopper; *Bembix furcata*, blue sand wasp; *Scaptia auriflua*, March fly; ? *Cleobora mellyi*, ladybird; Cicada; ?*Austrolestes annulosus*, blue damselfly; Brown butterflies.

Area Two (Bakers Point Beach/Spit)

Birds ~ *Calidris ruficollis*, red-necked stint; *Charadrius ruficapillus*, red-capped plover; *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*, silver gull; *Cygnus atratus*, black swan; *Epthianura albifrons*, white-fronted chat; *Haematopus longirostris*, Australian pied oystercatcher; *Hydroprogne caspia*, Caspian tern; *Larus pacificus*, pacific gull; *Malurus cyaneus*, blue-breasted fairy-wren; *Vanellus miles*, masked lapwing.

Flora ~ No new plants observed

Marine ~ *Mictyris longicarpus*, soldier crabs and other crabs of the Grapsidae family; Egg cases of the conical sand snail



Bird watching and looking for insects



Diphyma crassifolium, roundleaf pigface

ANNUAL MONITORING OF LEEK ORCHIDS AT SURREY HILLS

~ Wednesday 25 - Friday 27 JANUARY 2017

Five members (Ann, John, Karen, Noel and Prue) volunteered to participate in a field trip to Surrey Hills and the Vale of Belvoir for the annual monitoring of the crowded leek orchid with the Threatened Plants Tasmania group. Our interest stemming from a talk given by Phil Collier at the September general meeting when he told us about the monitoring and asked if we would like to learn more with a hands on exercise by participating in the monitoring. Keen to be involved in Citizen Science some quickly put their hands up.

While we had a wonderful day getting to our accommodation at the Forico owned Guilford Lodge by lunching at Wynyard, visiting the Trowutta Arch and having our evening meal at Burnie, Ann was not so lucky. She attended to a personal matter in Hobart and decided to join us by driving through the night arriving in the area after midnight. She could not find the lodge and camped the night in Waratah near other people while a flat tyre capped off her bad start to this trip.

At the lodge we met the other seven volunteers which included Phil Collier and Robyn Garnett, who were leading the monitoring. Phil assured us that we could still join the exercise even though we did not have a white car to match the four parked outside the lodge. We were also sharing the accommodation with Fred Duncan and Louise Gilfedder, who were recording the plants in the grasslands in the area.

On day one we visited 5 locations in the Surrey Hills area. At Westwing Plain we were joined by James, a Forico employee, and two more volunteers who were helping for the day. For our first exercise we broke up into two groups and marked out our first two 10 x 10 metre quadrats and

counted the orchids to be found there. One group had to walk a fair distance to get to an area that was burnt late last year while the other went to two places chosen by Phil on Google Maps, decided in which direction to make the quadrat from this arbitrary point, we obviously chose the easier terrain, marked it out by Phil's instructions and walked it out looking for the orchid.

Next we had a short stop to search for the orchid at another reasonably fresh burn site then lunched at a rest stop on the Murchison Highway with toilets and an undercover picnic area to keep us out of the sun on this warm day.



***Lomatia tinctoria*, guitar plant**



***Prasophyllum crebriflorum*, crowded leek-orchid**

Moving on we travelled to Hatfield Plain where we again counted the flowering orchids and tubes (a leaf without flowers or buds) in a 100 by 20 metre quadrat, referred to as a cricket pitch. Walking slowly in a line through the area we reported our findings at the end before swapping positions and counting back to the other end and again reporting to Phil for comparison. A mistake in marking out the quadrat saw us make a third pass.

We stopped at a further two sites on our return to Guilford finding a few orchids in a recently burnt area and more were found in another site with knee high tussock grass while on the other side of the road none were seen.

On day two our main task was to survey the orchids at the Vale of Belvoir transect. After setting up the transect we placed flags at markers of previous finds or orchid flowers and tubes which could be seen. Six volunteers then stayed for the survey while others looked along the forest line to see what plants were growing and another group did a walk into the Vale starting with a steep downhill walk along a rough gravel road and a steep climb up a grassed knoll with wooded areas.

The transect was a previously surveyed area of 50 by 10 metres, set out by a tape measure running between two permanent posts with each previous find marked by a tent peg, numbered brass tag and a small piece of plastic ribbon. If we could not find the marker Phil moved in with a

metal detector, sometimes getting close to the spot with the coordinates. This consisted of an X coordinate based on the measure along the tape and the Y on the distance from the tape and Phil had equipment to get an accurate 90 degrees off the tape and we noted that this put us within a few centimetres of the marker. It appeared that something liked the blue marker tape and would pull up the tape and peg, luckily leaving the tag in the correct place although giving us extra work to find it. It had rained overnight and the day was miserable being cold and windy with a light rain occasionally adding to our discomfort and the inexperience of Karen and Noel slowed the progress of the group on the east side. Even with the experienced Kerryn in our group we were still well short of completing the task when Phil, worried about the health of his volunteers, called a halt and we all returned to the lodge for a very late lunch.

Prue spent the day with Fred and Louise while we were at the Vale, her report is below.

