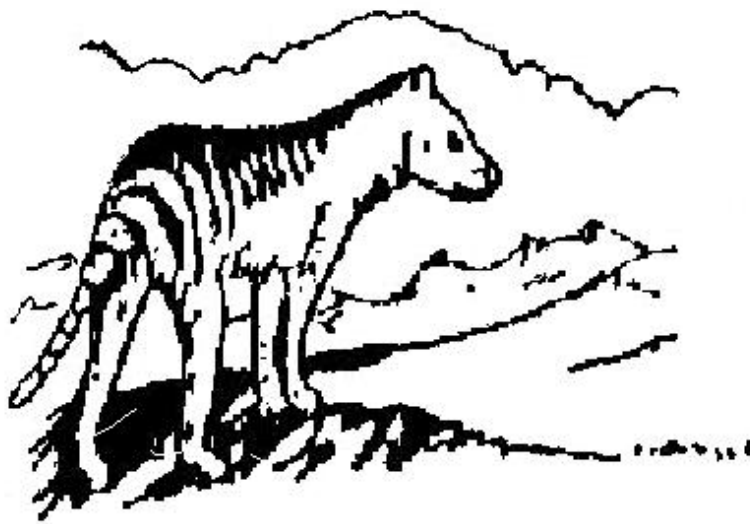


THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

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

Volume XLV No 2

December 2011 / January 2012

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- N'letter Co-ordinator** : Ms K. Manning
- Librarian** : Ms T McGlynn
- Committee** : E Montgomery, J Handlinger, P Wright, M Clarke,
P Warren, P Ralph

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

PROGRAM

FEBRUARY

- Tuesday 7** **General Meeting - Speaker: Guy Westmore - *Insects***
- Sunday 19** **Skemp Day - Collecting and identifying insects and spiders**

MARCH

- Tuesday 6** **General Meeting - Members Night**
- Sunday 11** **Field Trip - Weld River, prospecting and bushwalk**
- Monday 19** **Social Evening - Steve's Grill, Riverside (more details this newsletter, RSVP essential)**
- Saturday 24** **Skemp Day**

APRIL

- Tuesday 3** **General Meeting - Speaker: Martin George - *Transit of Venus***
- Saturday 21 -
Sunday 22** **Skemp Day - Water Monitoring and Saturday evening Astronomy with Peter Warren**

MAY

- Tuesday 1** **Skemp Memorial Lecture - Speaker: Marine biologist - *Rockpools and rocks***
- Sunday 13** **Field Trip - Badger Head/West Head - Rockpools and rocks**
- Saturday 26** **Skemp Day - Fungi foraging**

JUNE

- Tuesday 5** **General Meeting - Speaker: TBA**
- Saturday 16** **Field Trip: Mt Arthur track - Fungi and ferns**
- Sunday 24** **Skemp Day - Fungi and ferns**

The complete February to June program will be on the website shortly <http://www.lfnc.org.au/meetings.htm>

GENERAL / COMMITTEE MEETING

Puggle

December - The items passed around by J Campbell were correctly identified by A Green as *Anoglypta launcestonensis*, the granulated Tasmanian snail and an orchid seed.

Sightings

December - P Warren saw cows at Elizabeth Town with a Cattle Egret on each of their backs, and a White-necked Heron; B Montgomery saw two Wedge-tailed Eagles over Quamby Bluff; Jill Clark (visitor) saw two Blue-tongued Lizards; Tom McGlynn reported seven pademelons and a snake trying to swallow a young rabbit near his home; A Green asked if anyone was getting scorpions in their house and there were many yeses;

L Mockridge said a snake leapt out of the way of her car near Interlaken; M Johnstone saw an echidna at the Trevallyn Recreation Area and a Wedge-tailed Eagle in Riverside; A McKay reported 13 white cockatoos at St Georges Square; N Hardstaff saw an echidna on Targa Hill Road and white cockatoos at Punchbowl; P Wright saw a White Goshawk near her house struggling with its food, a Wedge-tailed Eagle at Gravelly Beach, a Firetail Finch feeding at the girl guide camp at Deviot and Grey Currawongs at Deviot with young; Tina Pinkard reported a dead Barred Bandicoot on Trevallyn Road; A McKay asked why there were no sparrows at Trevallyn and S Anthony said there were no tadpoles in Machins Reserve.

