

ARTICLES FROM THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

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**4 December - Alison Green - Crabs and other crustaceans**

" I spoke about some crustaceans which I have known during my years of work as a zoologist.

Crustaceans vary considerably in form and lifestyle, especially the smaller kinds. However, the following sentence applies to most of them:- a crustacean is an arthropod with two pairs of antennae on its head. In contrast an insect has one pair of these sensory feelers while an arachnid has no antennae.

I concentrated on the Eumalacostraca, a group which includes various shrimps, slaters and land hoppers, crayfish and crabs; i.e.. Larger and better known Crustacea. These share a basic pattern of head, 8-segmented thorax and 6-segmented abdomen, with a pair of appendages on each segment (e.g.. Legs on the thorax). However, often this pattern is modified by fusion of segments with the head, the tail plate (telson) or each other. The Tasmanian mountain shrimp, *Anaspides tasmaniae*, is its simplest example.

In order Decapoda an undivided carapace unites head and thorax, on their upper surface, and there are five pairs of legs (on segments 4-8). Within the Decapoda there are three sub-orders:- Macrura is represented by crayfish whose long abdomen projects backwards beyond the carapace. Brachyura contains the true crabs whose abdomen is small and always folded under the thorax. Anomura holds various decapod crustaceans which do not fit into the other two sub- orders. A porcelain crab, *Petrolisthes elongatus*, was chosen to represent the anomalous Anomura.

While discussing Brachyura, I told the story of a cancer crab, *Cancer novaezealandiae*, nicknamed "Houdini". It twice shed its exoskeleton without leaving evidence of how it escaped from this.

The introduced European shore crab, *Carcinus maenas*, was first found in Tasmania in 1993. I mentioned some later observations, up until 2000.

My research specialty has been terrestrial members of order Isopoda (slaters and their relatives). The slaters which live in gardens in Tasmania belong to three species introduced from Europe: - *Porcellio scaber*, *Armadillidium vulgare* and *Eluma caelatum*. A New Zealand

species, *Styloniscus otakensis*, has become introduced to Macquarie Island. With these aliens included, the number of species of Isopoda sub-order Oniscidea currently known to be in Tasmania and / or its associated islands is 63. Of these, 35 are new, still waiting to be described officially and named.

Within Tasmania there is a sure way to distinguish between introduced European and native Australian slaters. Their pleopods (the appendages on abdominal segments 1-5) provide the clues, which were explained. In mainland Australia, where more introduced species are present, there are a few exceptions to the Tasmanian test.

This talk was of 20th century vintage. Its supporting illustrations were printed on paper. " Alison Green

### **8 December 2007: Christmas at Skemps.**

The weather was fine and about 45 people came out to take part in the day. Walks were taken before the barbecue was lit and lunch was underway.

We were all very happy to see Jean and Bill Stephens, Win Barnard and Bonnie and David Nevin who are not able to attend as many events as they once did.

After afternoon tea was enjoyed by all 'Secret Santa' arrived. Among much laughter and with the help of young member, Sarah Brient, he was able to see that everyone received a present from the tree.

Following that happy event, members drifted away until there were only 4 left. These members stayed overnight to attend to the very mundane task of removing the Christmas tree and taking three trailer loads of rubbish (mainly old fencing) to the Nunamara tip as it only opens on Sunday!

During the weekend we inspected the waratahs (*Telopea truncata*) growing across the creek and found that the larger one of the two plants was completely covered with flowers. There were far too many to count! I understand that some of the waratahs in the Federation plantation were also flowering for the first time. Another first was the flowering of the christmas bells (*Blandfordia punicea*) located near the Field Centre.

As we arrived a large echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*) was spotted going for its life for the shelter of the bush land above the Field Centre.

Marion Simmons

## **19 January 2008 – Ben Lomond**

This excursion was an outing with a difference. We were greeted by an overcast day and light rain. However after meeting at Windmill Hill we set off for our destination joining with Al and Dianne Pegler at the mountain turn off. There were 13 of us in all.

The first stop was Carr Villa Scout Camp for morning tea. The rain persisted so we had our drink under the shelter of a small overhang of the Scout building. Four members decided to drive to the top, there to leave two of them to walk back down to the car. The remainder decided Skemps was a better venue for lunch and so we set off driving across country via the Camden Road. For the most part this was a very pleasant drive with the foliage of the bush washed clean by the rain.

At Skemps we warmed the place up with a fire in the old heater and enjoyed our lunch in comfort. We left fairly early and the much-needed rain continued. It was a most enjoyable day.

A few plants in flower were noted on the lower part of the mountain road, among them a lovely stand of flowering woolly teatree (*Leptospermum lanigerum*) in one gully in particular, some late flowering guitarplants (*Lomatia tinctoria*) and a display of a yellow flowered fireweed (*Senecio sp.*). Just driving along we did not notice the red berries that are usually a feature of that landscape.

Marion Simmons