A perverse change in the weather during the afternoon allowed us to explore the grounds around Guilford Lodge identifying the plants there and finding an area of tiger leeches which sent us scurrying from the bush as they were huge and in great numbers.

On day three we were all so psyched up for an early start that most of us spent nearly 40 minutes sitting around waiting to get going. We could not start early as we were to meet Kerryn at a locked boom gate.

Five of us worked on another transect with Noel and Robin working on the east side, Karen and Kerryn working on the west while Phil searched for markers that were difficult to find and provided help when we had problems. Better weather and a little experience from the previous day saw us having time for a morning tea break and we were finished by lunch time. Other volunteers went looking for three Google Maps points chosen by Phil, marked out quadrats and surveyed these for the elusive orchid.

At morning tea we farewelled those travelling back to Hobart and after lunch Karen and Noel returned to Launceston, while others revisited the Vale of Belvoir to finish the survey called off the previous day. We have since heard from Phil that the weather that afternoon was beautiful, quite different from the day before.

This field trip was a great success, we learnt new skills, and met some wonderful and enthusiastic orchid people and we hope to be invited back to assist with the count next year.

Noel & Karen Manning

As there were plenty of volunteers in the group at the Vale of Belvoir, I took the opportunity offered to assist botanists Louise Gilfedder and Fred Duncan with their research for the management of sub-alpine grasslands bordering Forico plantations.

They were returning to the same areas they had covered 25-30 years ago, and will be able to record any differences in the vegetation, along with the frequency of wild-fire and management burning. The research involved the botanists putting out a 10m x 1m line and, super keen on the job, they happily crawled on their bellies in all weather conditions to find and record every plant species in each area.

My job was simply to record the plants as called out, but both Fred and Louise took great care to show me all they could about the different species as we went – hairy leaves, purple stem, how many bunches of hairs on the awn of a grass sp, etc. I learnt more that day than from years of poring over my plant books.

Prue Wright



Looking for leek orchids



Measuring out a quadrat

Flora ~ *Acacia melanoxylon*, blackwood; *Acaena novae-zelandiae*, common buzzy; *Acrothamnus montanus*, snow beardheath; *Ajuga australis*, Australian bugle; *Astelia alpina* var *alpina*, pineapple grass; *Bellenden montana*, mountain rocket; *Cassinia aculeata*, dollybush; *Comesperma retusum*, mountain milkwort; *Coprosma quadrifida*, native currant; *Craspedia glauca*, common billybuttons; *Dianella tasmanica*, forest flaxlily; *Diplarrena latifolia*, western flag-iris; *Echinopogon ovatus*, hedgehog grass; *Epacris gunnii*, coral heath; *Epilobium gunnianum*, bog willowherb; *Pappochroma (Erigeron) bellidioides*, hairy mountain daisy; *Eucalyptus* sp., gum; *Gahnia grandis*, cutting grass; *Gastrodia procera*, tall potato orchid; *Gaultheria hispida*, copperleaf snowberry; *Gentianella polysperes*, early forest gentian; *Geranium potentilloides*, mountain cranesbill; *Gunnera cordifolia*, Tasmanian mudleaf; *Hakea microcarpa*, smallfruit needlebush; *Juncus* sp., rush; *Leptecophylla juniperina* subsp. *parvifolia*, mountain pinkberry; *Leptospermum lanigerum*, woolly teatree; *Leucopogon* sp., beardheath; *Lomandra longifolia*, sagg; *Lomatia tinctoria*, guitarplant; *Nothofagus cunninghamii*, myrtle beech; *Oxalis magellanica*, snowdrop woodsorrel; *Oxalis perennans*, grassland woodsorrel; *Ozothamnus thyrsoides*, arching everlastingbush; *Pentachondra pumila*, carpet frillyheath; *Phyllocladus aspleniifolius*, celerytop pine; *Picris augustifolia* subsp. *merxmulleri*, mountain hawkweed; *Pimelea drupacea*, cherry riceflower; *Pittosporum bicolor*, cheesewood; *Poa* sp., tussockgrass; *Podolepis jaceoides*, showy copperwire-daisy; *Pomaderris elliptica* sp., yellow dogwood; *Prasophyllum crebriflorum*, crowded leek-orchid; *Prasophyllum mimulum*, highland leek-orchid; *Pterostylis decurva*, summer greenhood; *Ranunculus* sp., buttercup; *Rhodanthe anthemoides*, chamomile sunray; *Rubus gunnianus*, alpine raspberry; *Senecio* sp., fireweed; *Stylidium?* *graminiifolium*, narrowleaf triggerplant; *Tasmannia lanceolata*, mountain pepper; *Telopea truncata*, red waratah; *Trachymene humilis* sp., alpine laceflower; *Veronica gracilis*, slender speedwell; *Wahlenbergia ceracea*, waxy bluebell (large); *Wahlenbergia gracilis*, sprawling bluebell (small); *Wahlenbergia multicaulis*, bushy bluebell (medium).