Library Report

Tina McGlynn reported that the Club had not yet received the Sarah Lloyd book and that we do have '*No Where Else on Earth*'

Club Publications For Sale - If you missed out on purchasing a 2012 Club calendar, there are a few copies still available and these can be purchased at the reduced price of \$3 each. The *Guide to Flowers and Plants of Tasmania* is also available for \$21. Contact Karen on 6344 2277 or catch up with her at meetings/field trips to arrange your purchase.

School for Seniors visit Skemps - Members were asked if they were able to assist on Monday 6 February when this group visits. During the day help will be required to conduct walks, give talks on the Club and activities at the property, history of the property etc and some hands-on with water monitoring and seed collection demonstrations. The Club will provide tea and coffee, so some help in the Centre would also be appreciated.

GENERAL MEETING - Tuesday 6 December - Mick & Helen Statham - Native Rodents

John Simmons introduced tonight's guest speaker Dr Mick Statham who was to talk to us about Australian Native Rodents.

Mick worked for the Dept. of Primary Industry and then the University of Tasmania for 36 years, primarily in research into pest animal management and management of the State animal control programs. In the last 20 years most major research has been conducted in conjunction with his wife Helen who has post graduate training and professional experience in ecology. They have extensive experience in trapping, radio tracking and use of infra red cameras for studying animal behaviour. They retired last year but are still both Honorary Research Associates in the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture. They now have the time to organise holidays and undertake some volunteer work with Wildcare.

Mick started by explaining that native rodents make up 70% of the total native animal population. There are 69 species of which 10 are extinct and five are introduced.

What is a rodent you might ask? Rodents have continuously growing pairs of incisors in both the upper and lower jaw. In size, rodents range for the Pigmy mouse at 6 grams to the Capybaras, a south east American rodent which weights up to 65 kilograms. In female rodents the nipples are aligned along the side of the body, whilst other native animals have nipples in the groin area. The significance of the nipples along the side of body, is that they can suckling up to four to six young at a time, like a pig.

Mick then talked about the different types of rodents in Australia.

Tree Mouse found in northern Queensland, one species in the genus

The **Water Rat** is native to Tasmania and Flinders Island. They can weigh up to 1200 grams. This rodent is carnivorous and eats fish invertebrates, frogs, small birds and is found in waterways and on beaches. During the 1940s they were taken for their fur. In Tasmania the water rat has a black back and golden yellow front and is often referred to as the Golden Bellied Rat. The Water Rat found on the mainland varies in colour and are not as vicious as the Tasmanian counterpart.

Melomys are found in wet northern Australian habitats. There are around 20 species.

The two species of **White-tailed rats** are found in northern Queensland, the **Giant white-tailed rat** is one of largest Australian rodents.

Hopping Mice are found in desert areas of Australia. They have a

tufted tail and shelter during the day in deep burrows. Their average weight is around 50 grams. The long tailed species of Hopping Mouse was last seen in 1901 and is presumed extinct.

Tree Rats are found in northern Queensland, two species **Black-footed tree rat** and **Golden-backed tree rat**.

Rabbit Rats are found on the north and east coasts of Australia. There are two species.

Rock Rats as the name suggests are found in rocky habitats across north Australia and in Central Australia.

Stick Nest Rats, there are two species that make nests up to two metres high to escape predators like dingos. The **Lesser stick-nest rat** was last seen in 1930 and has been declared extinct, but fresh additions to old nests have been reported so there is possibly a few still alive. In Australia, the **Greater stick-nest rat** is only found on two islands.

Short-tailed mice live in the desert. There are two species but not much is known about them.

In the genus *Pseudomys*, there are 24 species of which three are extinct and others are listed as threatened. They weigh up to 100 grams. The **New Holland mouse** is in this group. It is small in size, weighing approximately 18 grams and looks like a house mouse. The difference is the absence of a notch on the back of the incisors and a distinctive smell. They are found in lower New South Wales and Victoria, the east coast of Tasmania and Flinders Island in open forests. Numbers increase in regenerated areas. Mick described it as a 'boom and bust species'. The **Long-tailed mouse** is the only species of rodent endemic to Tasmania. The species is up to 90 grams in weight and widespread in Tasmania, occurring in wet sclerophyll forests and alpine heath. They are largely nocturnal and build their nests quite close to the surface, but would happily nest in a house.

