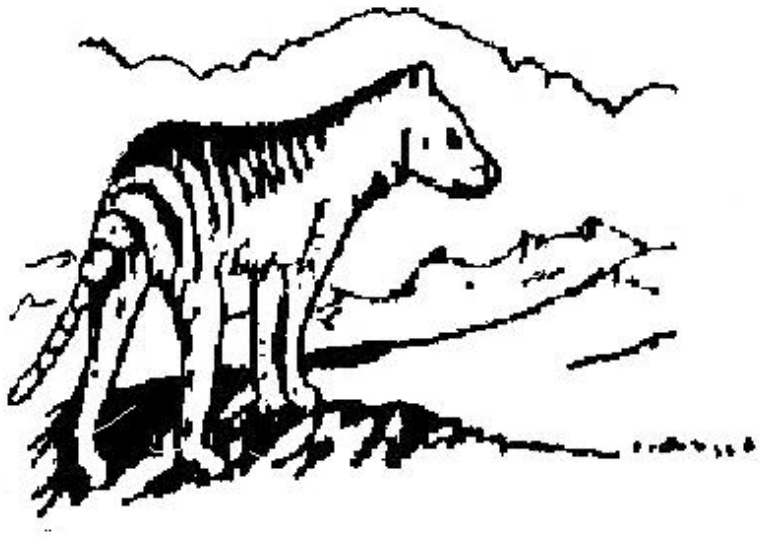
THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

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 XLIV No 4 **April/May 2011**

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

PROGRAM

JUNE

Tuesday 7	**Members Night**
Sunday 18	**Skemp Day: Tree Planting on Skemp Creek**

JULY

Tuesday 5	**Speaker: David Seymour - *Geology of Mathinna Group***
Sunday 10	**Field Trip: to be advised**
Sunday 24	**Skemp Day: Tree Planting on Skemp Creek**

AUGUST

Tuesday 2	**Speaker: Debbie Searle - *Maatsuyker Island***
Sunday 21	**Skemp Day: Tree Planting on Skemp Creek**

SEPTEMBER

Tuesday 6	**Members night, including judging of Club Photographic Competition**
Saturday 24 - Sunday 25	**Skemp Weekend: Tree Planting and on Saturday evening Astronomy with Peter Warren**

OCTOBER

Tuesday 4	**AGM Dinner Meeting (venue TBA)**
Sunday 9	**Field Trip: Midlands wildflowers**
Sunday 23`	**Skemp Day: Water Monitoring**
Fri 28 - Sun 30	**Federation Weekend @ Bruny Island hosted by TFNC**

Above correct at time of printing. For short notice changes to program visit http://www.lfnc.org.au/meetings.htm or contact a Committee member if in doubt

COMMITTEE/GENERAL MEETING

Skemp Report - John Simmons reported that the work on the culvert on Skemp Creek has been completed. Work on the barn was continuing. Jeff Campbell had been cutting firewood and John Elliott had sprayed blackberries and was preparing the sites for tree planting in June.

Puggle

April - Maureen Johnstone asked members to identify a snail shell which she passed around while she read out information bout the snail. Jeff Campbell correctly identified the snail as *Anaglypta launcestonensis*.

May - Jeff Campbell asked members to identify the location from an image. Maureen Johnstone identified the image as the beach at Lake Augusta in the Central Highlands.

Sightings

April - Irmgard Rosenfeldt had seen a Brown House Moth and had pictures. Prue Wright reported Brown Quail at Gravelly Beach and a Nankeen Kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*) near Auburn Road. Maureen Johnstone said that baby pelicans (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*) were in the Trevallyn tailrace. Peter Ralph had dug up large scorpions and a wolf spider in his garden. Jeff Campbell said he had collected several jewel beetles at Skemps, there might have been two species. He had also found what might have been a funnel-web spider (see Alison Green's report later in this newsletter). Jeff also reported seeing two White-bellied Sea Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) over Invermay. Daphne Longman had also seen Sea Eagles at Dilston.

May - Alison Green reported a dead *Luidia Australiae* sea-star at Bakers Beach. It is rare and has seven arms. Peter Warren reported a small snake at West Head which got nasty. David Walker reported a Whistling Kite (*Haliastur sphenurus*) at Longford. Sue Madden reported a Fur Seal relaxing in the sun at Red Rock Point, on the East Coast. Alma McKay reported fifteen white cockatoo and later seven Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus funereus*) at Launceston. Prue Wright reported that the Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina novae-hollandiae*) have not left for winter from Gravelly Beach. Maureen Johnstone reported Noisy Miners (*Manorina melanocephala*) in her garden. Musk Lorikeets (*Glossopsitta concinna*) have been in Tom Treloggen's garden.

