



THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

Volume LI No. 2 December 2017 / January 2018

The aim of the Launceston Field Naturalists Club is to encourage the study of all aspects of natural history and to support the conservation of our natural heritage

Patron : Prof. Nigel Forteath
President : Mr Tom Treloggen, 0408 341 397
Hon. Secretary : Mr Phillip Brumby, 0407 664 554
Hon. Treasurer : Mrs Karen Manning, 0363 442 277

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

Program:

February ~ Saturday 3

Tamar Saltmarsh Monitoring starts for 2018 with NRM North

(Further information page 8 this issue)

February ~ Tuesday 6

General Meeting ~ Guest Speaker Helen and Mick Statham ~ *10 days at Spitzbergen*

February ~ Sunday 11

Field Trip ~ [Big Blue Marine Community Expo](#) Albert Hall from 10am to 4pm

February ~ Saturday 26

Skemps Day ~ Bug hunt

March ~ Tuesday 6

General Meeting ~ Guest Speaker Rees Campbell ~ *Edible Native Plants*

March ~ Sat 17 & Sun 18

Weekend Field Trip ~ Visit Murnong Wild Food Garden in Wynyard on Saturday and other places of interest *(Further information page 9 this issue)*

March ~ Sunday 25

Skemps Day ~ Tree Monitoring

April ~ Tuesday 3

General Meeting ~ Members night

April ~ Saturday 14

Field Trip ~ Deb Hunter at Lake Mackenzie

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

SKEMP REPORT

December 2017 to January 2018

The Club's recently serviced ride-on mower has had four outings this summer so that all the mowed tracks are easy to see and the grass around the building is not a fire hazard. The brush cutter has been working hard to clear the nature trails of bracken, fern and sedge grass.

Weeds are a problem with John spending a lot of time poisoning foxglove and bringing back the flowers to reduce regrowth and two holly trees have been dealt with recently. Surprisingly tall weedy trees are still being found on the property. All stacks of fire wood around the property have been moved into the old fire wood shed and we expect to have a good supply ready for winter 2019. You may have noticed the tight, neat stacks of rubbish from the tree cuttings dotting the property. With a little turps these will burn easily and be soon gone and we are just waiting for suitable cooler months to put a match to them or maybe a group there over winter who would like a bon fire.

Small breakages and problems require constant attention and even during holiday visits and non-work days at Skemps I find things to repair. During the Christmas at Skemps and again recently I found the barbecue would not light properly and the problem was mud wasp nests in the burners. The plastic piping used in the plumbing causes frequent problems as well.

Over the Christmas New Year break our family did a clean-up at Skemps and a full trailer load was taken to the waste transfer station. Broken chairs, a stack of rubbish from the container, bits and pieces left in the old fire station shed and the old tree guards made of thin wire filled our trailer. Along with the bottles and cans we also managed to fill two garbage bags with foxglove from the fence line of the property bordering Old Scottsdale Road.

There are a few spars across nature trails, mostly a long way from the Centre, which are easy to get over and these will be dealt with when we have the time to walk that far with the chain saw.

Last week John worked hard lugging his camera and tripod over the bare hills above Skemps looking for the perfect picture of the Centre for the back page of the new edition of the Club's book. We hope his efforts are worth the trouble he went to.

Please remember to report blockages, weeds and other issues on the nature trails or elsewhere at Skemps after you have walked the property.

Noel Manning

PUGGLE

December Tom Treloggen:

Tom played a CD and asked us to identify 4 of the bird calls. – Identified by Louise, John and Marion.

SIGHTINGS

December

Tom T – had a large stick insect in a jar to show – found in garden in Mulgrave St. Peter L. found a blue tongue lizard in the strawberries. Roy and Louise have 2 BTs in there garden, as has Prue. Prue also has a snake, dispelling the theory that if you have one, you don't have the other. Also a BT at Peace Haven. John E saw a Pink Robin at Skemps, also a Brush Bronzewing. Black Cockatoo on the

Meander Valley highway. Two Wedge Tailed Eagles being chased by ravens at Skemps on Nov 22nd. Family of frogs at Legana. Wedge Tailed Eagle over Relbia – Pierre. Tina noted a Great Cormorant trying to pierce the skin of a dead eel too big to swallow, then sloshing it in the lake to soften it.