Broad Toothed rat, there is only one species and it looks like a larger version of a species of *Pseudomys*. They weigh up to 120 grams and are found in the highlands and west coast of Tasmanian and south-east Victoria. They build nests under grass and have runways under the vegetation. They eat roots, grass and seeds.

The **Australian Swamp rat** is what people consider to be the 'true rat'. There are seven species and three introduced species. The Swamp rat weighs up to 120 grams, is found all over Tasmania and on the east coast of Australia and is a 'good looking' rat. They are diurnal and found in swamps and tussock grass and form extensive runways beneath dense vegetation.

There are five rodents that have been accidentally introduced with

European settlement and all of these are likely to be seen in urban area. The **House Mouse** is widespread through Tasmania and mainland Australia. The **Pacific Rat** is found on some northern Australian islands. The Brown Rat and Black Rat are similar. The **Black Rat** has a tail longer than its body and is found in rural areas and nearby bushlands. The **Brown Rat** (sewer rat) is common in urban areas and is more aggressive than the Black Rat, it will attack you, whereas the Black Rat would run away. A population of the **Five-lined palm squirrel** can be found in Perth. The squirrels are descendants of escapees from the zoo over 100 years ago. There was a population at one stage in Sydney but they have died out since 1970.

The Water rat, Long-tailed mouse, New Holland mouse, Broad-toothed mouse and Swamp rat are native to Tasmania.

About 15 years ago there was a plague of Canefield Rats in Queensland.

Fossil records for rats date back 50 – 60 thousand years.

There were many questions asked during and after the talk to which Helen also contributed information. Peter Warren thanked Mick and Helen on behalf of members for informing us about these, in many cases, little known-about native animals.

CHRISTMAS AT SKEMPS - Saturday 10 December

Nineteen members and a guest attended the annual Christmas get-together at Skemps today. A couple of members arrived nice and early as the first job was to find a Christmas tree to erect which fortunately was spotted on the property as we arrived, under the large pine trees near the fire station. This was cut and moved to the Centre where it was installed and decorated. There was obviously some crossed wires as Grant arrived a little later with another tree, so this year the Centre was nicely decorated with two trees. The *Blandfordia punicea*, Christmas bells, planted outside the Centre were in flower and were admired by all who passed them.

After a cuppa we walked the Zig-Zag Track, stopping at the tree stump encircled with fungi brackets, the Federation Tree and also at the sites of engaeus mounds near the boardwalks and a new area of mounds located at the forest edge in the paddock. The Gunn's heath had almost finished flowering near the roadway, but there were still flower clusters worthy of a photo. From here we checked on the Waratah at the river

which also had a few flowers left. On the return walk to the Centre, the orange globular flowers of the Buddleia were attracting a lot of bees which interested members and in particular Andy who was visiting the property today. Judith was inspecting a few burrows along the roadway and found that one was occupied by an echidna.

Following lunch a group walked to the barn which has been made safe and useable during the year by members who volunteer on Tuesdays. After admiring their handiwork a few returned to the Centre to set up afternoon tea, whilst the remainder went to the old Skemp house site and spent some time there looking around the foundations and chatting.

Santa arrived as promised and handed out the gifts after which we



enjoyed the lovely afternoon tea that members had brought along. The winners of the lucky door prizes were Prue Wright and Tom Treloggen. Everyone headed home around 4.30 pm after an enjoyable day.

Santa handing out a gift
Photo: J Handler

BEN LOMOND WEEKEND - Saturday 14 / Sunday 15 January 2012

Fourteen people attended this field trip to Ben Lomond as a combined LFNC and Australian Plant Society outing. Two attendees were members of the APS only; seven were LFNC members only, whilst the remaining five were members of both clubs.

Maureen, Irmgard, Karen, Noel, John and Peter arrived and settled into Borrowdale Ski Lodge early on a fine Saturday morning for an overnight stay. Thanks to Peter the lodge was open and all ready for us to have an early cuppa prior to exploring the mountain.

