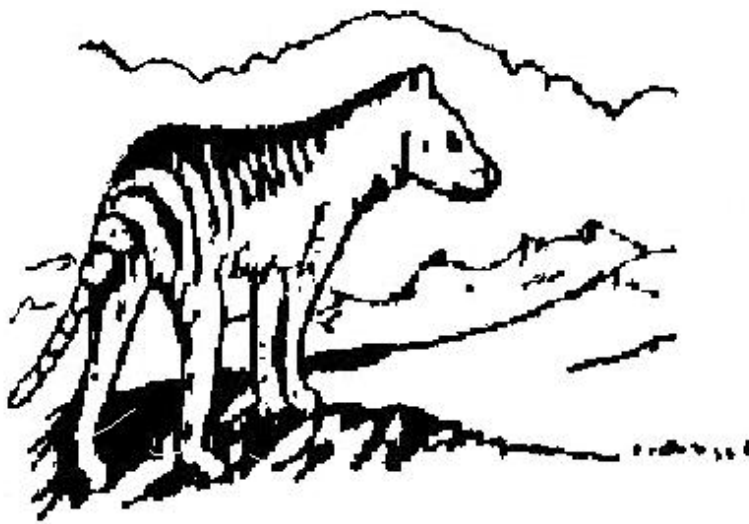


# THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

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 XLIII No 3**

**February/March 2010**

- Patron** : Mr Chris Tassell, AM
- President** : Mr N Manning, 46 Robin St Newstead, 6344 2277
- Vice President** : Ms E Montgomery, 6 Cleary Ave Young Town, 6344 3989  
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- Hon. Secretary** : Mr J Elliott, 64 Penquite Rd Newstead, 6344 9303
- Hon. Treasurer** : Ms K Manning, 46 Robin St Newstead, 6344 2277
- N'letter Co-ordinator** : Ms K. Manning
- Librarian** : Ms T McGlynn
- Committee** : G Cameron, L Mockridge, A Pegler, J Simmons,  
M Simmons, R Skabo

**Meetings 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of month, Feb-Dec at Scotch-Oakburn College, Penquite Rd Newstead**

## PROGRAM

### APRIL

- Tuesday 6**                    **General Meeting - Speaker : Peter Warren -  
*Telescopes and their uses***
- Saturday 17 -  
Sunday 18**                    **Weekend at Skemps  
Seed Collecting & Evening viewing night sky &  
Water Monitoring on Skemp Creek**

### MAY

- Tuesday 4**                    **SKEMP MEMORIAL LECTURE  
Speaker: Peter Manchester - *Geology of local area***
- Sunday 9**                    **Field Trip: Geology trip with Peter Manchester,  
location to be advised**
- Saturday 15**                    **Skemp Day - Photographic Competition**
- Saturday 22 -  
Sunday 23**                    **Federation Field Naturalists Get-together at Blue Tiers  
hosted by Central North Field Nats.**

### JUNE

- Tuesday 1**                    **Members Night**
- Sunday 13**                    **Fungi Day at Skemps**

To see the full January to June 2010 program visit

<http://www.lfnc.org.au/meetings.htm>

## COMMITTEE/GENERAL MEETING

**Skemp Report** - John Simmons reported that the front door had been covered with sheet metal and the new door latch installed. Craig Broadbent, a local logging contractor has been authorized to fell and stack the pine trees. This has now been completed. Members were asked to come up with suggestions for the disposal of the wood and to assist with the cleaning up in the area of the felling at the Skemp Day on March 20.

### Puggle

**February** - John Elliott asked how many species of frog occurred naturally in Tasmania. Lynne Mockridge gave the correct answer – 11.

**March** - Lynne Mockridge asked the meeting to identify the native animal that damaged wasabi crops. Elizabeth Fenton correctly answered that platypus could uproot the plants.