FIELD TRIP

Sunday 3 December - Karst Area with Deb Hunter

Six members met at Mole Creek on a miserable Sunday to look at the fire damage to the karst area to the north of the Tasmanian Wilderness Conservation area and were joined by our guide Deborah (Deb) Hunter and her French friend Ann.

Deb made many stops starting with one on the way to explain that we should see, so that we better understood where we were. Turning onto the road to Devils Gullet we noticed that it was marked 'CLOSED' and we assume that was because repairs have not been done.

Higher up, we noticed snow on logs, then on the rocks and we finally stopped with around 50 mm covering the road. A wonderful sight although we could not go further and it was cold. Two degrees where we were in the snow and only rising to 12 in the lower altitudes on the way home. Deb pointed out the areas of damage in the distance and we had already noted the burnt eucalyptus and wattle forests on the way, while areas dominated by *Nothofagus cunninghamii* appeared untouched. Parts of the forest with a fern understory appeared less burnt as well although this may have been regrowth after the fires.



Members with Deb Hunter at the Lake Mackenzie Road lookout in December 2017

Image Deb Hunter

On the way back to our lunch we made further stops to look at plants or scenery of interest and we were told that in some places there were no fallen trees after the fire as it had all been consumed by the intense fires. Waratahs were a favourite with the shutterbugs as these were in Christmas colours as many of the red flowers were covered in white snow and we saw one tree which must have been three metres tall, an impressive sight.

Back in Mole Creek we enjoyed a leisurely lunch before again braving the cold to look at Sassafras Creek at the end of South Mole Creek Road.

A stock fence separated the creek from areas of pasture and plantation forest forming a protected area connecting all the previously protected cave sites.

We were told that this was an important route between where we were and the Deloraine area with edible vegetation having been introduced along the way. Where we parked our cars there were large trees with hollows which could provide shelter, even for a small family, in the first one we looked at. After explaining this to us we moved into the area near the creek and followed along the creek bed.

As we walked Deb gave more information about what we were seeing including that the June 2016 floods, so soon after the devastating fires, had scoured the creek bed making it deeper and gouging out the banks making it wider. The creek soon disappeared into the side of a rocky ridge and as we walked further along we could see small entrances into the cave system below and 300 or 400 metres further along the ridge the creek emerged from a cave to continue on to join the Mersey River.

We learnt that this corridor had been provided by the Tasmanian Land Conservancy and handed to National Parks to manage.

The field trip ended with a big thank you to Deb and a drive home with some rain.

Noel Manning

GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday 5 December

“The Year That Was” and Annual Photographic Competition

This year we had a very good line-up with 19 entries on the night.

1ST Prize Judith Handlinger, Wolf spider

2nd Prize Peter Warren, Immature Eastern Spinebill

3rd Prize Peter Ralph, *Thelymitra aristata* (Sun Orchid)

CHRISTMAS AT SKEMPS

Saturday 9 December

23 members and six visitors eventually ended up at Skemps for our Christmas function, secret Santa, a few short walks and over indulgence in festive calories.

The day started overcast and Peter (W) had the fire going as Noel headed out for his first task, finding a suitable tree to give the Centre a Christmas feel. Walking toward the Federation Corridor he found a *Monotoca glauca*, goldey wood, around the correct height, cut it down, trimmed it and dragged it back to the building.

Setting it into a bucket with stones and water he asked Peter’s grandchildren to add the decorations. After a great effort by them, using tinsel and baubles, the tree looked presentable if somewhat straggly. Maybe introduced pines do have a place in the lives of field naturalists.

Eight members went for a walk before lunch, starting along the edge of the forest where we could see the echidnas feeding. We then looked at the eucalypts that were being attacked by caterpillars which was leaving their leaves in a skeletonized form and the trees looking rather poorly. We also found that there were many active jack jumper and inchman nests along the way, with Tom being bitten. A little dab of bracken sap on the bite kept the swelling down and the pain to a minimum. Along the creek, in the area below Bob's Bog, we checked the growth of plants put in over the last few years noting that the leptospermum were in flower and looking good, although many plants in the area needed to be removed from the guards and tidied up.

In the spillway of Bob's Bog we found many sticks which had trapped an eel of over two foot in length. This was the first time any of us had seen an eel in the ponds on the property and after removing the sticks it swam happily away.