General

Flinders Island - trip has been put on hold to avoid a possible clash with the Federation get-together on Bruny Island.

Covenant on new land - Members were shown a map which shows the two parcels of land which have been submitted for consideration of a covenant.

Planting on Skemp Creek - The stakes have been sharpened and tree guards

made in preparation for the second round of planting in June.
Calendar - Printing has been organised. The calendar should be ready for sales in early August.

GENERAL MEETING 5 April - SPEAKER Debbie Searle

Debbie Searle spoke to members and visitors at the General Meeting in April. Debbie has co-ordinated water quality monitoring in north-eastern Tasmania for many years and has supported the Club by attendance on days of water monitoring at the Skemp property and has kept LFN Club co-ordinator John Elliott advised of any changes to water monitoring methods and data requirements.

Debbie was working from the Launceston Environment Office in Tamar Street, but recently relocated to the Tamar Natural Resource Management office in Civic Square Launceston. The waterwatch data collected by volunteers is collated and sent to the Bureau of Meteorology who has the responsibility of compiling Australia's water information.

Debbie said that involving volunteers is a cost effective way to monitor the waterways. As many of the volunteers observe an area of waterway close to them, they have been able to report their concerns, such as dead animals and dumping of waste in rivers, which if not removed could have been detrimental to the health of the waterway. Also there have been reports of pest plants such as the invasive ragwort and Spanish knot weed which the Dept of Primary Industry, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) have since controlled. If the monitoring of wetlands and waterways was left up to a small centralised group these types of findings would most likely not have been detected until after these problems had taken some effect on the area.

Land management practices need to be addressed; riverbanks need to be fenced so animals cannot pollute waterways, weeds and invasive species need to be eradicated, and the use of pesticides and other pollutants need to be reduced.

There have also been positive reports. Sightings of water lobster, platypus and green and gold frogs living in the waterways.

The new buzz word for volunteers is *citizen science observation*. According to Wikipedia 'citizen science is a term used for projects or on-going program of scientific work in which individual volunteers or networks of volunteers, many of whom may have no specific scientific training, perform or manage research-related tasks such as observation, measurement or computation.'

Debbie gave a demonstration of how samplers should disturb the river bed to ensure a good sample to check for macroinvertebrate and discussed the importance of salinity and turbidity testing. There needs to be 3 – 5 years of constant monthly monitoring data to get a baseline for a particular area. A pattern may occur, due to drought, flood etc.

Members and visitors present were treated to free posters and a CD to take home, which Debbie had bought along. Karen Manning

Noel Manning thanked Debbie on behalf of members for her talk which confirmed the importance of volunteers and the work they achieve.

Skemp Day - Water monitoring Sunday 10 April

Following yesterday's rainy weather and today's gloomy morning start in Launceston, it was great to arrive at Skemps to a pleasant sunny morning. With our overnight guests still packing to leave, John and Noel headed off to obtain the water sample for monitoring and Alison and I walked to the Top Pond to stretch our legs. As there was quite a flow of water coming through the pond into the creek we wondered how much the rain would affect today's water monitoring results.

With the return of John and Noel, and other members having arrived, heads went down over the water samples to scan for movement and the macro-invertebrate captured were placed in the sorting containers for identification and counting.

After lunch some members went for a walk while others used the macro-invertebrate key, microscope and loupes to identify the 'Order' (taxonomic rank used in the classification of organisms) of the items in the containers.

With the afternoon cooling quickly and our work done, we packed up early and headed home. Karen Manning

Many thanks to John Elliott for collating today's information which is in the table below. A table of overall results from water monitoring over the six year period of monitoring is on the following page, along with turbidity and salinity results.