### Sightings

**February** - Noel Manning had seen raptors while driving through the midlands. Maureen Johnstone reported that large numbers of birds, including pelicans and black ducks, were feeding on eels killed by the turbines in the tailrace. Karen Manning said that they had seen a platypus in Bob's Bog at Christmas. Peter Ralph had encountered a family of superb fairy wrens by the Weld River. Mike Handlinger said that a large mixed flock of cockatoos, galahs, corellas and starlings had fed for several days on hay aftermath near their home. A young peregrine was seen in John Simmons' garden. He had also seen a large copperhead snake near the container at Skemps. Peter Warren had seen magpies in Racecourse Crescent. Prue Wright had seen a sea eagle flying up the Supply River. It could have a nest there. The white goshawk that nests near Prue's house did not breed this year. Margrit Korosi had seen a sea eagle chasing a duck on the Supply River. John Elliott had heard a bronzewing pigeon calling in the Newstead Reserve.

**March** - Prue Wright had seen an immature sea eagle at Gravelly Beach. Lynne Mockridge reported seeing a platypus in Kings Meadows Rivulet on 5 February. John Elliott had seen a Macleay swallowtail butterfly at Skemps and forktailed swifts over Archers Knob. Peter Ralph reported large numbers of pelicans and pacific gulls flying north on the weekend before the meeting

### Library Report

**February** - The following donations had been received in the Skemp Library : *Wattles of Tasmania* from Marion Simmons, *Wildflower Journey* from Pat Castley and books owned by John Skemp from Anne and John Grey.

**March** - Tina McGlynn reported that she has re-organised the Skemp Library so things might not be where they used to be. The newsletters received would be available at Skemps. Tina also described her difficulties finding a second-hand copy of *Orchids of Tasmania*.

**Constitution** - A copy of the draft constitution and associated documents were sent to

members to read early February. Members were asked to comment on these documents. Comments were to be made at the March General Meeting or if unable to attend, members were asked to contact the Secretary prior to this meeting so their comments could be recorded and presented on their behalf. No comments were received by the Secretary regarding the changes. It was discussed that the new constitution should require the placement of a notice of the annual general meeting in a Launceston paper.

The Special General Meeting to vote on the constitution is to be held in August, on the same night as the General Meeting.

## **GENERAL**

**Calendar** - All calendars were sold. Another calendar will be produced this year.

**Supper Roster** - Roster was circulated and members have volunteered for all suppers for the year. Noel Manning agreed to act as co-ordinator.

**FHSCIA Grant** - The Club has received over \$2000 to spend on items for Skemps. The purchases have to meet strict guidelines.

**Seed Collection** - John Simmons outlined the reasons for seed collection at Skemps and asked members to take part in these collection days.

**Children's Days** - Roy Skabo discussed the plans for activities aimed at children. A program for next year will be developed this year, but schools and other groups will still be invited to attend suitable events this year. Elizabeth Montgomery, Prue Wright, Maureen Johnstone and Lynne Mockridge volunteered to meet with Roy to develop the program.

**Tree Removal** - Expenditure approved for felling of pine trees.

**Annual Maintenance Statement** - All work required has now been completed.

**Digital Microscope** - Following the recent demonstration of this microscope at a Club meeting, the Committee agreed that a digital microscope would be useful for examining specimens at Skemps and general meetings, and also for displays. Funds were approved for the purchase of one.

**Australian Natural History Medallion** - This is an annual award in recognition of services to Australian natural history and is administered by the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc. The Committee approved a donation of \$50 towards the medallion.

**New Member** - Graeme Briton was welcomed to the Club in March.

**NEW CLUB EMAIL ADDRESS** - We will now be using an email address provided by our website host. The new address is [secretary@lfn.org.au](mailto:secretary@lfn.org.au)

## **GENERAL MEETING - 2 February - Members' Night**

Roy Skabo gave a presentation of member's images from field trips to Ben Lomond, the convict road at Orford, Bluff River Gorge and the Tasmanian Bushland Garden near Buckland, the Federation weekend at South Mt Cameron and the Northern

Childrens Network day at Skemps. The field trips had all been undertaken during the previous four months.