As we were setting off, Roy and Louise, Janet and Colin arrived together for the day, so we waited for them to get their boots on and then headed off on the first of our walks which was to the alpine heath to the north of the village. Although the Scoparia was past its best,

many plants still had the distinctive orange flowers and downwind their scent filled the air. John convinced us that it was safe to suck the nectar from the flowers and he had some himself. I tried it as well although with the strong flavour I would not consider it a delicacy.

Our destination was Hamilton Craggs, but the walk there was very slow as there was so much to see. The list of plants seen by the time we got to the slopes of the Cragg was quite large, especially as there were several different types of cushionplants and daisies in the area. By lunch time, some of the group had returned to the Lodge as they hadn't taken their lunch with them, the others continued on up the slopes of the Cragg where they had lunch and looked for other species of plant until mid-afternoon.

Just before lunch we were joined by Peter, Lois, Karl and Claire who were staying for the day only. The late arrival of one couple was caused by confusion over where we would meet and the other couple missed the turnoff to the mountain twice, we won't say who did what.

After lunch Maureen, Irmgard, Karen, Noel, Karl and Claire went up through the ski fields around to Legges Tor and down to the old ski village. The area here and down the track to the roadway was rich with wildflowers, the colours were magnificent. In the distance we could hear and then finally spotted the group of five who had stayed out all day looking at the plants on the Cragg opposite. After coffee the Skabo's and Hallam's headed off home while the other four stayed till late.

Following dinner we enjoyed a chat and also some reading in a building still warm from the sun. John headed off to get a sunset shot from Legges Tor, but was back disappointed as the fog had moved in before sunset.

The next morning Maureen and Irmgard headed off early for walks around Carr Villa, while Noel, Karen and John walked along the overland ski runs east of the car park. The Manning's continued up to Little Hell and beyond, while John stayed looking for wildflowers on the ski run area which was dotted with little ponds, many containing tadpoles. After lunch we finished the cleaning and headed home after an enjoyable weekend at this most interesting national park.

Noel J Manning

Many thanks to Roy Skabo for compiling the following list of plants identified during the visit

Oreomyrrhis ciliata, Fringed caraway ; *Abrotanella forsteroides*,

Tasmanian cushionplant ; *Argyrotegium mackayi*, Silver cudweed ; *Brachyscome tenuiscapa*, Mountain daisy ; *Celmisia asteliifolia*, Silver snow-daisy ; *Craspedia alpina*, Alpine billybuttons ; *Erigeron belli-dioidea*, Hairy mountain daisy ; *Erigeron tasmanicus*, Tasmanian mountain daisy ; *Ewartia catipes*, Diamond cushionherb ; *Microseris lanceolata*, Yam daisy ; *Olearia algida*, Alpine daisybush ; *Olearia obcordata*, Heartleaf daisybush ; *Ozothamnus rodwayi* (var *kingii*), Silvery alpine everlastingbush ; *Pterygopappus lawrencei*, Sage cushionplant ; *Senecio gunnii*, Mountain fireweed ; *Senecio jacobaea* (i), Ragwort ; *Senecio pectinatus*, Yellow alpine groundsel ; *Senecio pinnatifolius*, Highland groundsel ; *Wahlenbergia saxicola*, Mountain bluebell ; *Drosera arcturi*, Alpine sundew ; *Acrothamnus montanus*, Snow beardheath ; *Pentachondra pumila*, Carpet heath ; *Richea acerosa*, Slender candleheath ; *Richea scoparia*, Scoparia ; *Richea sprengeloides*, Rigid candleheath ; *Chionogentias diemensis*, Ben Lomond snowgentian ; *Geranium potentilloides*, Mountain cranesbill ; *Baeckea gunniana*, Alpine myrtleheath ; *Epilobium tasmanicum*, Snow willowherb ; *Prasophyllum alpinum*, Alpine leek-orchid ; *Plantago daltonii*, Alpine plantain ; *Montia australasica*, White purslane ; *Bellenden montana*, Mountain rocket ; *Orites acicularis*, Yellow bush ; *Orites revoluta*, Revolute orites ; *Ranunculus* spp, Buttercup ; *Acaena montana*, Mountain buzzy ; *Asperula gunnii*, Mountain woodruff ; *Coprosma nitida*, Mountain currant ; *Leionema montanum*, Mountain waxflower ; *Euphrasia collina*, Eyebright ; *Ourisia integrifolia*, Mountain whitebell ; *Veronica ciliolata*, Ben Lomond cushionplant ; *Kelleria dieffenbachii*, Carpet riceflower ; *Pimelea sericea*, Mountain riceflower