We returned for a leisurely lunch then walked to the Bedfordia Track where Noel had seen fresh wombat scats earlier in the week and we also saw more today. Noel and Prue setup the wildlife camera in the hope of capturing activity near one of the burrows. We were also on the lookout for feral plants and removed a small holly tree and a stinging nettle bush. Other hawthorn and sycamore trees were too large to remove by hand and were left for another day. We then walked out via the larva flow to check the trees planted along the fence line as a buffer to the Forico plantation finding them looking healthy with significant growth on some.

We hurried back to the Centre for afternoon tea and the impending arrival of Santa who handed out the gifts and lead members in the song "We Wish You A Merry Christmas".

A few members hung around to finish tidying up and we would have run the vacuum cleaner except that the filters were clogged with wet dust and lint, so a brooming had to suffice.

Karen & Noel Manning

NB The eel seen in the Bottom Pond appears to be an *Anguilla australis*, southern shortfin eel. On checking the Atlas of Living Australia, there are many records of this eel in Tasmania, with 2 reported sightings in the St Patrick's River at the bottom of Targa Hill Road and others nearby at Patersonia and Nunamara. The eel is widespread throughout south eastern Australia and found in streams, lowland rivers, lakes and swamps, in areas where there is little water flow. The maximum length of the eel is about 110 cm but most are less than 70 cm in length, the larger ones are found in land locked areas. They are generally olive green on their back and sides, with a greyish-white to silver belly. They feed on fish, crustaceans, molluscs and insects.

Karen Manning



Anguilla australis R. M. McDowall from R McDowall (1996) 'Freshwater fishes of South-Eastern Australia'



Members looking around the property during ‘Christmas at Skemps’

Thanks to Prue for providing the following list of flora and fauna seen on the property today:

Birds: *Acanthiza pusilla*, brown thornbill; *Cacomantis pallidus*, pallid cuckoo; *Colluricincla harmonica*, grey shrike-thrush; *Malurus cyaneus*, superb fairy-wren; *Pachycephala pectoralis*, golden whistler; *Rhipidura albiscapa*, grey fantail

Fish: *Anguilla australis*, southern shortfin eel (in the bottom dam)

Insects: *Ancita crocogaster*, longicorn beetle (larvae and adult live on Acacias); *Apis mellifera*, honey bee; *Diphucephala colaspoides*, green scarab beetle; *Hemicordulia australiae*, Australian emerald (Dragonfly); *Lepispilus sulcicollis*, darkling beetle; *Myrmecia esuriens*, Tasmanian inchman; *M. pilosula*, jack jumper; *Onthophagus* sp., probably *auritis*, dung beetle (of native herbivores); *Peltoschema orphana*, Acacia leaf beetle; *Phyllotocus rufipennis*, nectar scarab beetle; *Uraba lugens*, gumleaf skeletonizer caterpillar

Mammals: *Tachyglossus aculeatus*, echidna



Ancita crocogaster, longicorn beetle, Prue Wright



Massed gumleaf skeletonisers, *Uraba lugens* Prue Wright



Rhipidura albiscapa, grey fantail Prue Wright



Pultenaea juniperina Prue Wright

FIELD TRIP

Friday 19 to Monday 21 January - Ben Lomond Wildflowers

We arrived at the Borrowdale ski lodge to find Peter and Prue had opened up in preparation for our annual pilgrimage to the highlands of northern Tasmania. Their grandchildren Adelaide and Charlotte were there as well on this fine hot late Friday morning.

After an early lunch we started our walks with Prue and the children heading up Legges Tor while three Mannings went to the slopes to the north of Hamilton's Crag, the rocky parts made uncomfortable by the high wind. During the walks we noted how very dry it was and Prue later observed that the dam was so low it may end visits to the mountain this summer due to the lack of water. Later in the day we were joined by another four with two arriving for a late evening meal. We finished the day with a quiet evening, including table games and reading, and started Saturday with a less hectic breakfast before the crowd arrived.

Over Saturday morning another 13 arrived with a noisy catch up quieting down as we dispersed in various directions for walks, thankful that the wind had abated. The first group headed up Hamilton's Crag, the second disappeared along the newly finished track past the Rover Lodge and a large group headed along the overland ski route to the south of the car park. At the junction with Little Hell, five headed off in that direction intending to climb out of the valley and head back to the Lodge over the ridges behind the village while the less mobile turned back along the ski route for an easier walk.