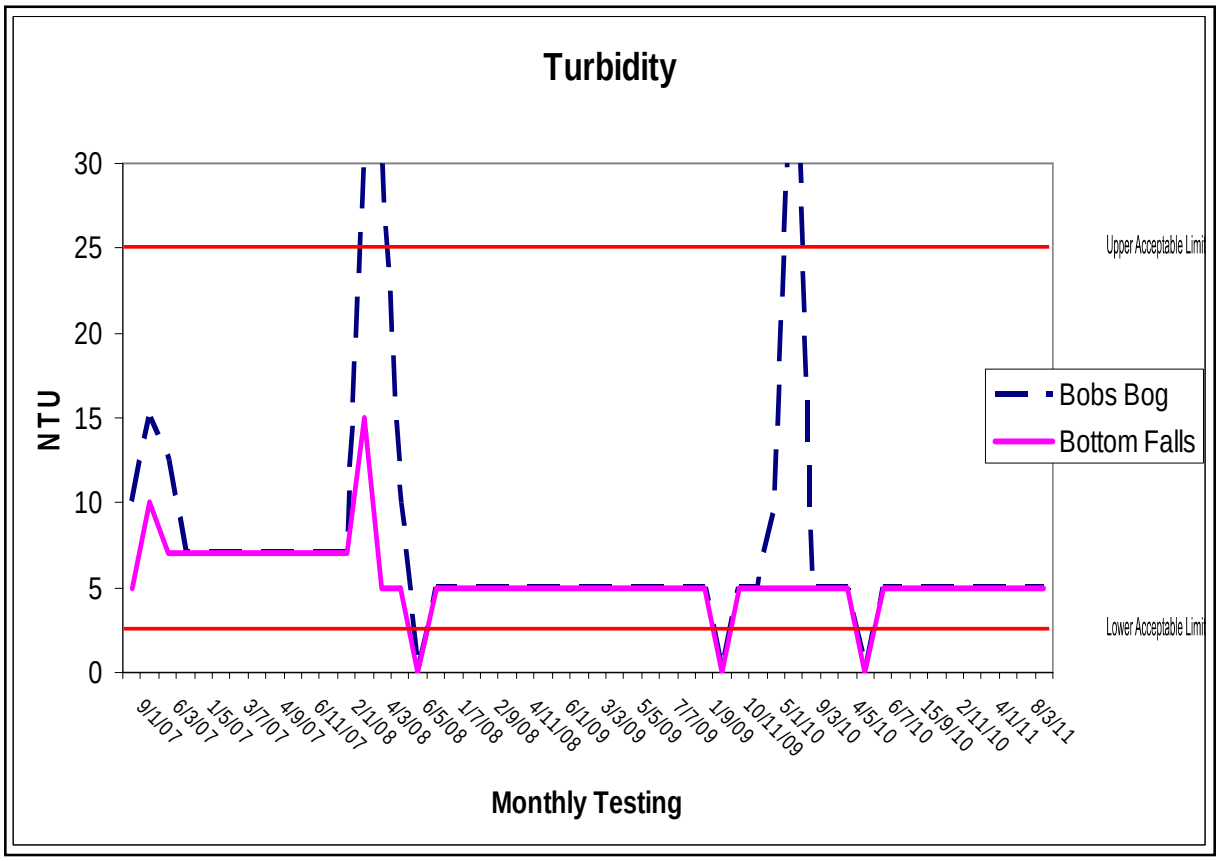
Kind	**Grade**	**Found**
Acarina (freshwater mites)	6	1
Coleoptera (beetles)	5	1
Diptera (flies, true flies)	3	1
Ephemeroptera (mayflies)	9	1
Hemiptera (backswimmers, water striders)	2	1
Odonata (damselflies)	3	1
Oligochaeta (segmented worms)	2	1
Plecoptera (stoneflies)	10	1
Trichoptera (caddisflies)	8	1