Ferns ~ *Blechnum nudum*, fishbone water fern; *Blechnum pennamarina* subsp. *alpina*, alpine waterfern; *Dicksonia antarctica*, soft tree fern; *Gleichenia microphylla*, scrambling coralfern; *Histiopteris incisa*, bat's wing fern; *Polystichum proliferum*, mother shieldfern; *Pteridium esculentum*, bracken fern.

Mosses ~ *Lycopodium fastigiatum*, mountain clubmoss; *Sphagnum* sp., moss.

Butterflies ~ *Anisynta dominula*, dominula skipper; *Heteronympha Penelope*, shouldered brown; *Neolucia agricola insulana*, fringed heath blue

Miscellaneous ~ *Altica pagana*, blue metallic flea beetle; *Eriophora pustulosa*, garden orb web spider; *Leptotarsus costalis*, common crane fly; *Niveoscincus* sp., skink; *Stepera fuliginosa*, black currawong; Green grasshopper.

Information has been received by the Secretary on the following which may be of interest to members

NRM NORTH EVENTS

Tamar Saltmarsh Monitoring 2017 - NRM North and Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) are seeking individuals and community groups interested in being involved in surveys of Tamar estuary saltmarsh habitat this summer.

All training and survey materials are provided, and no expertise is required. Surveys normally take approximately 1 – 2 hours and may require moderate walks through muddy areas. You can attend one survey, or as many as you would like.

Join us for a TRAINING DAY on Friday 10 February at Long Tom Reef (George Town), where UTAS researcher Vishnu Prahalad will provide background and demonstrate survey techniques.

NRM NORTH	Fri 10th Feb TRAINING DAY	10.00 am	Long Tom Reef (The Monument car park, George Town)
NRM NORTH	Tue 14th Feb	9.00 am	Kelso
NRM NORTH	Fri 17th Feb	11.00 am	West Arm North (near York Town)
NRM NORTH	Tue 21st Feb	7.00 am	Swan Point
NRM NORTH	Thu 23rd Feb	8.30 am	West Arm South (near York Town)
CVA	Sat 25th Feb	10.00 am	Middle Point (near Rowella)
CVA	Sun 26th Feb	11.00 am	Long Tom Reef (near George Town)
NRM NORTH	Thu 2nd Mar	9.00 am	Kelso
CVA	Sat 4th Mar	10.45 am	West Arm North (near York Town)
NRM NORTH	Thu 9th Mar	8.30 am	Swan Point
NRM NORTH	Fri 10th Mar	9.00 am	West Arm South (near York Town)

Contact NRM North Facilitator Megan Dykman Ph. 6333 7775, mdykman@nrmnorth.org.au) or CVA Regional Manager Grant Houniet (Ph. 6334 9985 ghouniet@conservationvolunteers.com.au) to register for the training day and surveys, and receive more details about location, what you need to bring and transport options. REGISTRATIONS ESSENTIAL (at least 3 days prior).

Tree Decline Monitoring - Have you noticed changes in the local landscape? Are you concerned about the loss of healthy eucalypts on your property? Would you like to monitor your property to capture these changes? Join NRM North with the support from local experts, Dr Tanya Bailey and Anna Povey to set up a broad scale tree decline monitoring program in Northern Tasmania. Landholders will monitor tree health in small plots on their properties over an extended period of time. To register your interest in the program contact NRM North on 6333 7777 or email admin@nrmnorth.org.au

NORTHERN TASMANIAN CAMERA CLUB



Photography of Birds Workshop featuring renowned bird photographer **Andy Smylie** from South Australia, will be held at the Lions Clubrooms, Merino Street Kings Meadows on Sunday 26th February 2017 from 8.45 am to 3.30 pm.

Workshop sessions: gear for birding, getting the shot and what to do with my birding images

Cost is \$40 per person or \$70 per couple.

Enquiries to Rod Oliver, mobile 0408 340 621, telephone (03) 6327 2942 or email r.oliver46@bigpond.com

WILDLIFE SPOTTER ~ ONLINE CITIZEN SCIENCE PROJECT

Australia is a vast country. Researchers have set up automatic cameras that are snapping wildlife day and night. We need your help to analyse the millions of photographs captured in tropical rainforests, the dry rangelands, and around our cities.

From emus to superb lyrebirds, from bettongs to bandicoots, from brush turkeys to Tassie devils, and even feral cats and foxes—scientists want to know which species are roaming both in the wild and in urban areas.

The research will help answer questions including: how many endangered bettongs are left; how well native predators like quolls and devils are competing with cats for food; and how common are common wombats.

So join in and help save threatened species and preserve Australia's iconic wildlife! Visit <https://wildlifespotter.net.au/about/> if you would like to get involved in this interesting project.

Source: <https://wildlifespotter.net.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. Provide your own food and drinks for the outing and wear/take clothing/footwear suitable for all weather types.
3. When travelling by car in convoy, each driver is responsible to ensure that the vehicle behind is in sight immediately after passing a cross road or fork in the road.
4. When carpooling, 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: 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 our booking manager, John Elliott on 6344 9303 or skempbookings@yahoo.com.au regarding availability and keys before visiting the property.

Field Centre Phone Number - 6399 3361

Postal Address: PO Box 1072 Launceston 7250

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

Email : secretary@lfnc.org.au

Find us on 