Prue Wright demonstrated her digital microscope which was connected to a laptop. Specimens could be seen on the laptop screen, but in combination with the Club's LCD projector the whole audience at the meeting were able to see the specimen in great detail on a large projector screen. Prue used a daisy, spider and dot sized insect in her demonstration.

Judith Handlinger presentation was images of the wildlife near her house at Hadspen.

## **SKEMPS DAY - 7 February - Seed Collecting**

Club members met at Skemps today to collect seeds which will be propagated with the intention of being planted on the property in the future when they are a mature seedling. In the morning three groups formed, two groups heading off in different directions to collect seed and one group staying at the Centre to remove seed from seed cases which had been collected earlier in the week. On the list for collection was banksia seed, but with rain predicted closer to the weekend, it had been decided to collect the cones early so they were suitable to obtain the seed from. The amount and variety of seed collected during the day was very pleasing.

Following lunch all members stayed at the Centre and continued with the removal of seeds from their cases. This was followed by the bagging of seeds and the recording of their details.

Prue had her digital microscope and laptop so members were able to have a closer look at some interesting items picked up during our seed collecting walk. A beetle found, appears to be the dung beetle, *Onthophagus pronus*, following consultation with Elizabeth Daley's book *Wings*. We were able to look closer at a curled leaf which contained a spider and a small flying insect, as we weren't sure who was eating who.

Seeds collected for propagation were:- *Callistemon pallidus* (yellow bottlebrush), *Banksia marginata* (silver banksia), *Pimelea drupaceae* (cherry riceflower), *Dianella tasmanica* (blue flax lily), *Pittosporum bicolor* (cheesewood), *Leptospermum lanigerum* (woolly teatree), *Tasmannia lanceolata* (mountain pepper), *Coprosma quadrifida* (native currant), *Olearia argophylla* (musk daisybush), *Olearia lirata* (forest daisybush), *Aristotelia peduncularis* (heartberry), *Eucalyptus obliqua* (brown-top stringybark), *E. delegatensis* (white-top stringybark), *Acacia melanoxylon* (blackwood), *Acacia dealbata* (silver wattle), and *Acacia leprosa* var. *graveolens* (cinnamon wattle) previously known as *Acacia verniciflua* (varnish wattle)

Karen Manning

## **GENERAL MEETING - 2 March**

**Speaker : David Maynard - *Underwater Marine Life***

David Maynard of the Australian Maritime College Launceston was guest speaker

at this meeting. With his magnificent photographs he introduced plants and animals which live in the Tamar Estuary and in selected parts of Bass Strait. There were three main topics: - Habitats, Fish and Invertebrates.

Habitats. Life in the sea is influenced by a combination of factors, including depth, salinity, temperature and turbulence. As depth of water increases, light penetration lessens. There are wide salinity differences in the Tamar Estuary. Its water temperature can range from 21°C in summer to 9°C in June. Wave action in Bass Strait makes this a difficult place in which to live.

From depths of nine metres downwards plants decrease until they are replaced entirely by animals. Three main groups of algae are distinguished, superficially, by their colours.

*Caulerpa* is a common green alga in quiet waters. Giant kelp, *Macrocystis*, forms kelp forests in sheltered estuaries. In the Tamar's stands of this brown alga specimens anchored at seven metres depth, and buoyed by their floats, stretch upwards to the surface.

Red algae are prominent, among sponges and anemones, on a rocky reef off Garden Island, near George Town. On exposed coastlines, with much wave action, rocky areas are dominated by other brown algae.

Sea grass beds in the Tamar Estuary are important as nurseries for juvenile fish. Elsewhere in the Tamar there is exposed sand into which worms and crabs burrow.