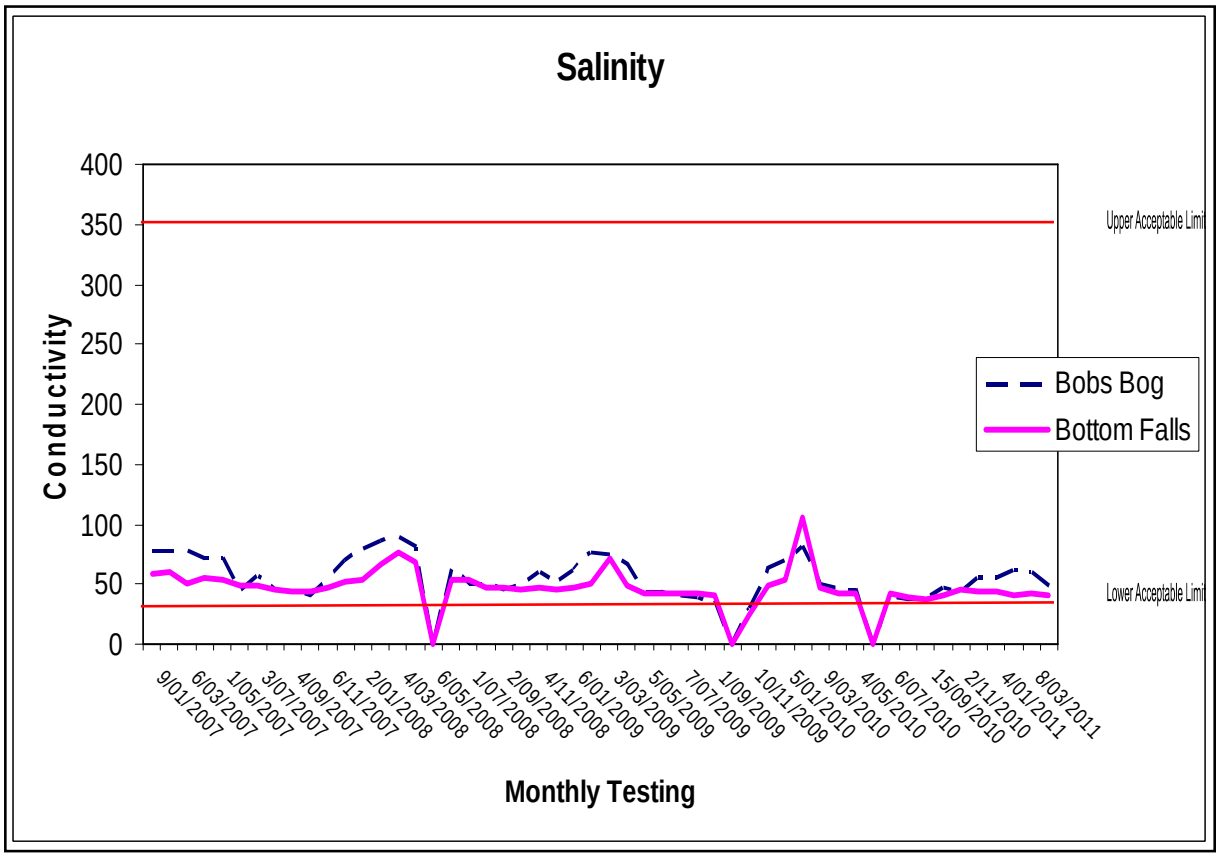
Total Grade 48.0 **Number of kinds 9** **Signal 2 Score 5.3**

Macroinvertebrate monitoring: Signal 2 score

Sample date	Kinds	Score	Interpretration	Water Quality
31/10/2005	9	6.2	Good quality. Little or no environmental degradation	Excellent
22/04/2006	8	5.5	Good quality. Little or no environmental degradation	Excellent
22/10/2006	8	6.2	Good quality. Little or no environmental degradation	Excellent
21/04/2007	8	5.8	Good quality. Little or no environmental degradation	Excellent
14/10/2007	9	5.4	Fair quality. Some degradation due to agriculture	Good
19/04/2008	8	5.4	Fair quality. Some degradation due to agriculture	Good
25/10/2008	7	6.3	Good quality. Little or no environmental degradation	Excellent
17/05/2009	8	5.8	Good quality. Little or no environmental degradation	Excellent
18/10/2009	8	5.8	Good quality. Little or no environmental degradation	Excellent
14/04/2010	8	5.6	Fair quality. Some degradation due to agriculture	Good
23/10/2010	6	6.5	Questionable quality, Indications of disturbance or poor sampling	Fair
20/11/2010	7	5.9	Good quality. Little or no environmental degradation	Excellent
10/04/2011	9	5.3	Fair quality. Some degradation due to agriculture	Good

Salinity and turbidity monitoring





GENERAL MEETING 3 May - Skemp Memorial Lecture given by Mark Holdsworth on the *Orange Bellied Parrot Recovery Program*

John Simmons gave a comprehensive background to the Skemp Memorial Lecture and introduced Mark Holdsworth to an appreciative audience of 31 members and three guests.