MEMBER'S NIGHT - Tuesday 6 March

Peter Ralph will give a talk about the Weld River at Moorina, the location of the Club's field trip on Sunday 18 March; here we will try out luck prospecting and enjoy walks in the surrounding bush. Members are asked to bring along a 'treasure' (a piece of rock or mineral) for show and tell. There will also be a quiz.

CLUB SOCIAL EVENING - Monday 19 March

This will be held at Steve's Grill on Monday 19 March, 6.00pm for 6.30pm. Steve's Grill has a good grill menu but there is also a comprehensive general menu which caters for all tastes. Appetisers are priced from \$7.90 -

\$18.00 include soup, herb breads, pate and seafood dishes. Mains from \$15.00 - \$31.00 include sausages, kebabs, pasta dishes, chicken, pork, duck, seafood and salads. Steve's steaks range from \$23.00 - \$47.00 depending on weight and a choice of six sauces is offered. Desserts are \$10.90 if you have any room left. Coffee and tea \$4.00.

To get to Steve's go down the West Tamar Road past the Trevallyn Power Station and turn right past the apartment blocks. Keep in the right hand lane for about 100 metres then turn right in to the area in front of the apartments. There are a few parking places on your left but if these are occupied keep going under the archway and there is parking at the end of the building. If these are full keep going around the back of the building where there is plenty of parking space.

Members not at the March General Meeting are requested to RSVP to Noel or Karen on 6344 2277 or family_manning@yahoo.com.au before Friday 16 March if they would like to attend the dinner.

CLUB CALENDER 2013

At the July General Meeting we will decide on the images for the next calendar. Conditions of entry:

- ◆ Print topics: subjects are to be related to Tasmanian flora and fauna, forests and Tasmanian landscapes. Images of cultivars are not acceptable.
- ◆ Members must be able to give a full description of the object in their image including location and approximate date. They will also be required to write a brief blurb to go with the image if selected for the calendar.
- ◆ Images to be submitted on CD or USB.

Date for submission of images will be advised in the April/May newsletter.

AUSTRALIAN PLANT SOCIETY MEETINGS

LFNC members are welcome to attend APS meetings held on the third Tuesday of the month at Max Fry Hall, Gorge Road Trevallyn at 7.30 pm. Their first meeting in 2012 will be on 21 February.

FIELD DAY Tamar Island Wetlands Reserve - 25 February 2012

The Tamar NRM has invited members to attend their field day '*G day...is here!*', the G = Gambusia. To find out more about this fish and join in the activities, visit between 10.00am and 2.00pm. Contact Tamar NRM on 6323 3310, if you require additional information.

AUSTRALASIAN BAT SOCIETY INC.

An email was received from the above society enquiring whether members are interested in participating in the inaugural Australasian Bat Night on the weekend of 3rd - 4th March.

This Club is not in a position to arrange an event to participate in this, so if you are interested please visit www.abs.ausbats.org.au or email: secretary@ausbats.org.au to obtain more information on what may be being held locally.

FUNGIMAP FESTIVAL 2012

Fungimap and NRM South have organised a Fungi Festival to be held in Hobart from Thursday 26 to Sunday 29 April, 2012. The full program is available for the *Symposium on Conservation and Management of Fungi* (Thursday and Friday) and the workshops and forays (Saturday and Sunday).

The following weekend, Friday 4 to Saturday 5 May, Fungimap and the Central North Field Naturalists Club will be holding some fungi activities at Corinna in the Tarkine.

Full details for both weekends, including printable program and registration forms, are available at <http://www.rbg.vic.gov.au/fungimap/tasmanian-fungi-festival-2012>

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.

Skemp Days: meet at property from 9.30 am onwards.

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. Contact our booking manager, John Elliott on 6344 9303 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