After the evening meal four members drove to the lookout to get some photos in the fading light and on the way back spotted a wombat and stopped to take photos. The wombat was a large male with, thankfully, no visible signs of mange.

In total 24 people took part in the weekend, including seven visitors, with 11 spending the first night and 10 the second. The cleaning started mid-morning Sunday with all mucking in and ended with Peter starting the generator so that we could run the vacuum cleaner. Most of us were home by lunch as the hot weather had played havoc with our perishable foods.

It was too late for the wild flowers except the hardy gentians, the odd mountain rocket with a little white still showing, a bit of orange on the a very few scoparia flowers and plenty of white daisies. Thanks to Peter and Prue it was a great weekend and hopefully we will return next year.

Noel Manning

Flora and fauna list from Ben Lomond visit

Flora: *Acaena montana*, mountain buzzy; *Astelia alpina*, pineapple grass; *Baeckea gunniana*, alpine heathmyrtle; *Bellenden montana*, mountain rocket; *Carpha alpina*, small flower-rush; *Celmisia asteliifolia*, silver snowdaisy; *Coprosma nitida*, mountain currant; *Craspedia macrocephala*, alpine

billybuttons; *Drosera arcturi*, alpine sundew; *Euphrasia collina* ssp. *diemenica*, eyebrights; *Ewartia catipes*, diamond cushionherb; *Gentianella diemensis*, Tasmanian Snowgentian; *Geranium potentilloides*, mountain cranesbill; *Lagenophora stipitata*, blue Bottledaisy; *Leptospermum rupestre*, mountain teatree; *Lycopodium* sp., clubmoss; *Microseris lanceolata*, yam daisy; *Olearia ledifolia*, rock daisybush; *O. obcordata*, heartleaf daisybush; *Orites revoluta*, revolute orites; *Pentachondra pumila*, carpet frillyheath; *Podolepis decipiens*, showy copperwire-daisy; *Polystichum proliferum*, mother shieldfern; *Pterygopappus lawrencei*, sage cushionplant; *Richea scoparia*, scoparia; *R. sprengeioides*, rigid candleheath; *Senecio pinnatifolius* sp., groundsel; *Spaghnum* sp., moss; *Veronica ciliolata*, Ben Lomond cushionplant.

Fauna: *Aquila audux*, wedge-tailed eagle; *Crinia tasmaniensis*, Tasmanian froglet (tadpole); *Ecnolagria grandis*, honeybrown beetle; *Heteronympha merope*, common brown butterfly; *Macropus giganteus*, eastern grey kangaroo; *M. rufogriseus*, Bennett’s wallaby; *Niveoscincus metallicus*, metallic skink; *Tachyglossus aculeatus*, echidna; *Vombatus ursinus*, common wombat (male).



Image Peter Ralph

TAMAR SALTMARSH MONITORING NRM 2018

NRM North is seeking individuals and community groups interested in being involved in bird, plant and human impacts surveys of Tamar River estuary saltmarshes this summer. Dates at this time are:

Saturday 3 rd Feb	8.30 am	West Arm North (near York Town)
Tuesday 6 th Feb	10.30 am	West Arm South (near York Town)
Tuesday 13 th Feb	9.00 am	Swan Point
Thursday 15 th Feb	10.30 am	Long Tom Reef (near George Town)

Registration is essential and should be made no later than 3 days before the event. To receive further details about other dates and location, what to bring etc., contact Megan Dykman (NRM North Facilitator) on 6333 7775 or email mdykman@nrmnorth.org.au

WEEKEND FIELD TRIP – Wynyard area
March Saturday 17 & Sunday 18

As a follow up to the Rees Campbell talk at the March general meeting a weekend away has been organised. On the Saturday members may visit her property in Wynyard, the Murnong Wild Food Garden, with the local 'Created from Chaos' sites and the Trowutta Arch as other places considered to complete the weekend.

Judith Handler had looked into accommodation options and other venues to visit, and will discuss this with members at the February General Meeting. If you are unable to attend this meeting and would like further information, please contact Judith Handler on 6393 6603.

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, Phil Brumby on 0407 664 554 or bookings@lfnc.org.au regarding availability and keys.

Field Centre Phone Number – (03) 6399 3361

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