Fish. Some of the fish species found in the Tamar Estuary were featured. Sea horses are plentiful but they are hard to find. A leafy sea dragon was photographed near the Low Head lighthouse. Wrasse, rock cod and flathead are catchable in the Tamar. Magpie perch are common. Trevally are seasonal visitors, present in summer.

Some fish have excellent camouflage so that they blend into a background of sponge and soft coral, etc. With only their eyes as a giveaway. Visible eyes, also, provide clues to flounders or stingrays which otherwise are hidden under sand.

Invertebrates. Sponges are prolific in habitats where the residents are fixed to a stable base. These animal colonies can form spectacular "sponge gardens".

Phylum Cnidaria is well represented among subtidal invertebrates. Anemones are familiar examples. These single animals with many tentacles can change location. Zooanthids are anemone-like animals which form colonies permanently attached to a support, such as rock.

Another cnidarians group includes soft corals, gorgonians (e.g. sea fans) and sea pens. These all form colonies of small polyps, each of which has eight tentacles. Gorgonians are common in areas of high water flow. Unlike the soft corals they have a hard external skeleton which may be brightly coloured. The purpose of such colour in dim undersea surroundings is not understood. To record underwater colours a photographer must use a strobe light.

Soft corals and gorgonians form massed displays but each sea pen colony is anchored separately in sand. Some of these are near the Pilot Station at Low Head.

Echinoderms were represented in photos by sea stars and sea urchins. In addition to native Tasmanian species David Maynard included a picture of the

long-spined sea urchin, *Centrostephanus rodgersi*. This native of NSW has drifted south with the Eastern Australian current. In southern Tasmania it has eaten algae until rocks are bare, thus depriving other animals of food and shelter. Not yet found in the Tamar, a watch is kept for this intruder.

Molluscs pictured included abalone, cuttlefish and nudibranchs (colourful, shell-less sea snails). Other invertebrates shown were bryozoans (another kind of colony with polyps) and a pycnogonid (an arthropod superficially like a spider).

There is so much variety below the sea surface. Many thanks to David Maynard for his excellent introduction to this great underwater community.

Alison Green

Louise Skabo thanked David for his talk on behalf of members.

An exhibition of David Maynard 's photographs will be on display from 1 May to 11 July 2010 in the Atrium at the Inveresk site of the Queen Victoria Museum. The exhibition '*Beneath the Tamar*' will give viewers a glimpse of the rich diversity of marine animals and plants in the Tamar River.

Members who missed David's presentation to the Club during the March General Meeting should do themselves a favour and visit the QVMAG to view this exhibition.

David Maynard also has a website and photographs can be viewed at <http://www.maynardi.com/>

### **FIELD TRIP - 7 March - East Beach, Low Head: Zoology Report**

Seventeen member of the Club visited Low Head to investigate the intertidal ecology of a rocky marine shore. The site chosen is at the western end of East Beach, facing Bass Strait.

On a tidal shore invertebrate animals are zoned according to how they cope with exposure to air and immersion in water. In South Eastern Australia a typical zonation for a shore with moderate wave action would have Littorinidae (periwinkle shells) on rocks nearest high tide level, then barnacles, then calcareous tubes containing polychaete worms, *Galeolaria caespitosa*, starting at mid-tide level.

On the East Beach rocks all of these are present, as well as small mussels, but they mingle at changeover without distinct boundaries between zones. Barnacles include *Elminius cordatus*. Mussels are probably *Xenostrobus* sp.

Above mid-tide level the rocks are large. I avoided these and worked the lower half of the intertidal area with its smaller rocks and easy access. This report is based on my own observations and on the finds of people who explored near me. Others ranged further away so my story is not comprehensive.

Between mid and low tide levels invertebrates were seen attached to rocks or under stones or in small pools. The following notes summarise our findings.

