

ARTICLES FROM THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

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6 October: Excursion to Narawntapu

The Field Nat. party of 11 members met at the car park near the information centre. After morning tea we divided into two groups, one lead by Jeffrey Campbell to walk through to Archers Knob and the smaller group lead by John Simmons to walk to the bird hide at the large lagoon.

Bird Hide Walk. It was pleasant walking along under the shade of the trees, the majority of which were old coast wattles (*Acacia longifolia* var. *sophorae*) and prickly box (*Bursaria spinosa*). We noticed brown Tasmanian Scrubwrens flitting among the trees and heard the call of the Grey Shrike-thrush. Different plants were in flower, one in particular that took our eye was the coastal small-leaf clematis (*Clematis microphylla*) draped across the track-side shrubs. Native nettles (*Australina pusilla*) and a delicate twining pea (*Glycine clandestina*) were also seen. Then we were delighted to have a Spotted-tailed Quoll cross the path in front of us. What luck!

We duly arrived at the lagoon after passing through a shady Melaleuca swamp (*M. ericifolia*) where we noticed how little water there was in any part of it. Near the lagoon, that did have plenty of water in it although lower than usual, we noted woolly teatree (*Leptospermum lanigerum*) and Leucopogon species.

At the lagoon there were a number of water birds hunting for food. These included black swans, hoary headed grebes, ducks and cormorants. After a short stay we started on our way back and were fortunate to meet a ranger who had a wide knowledge of devils in the park and who was ready to talk to us about the little carnivore. She seemed most concerned that the horrible devil disease had been found in devils not far from the park.

Marion Simmons

Archer's Knob

To reach Archer's Knob we followed the track between the lagoon and Bakers Beach. Near the eastern end of the beach we walked a track which rose steadily through coastal trees to the top of Archer's Knob. The views over Bakers Beach, Badger Head and beyond were superb and there was snow in the distance on Mt Roland, the Western Tiers and Black Bluff.

After lunch in the wind on the exposed Archer's Knob, we completed the circuit walk around the knob and finished this enjoyable walk via the beach. Karen Manning

Members identified the following during Archer's Knob walk:

PLANTS : Yellow Dogwood (*Pomaderris elliptica*), Coast Dogwood (*Pomaderris apetala* subsp. *maritima*), Honeysuckle (*Banksia marginata*), Grass Tree (*Xanthorrhoea* spp.) – on summit of Archers Knob only, Running Postman (*Kennedia prostrata*), *Leucopogon parviflorus*, *Leucopogon ericoides*, Blue Love creeper (*Comesperma volubile*), Prickly Moses (*Acacia verticillata*), Small-leaved Clematis (*Clematis microphylla*), Coast Wattle (*Acacia longifolia*), Coast Paperbark (*Melaleuca ericifolia*),

Allocasuarina sp., Apple Dumpling (*Billardiera scandens*), Large-leaf Bush Pea (*Pultenaea daphnoides*), Prickly Beauty (*Pultenaea juniperina*), Candles (*Stackhousia monogyna*), *Lasiopetalum baueri*, *Leptospermum sp.*, *Aotus ericoides*, *Bossiaea cinerea*, *Dillwynia sericea*, *Hibbertia sp.*, *Chamaescilla corymbosa*, Orchidaceae Parson-in-the Pulpit (*Glossodia major*), Bird Orchid (*Chiloglottis grammata*), Helmet Orchid (*Corybas spp.*), *Cyrtostylis sp.*, *Chamaescilla corymbosa* and Rabbit-ears (*Thelymitra antennifera*).

BIRDS : White-bellied Sea-Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*), Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus latirostris*), Black-faced cuckoo shrike (*Coracina novaehollandiae*), Pacific Gull (*Larus pacificus*), Swamp Harrier (*Circus approximans*), Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Aquila audax*), Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax sp.*), Pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*), Raven (*Corvus tasmanicus*) and Grey Fantail (*Rhipidura fuliginosa*)

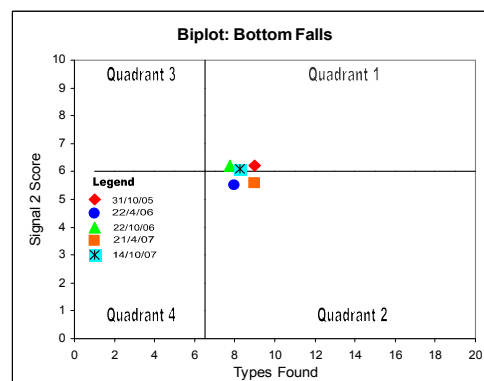
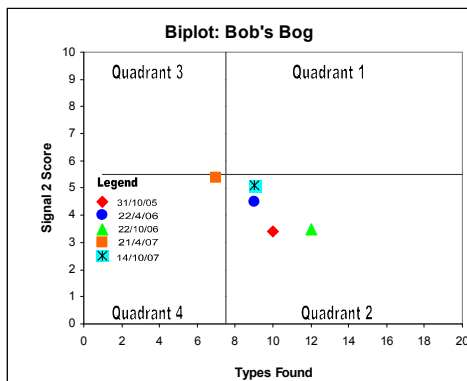
ANIMALS : Echidna (burrowing into sand dune), Pademelon, Wombat and Bennett’s Wallaby.