Mark Holdsworth is a wildlife biologist with the Wildlife Management Branch of the Department of Primary Industry, Parks, Water and Environment.

Mark started his talk by giving the five Commonwealth generic terms for species at risk in the wild. There are four categories between extinct and safe which are extinct in the wild, critically endangered, endangered and vulnerable species.

The critically endangered Orange Bellied Parrott (OBP) (*Neophema chrysogaster)* is one of the four coastal grass parrots of the six grass (*Neophema*) parrots of Australia. The OBP is an obligate migrant, breeding in a limited area of the south west of Tasmania before leaving between February and April and island hopping to the mainland chasing winter feed. Although it's winter habitat covers the western two thirds of the Victorian coast through to Adelaide it can also be found further west into South Australia and as far east and north as the coastal areas up to Sydney (some northern sightings may be mistaken identity).

The slow migratory move to the north takes in the west coast of Tasmania, the western islands north of Tasmania, including the salt marsh of Sea Elephant Lagoon on King Island with the Werribee sewerage treatment works in Victoria being a popular winter destination. The birds take their time with the winter migration as long as there is food along the way. Naturally, as true Tasmanians, they hurry back for the breeding season with few stops along the way.

With the reduction of the breeding pairs of the OBP the breeding area has reduced to the button grass plains less than 5 kilometres from the coast in the Melaleuca and Birches Inlet area of the south west of Tasmania. This reduction in numbers was well documented over the last 15 years but there was a greater decline in the last 10 years which may be related to drought over this period. The OBP has a life span of around two and a half years and breed in their first year.

Rescue efforts for the OBP start with monitoring through banding and observation. There are two bands, a plastic coloured and numbered band on one leg and an aluminium coloured and lettered band on the other. Volunteers monitor the birds for two hours in the early morning and another two in the late afternoon at a feeding station at Melaleuca during the breeding season.

Secondly the birds are assisted in the wild by the provision of breeding boxes which also allow access to the young for banding. There are problems with breeding boxes attracting other birds and animals. As well as attracting birds for monitoring, the feeding station allows the program to supply better quality food to the birds which seem to reduce their breeding during bad seasons when their

preferred food is in short supply. The birds feed on grasses and shrubs and prefer areas of shorter and younger new growth. Parks and Wildlife eventually allowed burn offs in the breeding area which has improved the quality of the preferred food.

The third part of the rescue is a captive breeding program and a decision was made to take more birds this season to increase the captive stock to 400. Due to the end of the drought, this year was a good breeding season and 27 young were recorded. These birds are presently kept in Hobart, Adelaide and Victoria and more sites are needed for the increased breeding stock.

Birds bred in captivity seem to adopt the migratory habits of the wild birds and quickly assimilate into the native population. There is a need to improve the fitness of the captive stock and reduce their weight before release and this is achieved by walking the aviary to get the birds flying. This is not only necessary for the arduous migration but also to assist the birds to fly away from predators such as the goshawk.

This was a wonderful lecture well deserving of the Skemp Memorial Lecture Medallion and we wish Mark and his team every success with the rescue program.

Prue Wright gave the thank you to this well received talk which was followed by many questions. We thank Mark for his time and a great presentation.

Noel J Manning

SKEMPS DAY Sunday 22 May - Fungi

It was an early start for our fungi day, meeting at the Field Centre for a ten o'clock departure. With Roy Skabo leading the group, fourteen members and two visitors headed to the Power Track where we found many fungi as well as in the bush beyond. Roy's knowledge of the species and his stories about them made the morning very interesting. For example the *Cordyceps Gunnii* is a specialised fungi that parasitise insects at their larval stage and if you can get the entire fungi from the ground you will find the grub on the end of it. All the species were photographed and where possible identified for our scribe and samples were taken of a few, for further study and to obtain spore prints where their identity was unknown. Prior to lunch we also searched in the leaf litter under the trees at the start of the Tyre Track and on our return to the Field Centre along the driveway which produced some species not previously seen on the day.

Karl and Neil took Victorian visitor Robert, for a walk to show him over the property. They walked through the Fern Gully to the Bottom Falls returning via the Bottom Fall track to the paddock. It was here they saw a Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Aquila audax*).

Following lunch we returned to the Tyre Track and headed down into the gully, where we spent about an hour, before heavy rain forced our return to the Centre.