Crustacea. Decapod crustaceans represented by Brachyura (true crabs) and Anomura. A true crab has five pairs of legs visible. Notched shore crabs,

*Paragrapsus quadridentatus*, were common. One seaweed crab, *Naxia* sp., was recognised despite its camouflage of seaweed pieces attached to its carapace. An anomuran “crab” has four pairs of legs obvious and a small fifth pair held close to the body. Porcelain crabs, *Petrolisthes elongatus*, were very numerous. Two stone crabs, *Lomis hirta*, were found. These brown, hairy animals are less conspicuous than the smooth, fast-moving *Petrolisthes*.

Echinodermata. Represented by sea stars (Asteroidea), brittle stars (Ophiuroidea) and a surprise. Eight-armed cushion stars, *Patiriella calcar*, were common; sometimes called garden stars because of their varied colours and patterns. There was one *Coscinasterias* sp. with eleven arms.

Two brittle stars, *Ophionereis schayeri*, were very active. Five slender arms are each much longer than width of the central body.

People were curious about spurts of water coming from sand in pools. I dug out what I first thought was a sipunculid worm. It suddenly ejected, through the mouth, its alimentary canal and other organs. This is a defence reaction by some sea cucumbers (Holothuroidea). A predator may eat the soft tissue while the tough-skinned echinoderm escapes and then regenerates its missing parts.

Mollusca. Represented, below mid-tide level, by chitons (Polyplacophora) and single-shelled Gastropoda. A chiton, or coat-of-mail shells, has its shell formed of eight parts. Many *Sypharochiton pelliserpentis* specimens adhered to rocks. Among the gastropods black nerites, *Nerita atramentosa*, were common. Others included limpets, *Cellana* sp., whelks, *Cominella* sp., and warreners, *Turbo undulates*. Species of top shells (Trochidae) present were mainly above mid-tide level.

Bryozoa. Lifeless specimens washed ashore were puzzling. In each a fawn calcareous material, with prominent crests, surrounds a horny stem. Magnification later gave the answer. The fawn substance is the skeleton of a bryozoans colony. It has many small holes in which individual animals lived. This can be called lace coral. However, the polyps of Bryozoa are more complex than those of true coral.

Porifera. Two small, globular, orange sponges, probably *Tethya* sp., were attached under rock overhangs.

Near the low tide level at East Beach the dominance of animals is replaced by algae in stony places and a sea grass mat on nearby sand.

Crustacea continued. Before leaving I walked alongside the main rocks to check high tide level. At the top of the beach a line of rocks separates sand from dry land. In damp hollows under stones there were other shore crabs, *Helograpsys haswellianus*, and fast-moving shore slaters, *Ligia australiensis* (Isopoda).

The Club’s one-morning exploration of a limited site revealed only a small proportion of the many species of invertebrates which inhabit similar places. Nevertheless it gave a good introduction to the kinds of animals which live between tide lines on rocky shores in Tasmania.

Alison Green

## **SOCIAL EVENING - 15 March**

Twenty members met at the Duke of Wellington for a meal on a very warm



evening. The menu provided many choices of beef, chicken, seafood and pasta meals as well as an extensive wood-fired pizza menu. While we waited for our meals, discussion turned to the recent field trip to Low Head and the amazing variety of sea life seen and the pieces of petrified wood that members found during a stroll along East Beach after lunch. Meals seemed to take a while to arrive at the table, but were worth the wait, being both generous and tasty. An evening enjoyed by all.

Karen Manning

## **SKEMPS DAY - 20 March**

Fourteen members arrived at Skemps to an overcast morning. Following the usual coffee and chat, we headed outside to do some clearing up around the site closest to the Centre where two pine trees were recently removed. With the pines gone, three large *Acacia melanoxylon* (blackwood) trees on the roadside edge of the old homestead site can be seen.

With either a rake, shovel or wheelbarrow in hand, we removed the smaller limb pieces to the main heap, collected pine cones to use as fire starters, filled in holes and raked twigs, leaf litter and bark into small piles for later removal.

A heavy shower stopped work at what we all considered a good time for lunch, so many convened around the BBQ to dry off, cook their meal and share a joke.