BEACH WALK: sea spurge, sea sponges all shapes and sizes, False balon shell (*Livonia mammilla*) – Tasmania’s largest gastropod, New Zealand screw shells (*Maoricolpus roseus*), shell varieties – scallop, abalone, wedding cake, volute, helmet, assorted bi-valves and cowri.

Water Monitoring report by John Elliott

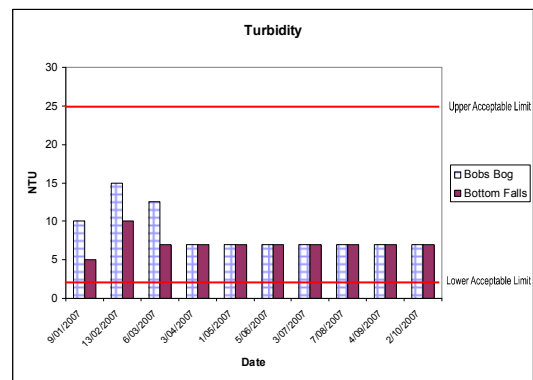
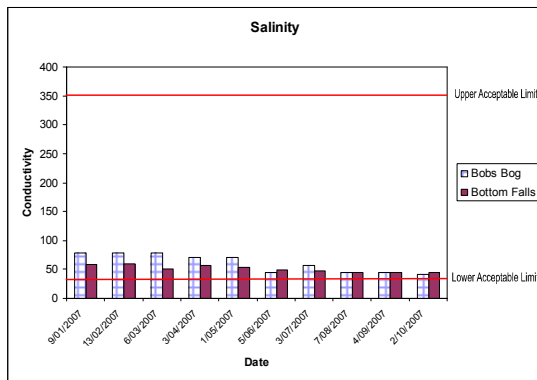
The result from the macroinvertebrate monitoring for Bob’s Bog on 14 October 2007 is fairly consistent with the previous results from this site. The Signal 2 score is the highest to date in Quadrant 2 so this result may be the best so far from this site, by a very slim margin.

The results from Bottom Falls are tightly clustered and very consistent, probably because this site is more environmentally buffered than is Bob’s Bog. The main difference at the Bottom Falls seems to be seasonal, with the Spring scores higher than those in Autumn.



Salinity and Turbidity report by John Elliott

Salinity and turbidity levels were well within acceptable limits. There was very little variation over Winter. Possibly the main factors affecting salinity and turbidity are bacterial/algal growth due to higher water temperatures in Summer and low water flows, also in Summer.



6 November—Mt. Barrow

Our speaker Dr Ben Brooks gave us a talk outlining his view of Mt Barrow and where he sees its future. He owns land in the area and is an active member of the Friends of Mt Barrow who hope as a group to develop more interest in this wonderful area that he feels is a forgotten mountain. One aim is to connect, through the development of a walking track, the isolated Falls Mountain Reserve through a series of private properties with covenants to the main Mt Barrow Reserve. There are many problems associated with this and the challenge is to convince all landholders to join in the project.

Mt Barrow is part of the north-east plateau massive, is smaller than Ben Lomond and lower at an altitude of 1413 m and drains mainly towards the St. Patrick's River, the source of Launceston's water supply. Rainfall is usually around 1445 mm a year, but he has observed a reduction in stream flow since 2004.

Fire and disturbance. Logging is marching up the mountain, the results of clear felling very evident. There is evidence, too, of fire on the north-west slopes that occurred in about 1979 but no more sign of fire since, although it remains a worry, especially with the present logging regime.

A botanical survey in 1990 found almost 200 species, among them rare plants including three endemics, midlands wattle (*Acacia axillaris*), scented dustymiller (*Spyridium ulicinum*) and delicate laurel (*Tetracarpaea tasmanica*).