We were pleased with the variety of species found today which included *Aleurina ferruginea, Bisporella citrina, Byssomerulius corium, Cantherellus*

concinnus, Clavaria sps., Clavaria miniata, Clavicorona colensoi (now *Artomyces colensoi*), *Clavulina Sp., Cordyceps gunnii, Crepidotus sp., Cudoniella pezizoidea, Cystoderma amianthinum, Discinella terrestris, Entoloma sp., Geastrum triplex, Heterotextus miltinus* (now *H. peziziformis*), *Hygrocybe chromolimonea, Hygrocybe mavis* (now *Humidicutis mavis*), *Hygrocybe miniata, Hypholoma fasciculare, Laccaria sp., Lentinellus sp, Leotia lubrica, Lepiota sp., Marasmius alveolaris, Melanophyllum haematospermum, Mycena sps., Mycena cystidiosa, Mycena epipterygia, Mycena interrupta, Mycena minya, Mycena subgalericulata, Mycena viscidocruenta, Pseudohydnum gelatinosum, Ramaria sp., Russula sp., Scleroderma cepa,* Slime moulds*, Trametes versicolour, Xerula australis* (now *X. gigaspora*)

LFNC PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

A reminder that the judging of the photographic competition will be held at Scotch Oakburn College during the general meeting on 6 September. Entries must be submitted to the Secretary, John Elliott, no later than the August general meeting. Due to time limitations to erect the display of entries and judge them during a meeting, there will be a limit of three entries per member.

Members attending the September meeting will be asked to judge and vote on the entries; prizes will be awarded for 1st, 2nd and 3rd places.

Conditions of entry

- **Print size:** from approximately 10 x 13 cm up to 21 x 30 cm (A4)
- **Print medium**: colour and monochrome (black and white)
- Must be simply mounted on cardboard at least.
- **Prints topics**: Subjects are to be related to Tasmanian flora and fauna, forests and Tasmanian landscapes. Prints of cultivars are not acceptable.
- All entries to have been taken during the past 12 months.
- The competition is open to members only.

MITURGA AGELENINA Simon 1909

Five species of *Miturga* have been recorded from Tasmania. All are large spiders found under loose stones.

Miturga agelenina is the most common, found both at sea level and at higher altitudes.

Adult female 18 – 20 mm in body length
Adult male 15 – 17 mm in body length

Dorsal surface is dark fawn, minutely speckled with yellow. Extending from front to hind end are two rows of yellow spots decreasing in size posteriorly. On outer side of each row is a thin broken black line. Ventral surface is mainly black with four longitudinal stripes composed of contiguous yellow dots.

This spider is usually found in open sunny situations. The nest made by young specimens is long and tubular. In the case of older specimens it is expanded and somewhat flattened. It is made of dense white silk and usually attached to the underside of a loose stone. The nest may have two or more openings. (Sometimes the nest is made in grass tussocks or dense shrubs, such as gorse).

Reference: Some Common Spiders of Tasmania, V.V. Hickman (1967), page 97, plate XVI fig. 4 (page 98)

Report by Alison Green on Jeff Campbell's spider mentioned in sightings April 2011.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Dinner meeting will be held on Tuesday 4 October this year. If members have any suggestions for a venue for this meeting, please contact a Committee Member, we would appreciate your help.

TASMANIAN FEDERATION OF FIELD NATURALISTS Get-together

Michael Driessen of the Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club has advised that the spring 2011 Federation weekend has been organised for the Friday 28 to Sunday 30 October 2011 at Murrayfield Station on Bruny Island. The cost to stay at Murrayfield will be $10/head. The quarters we will be staying in sleeps up to 24 people (small rooms with 2 beds) or you can set up a tent. Maximum number is 50. There is a large kitchen and large living areas. For more information about the Murrayfield, visit their website:
http://murrayfield.com.au/site/page.cfm?u=274

If you are interested in attending, note these dates in your diary. To received further information (ferry times, agenda etc) on this get-together, please let John Elliott know and he will provide you with the information as it becomes available.

AUSTRALIAN PLANT SOCIETY MEETINGS

LFNC members are welcome to attend APS meetings held on a Tuesday at Max Fry Hall, Gorge Road Trevallyn at 7.30 pm. Their next meetings will be on:

June 21 - Member presentations
July 19 - Jayne Shapter will talk about Weeds

Their program can be viewed at http://www.apstasnorth.org/pages/program.html

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.

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

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