Following lunch the weather had cleared so we were able to finish off the morning's work. It wasn't all work and no play, as some members did get a walk in during the day. We departed around 4 pm as many of us still had to find a polling booth on the way home.

Karen Manning

## **TASMANIAN LANDCARE FUND**

The Club Secretary has been advised that an application for funds, recently lodged for a grant to revegetate the upper portion of Skemps Creek, has been successful.

This project will restore the natural ecosystem along Skemps Creek by the planting of riparian vegetation which will stabilise the banks, increase the wildlife habitat on the property and provide a corridor between existing forested areas.

To enable this project to proceed to the proposed plan, the assistance of Club Members is needed to make 400 netting tree-guards between April and late June, ready for the planting of seedlings from July to September. It is proposed that the tree-guards are made during the Skemp Days in April, May and June along with other activities being held on those days, or Club Members could assist on Tuesdays when the maintenance group are at the property.

Your assistance would be greatly appreciated. Please contact John Simmons on 63301370 if you are able to help on a Tuesday.

## LFNC PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

The photographic competition is being held again this year following the success of last years. Prints will be displayed and judged on Saturday 15 May at Skemps.

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.

Prizes will be awarded to 1st, 2nd and 3rd places. A special prize will be awarded for a photograph taken on an excursion during the last 12 months.

## FEDERATION OF FIELD NATURALISTS WEEKEND

### **Hidden Treasures: discovering the fungi of the Blue Tier**

Friday 21 - Sunday 23 May 2010 at the Weldborough Hall

**Friday evening at 8.00:** *Introduction to Fungi* by Paul George (Fungimap, Inc.)

**Saturday and Sunday mornings** (meet at the Weldborough Hall at 9.30 am) Forays to different vegetation communities on the Blue Tier including the myrtle beech forests at Poimena and the wet eucalypt forests on the lower slopes of the mountain.

**Saturday and Sunday at 2pm:** Workshops covering: collecting and describing fungi; Tasmanian Fungimap target species; identification of fungi; photographing fungi

**Saturday Dinner at 6.00: Weldborough Hotel (approx \$20)**

**Saturday evening at 8.00:** Dr Tom May (senior mycologist, RBG Melbourne)  
*The importance of Tasmania's cool temperate forests as habitats for fungi.*

All workshops, talks, fungal displays and an exhibition of natural history photographs by Sarah Lloyd will take place at the Weldborough Hall.

Please notify your intention to attend by filling in the registration form.

For further information please check the websites:

<http://www.bluetier.org/fungimap/>

<http://www.disjunctnaturalists.com/fungimap/>  
<http://www.rbg.vic.gov.au/fungimap>

or contact: Sarah Lloyd Email: [sarahlloyd@iprimus.com.au](mailto:sarahlloyd@iprimus.com.au) or phone: (03) 6396 1380

There will be a small charge to cover costs. Numbers are limited and registration is **essential**. Registration forms can be obtained from <http://www.disjunctnaturalists.com/fungimap/ht.pdf> and should be completed and returned with payment to Sarah Lloyd before April 30.

**If you are interested in attending and do not have internet access to obtain the forms, please contact Karen on 6344 2277, who will arrange for you to receive a copy.**

## **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. The next meetings will be on:

**20 April** - Club night - books. Plant of the month - Lynne Mockridge.

**18 May** - To be advised. Plant of the month - Julie Nermut

On Saturday 10 April the APS is holding a sale of beautiful native plants, at Max Fry Hall from 10am to 4pm.. Herbs, shrubs and trees will be available at very competitive prices.

There will be a native plant suitable for any situation from a shady spot to full sun and from a wet patch to a dry area. Native plants which flower in different seasons including winter and autumn will be available.

Experienced and knowledgeable gardeners will be on hand to provide advice.

## **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>

**Email :** [secretary@lfnc.org.au](mailto:secretary@lfnc.org.au)