The Falls Reserve is north of Mt Barrow Reserve and has no particular track access. The Friends are raising funds to do a special value survey for rare and endangered plants, including *Acacia axillaris* in the logging coupes. They hope to renovate the hut at the entrance to the Mountain reserve for use by the local community, re-open the summit track that was closed down several years ago and update the interpretive trail, as well as push through the extension to the Falls Reserve already mentioned.

Marion Simmons

11 November – The excursion was to Mt Barrow Interpretation Centre taking the road that turns right off the highway at Nunamara. Ten members had a wonderful day, the weather was perfect and the flowers, especially on the way up the marked road were a blaze of colour, mostly gold. There were numerous pea flowers in full bloom including golden bushpea (*Pultenaea gunnii*) (we think), prickly beauty (*Pultenaea juniperina*) and the orange spiky bitterpea (*Daviesia ulicifolia subsp.*

ruscifolia), endemic blue-flowered speedwell bush (*Veronica formosa*), the beautiful fairy waxflower (*Philotheca verrucosa*), milkmaids (*Burchardia umbellata*), dwarf riceflower (*Pimelea humilis*) and wonderful stands of cream flowered mountain needlebush (*Hakea lissosperma*). Further up the road we saw plenty of purple cheeseberry (*Cyathodes glauca*) and waratah (*Telopea truncata*) in bud which should present a lovely show in a few weeks.

At the top of the road lunch was taken at the fairly new very comfortable shelter that provides an indoor barbecue, seats and toilets. A view of Launceston can be seen through the trees from the viewing section. After lunch we continued and completed the loop road, finishing back at Nunamara shop where we stopped and enjoyed an icecream out on their new deck. Marion Simmons

16—18 November : Federation Weekend Bicheno

The Federation get-together was held at “Seaview Holiday Park” at Bicheno and was hosted by our Club.

On Friday evening John Simmons and Jeff Campbell gave their presentations. John’s slideshow was on his and Marion’s trip to the Alice Springs and Darwin areas earlier this year. One of the highlights of their trip was a visit to the Olive Pink Reserve in Alice Springs which was in the height of flower at that time of year and was evident from the slides displayed. John had also included some slides of Palm Gorge and of the facilities at Mary River where the ANN is being held in 2008.

Jeff’s slideshow was of wildflowers from his trips to Western Australia.

Saturday’s first port of call was Moulting Lagoon at a stop opposite Swanwick and Dolphin Sands to see what water birds were present. There were swans, cormorants, ducks and terns.

From there we moved further north to another viewing point on the beach of the lagoon and here we were amazed with the numbers of swans present—there were thousands, many of them with their cygnets. As we watched flights of ducks also landed on the water near the swans, swelling the numbers.

Our lunch spot was Friendly Beaches. The long white beaches were a picture with only half a dozen people wandering along the sands. On our way out we stopped at a couple of sites to see what had regenerated in lightly burnt bush areas. It was interesting to note that some of the she-oaks were shooting along the branches and at the base. Small acacia seedlings were appearing everywhere in the burnt soil—recovery is well under way.

On Saturday night an informal meal provided by staff at Seaview was enjoyed by all. This was followed by a comprehensive and interesting talk given by Tim McManus who detailed the development of the Winifred Curtis Reserve at Scamander, together with the history showing us an interesting aerial view of the entire property and telling us something of the fire devastation of twelve months ago.

Sunday’s visit to the Reserve was the follow-up to Tim’s talk and under his guidance we walked the tracks, taking photographs and notes of the plants we saw in recovery mode. Signs of the horrific heat of the fire were everywhere but it was quite amazing to see how life was returning slowly with orchids and young seedlings everywhere.

Some of the plants that were common were hundreds of small duck orchids (*Paracaleana minor*) as well as a number of flying duck orchids (*Caleana major*), thousands of milkmaids (*Burchardia umbellata*), many hibbertias, triggerplants (*Stylidium graminifolium*), a range of peas, including smooth parrotpea (*Dillwynia glaberrima*), golden pea (*Aotus ericoides*), common wedgepea (*Gompholobium huegelii*), glandular pinkbells (*Tetratheca labillardierei*), blue dampiera (*Dampiera stricta*) varying from white to bright blue flowers, trailing native-primrose (*Goodenia lanata*), common heath (*Epacris impressa*), pale yellow flowered tufted lily (*Thelionema caespitosum*) and grass trees by the thousand. They had just about completed their flowering. Another feature plant was the blue-mauve flowered long purpleflag (*Patersonia occidentalis*) and one more that impressed us was the bright blue flowered bluespike milkwort (*Comesperma calymega*).

Of course the eucalypts were responding with prolific growth up the trunks and stems as they always do after fire. We all hope and believe that the recovery, although it will take time, will be comprehensive.

Marion Simmons