

THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

Volume LVII No.1 Oct-Nov 2023

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

Patron : Prof. Nigel Forteach
President : Andrew Smith, 0402 893 378
Hon. Secretary : Bernadette Willey, 0487 755 085
Hon. Treasurer : Karen Manning

Meetings 1st Tuesday of month, February-December at Scotch-Oakburn College, Senior Campus, Penquite Rd Newstead. Daytime meetings will be held during the month of July and August at a venue to be advised

Program:

December

Tuesday 5

Meeting - Members Night – *The Year That Was*: please bring a plate of food to share

Thursday 7

Monthly Morning Walk – Tamar Wetlands at 10am, meet in the carpark

Saturday 9

Skemps Day - Members Christmas Get-together

January

Date to be confirmed

Field Trip – East Beach at Low Head for Rockpools – more details later

Date to be confirmed

Skemps Day

February

Tuesday 6

General Meeting – Presenter to be confirmed

Date to be confirmed

Skemps Day

For further program details visit <https://www.lfnc.org.au/meetings.htm>

SKEMPS REPORT – October/November

Although three of us went to Skemps on the first Tuesday in October it was a washout with consistent rain and nothing significant was done. The next few Tuesdays were devoted to clearing the fall behind the Centre and a number of spars down along the power track with both adding considerably to our fire wood supplies. Jeff and I returned from other tasks around lunch time to find that Karen had done an impressive job cleaning up and stacking fire wood behind the Centre. She also did a great job cleaning up the container ready for a log splitter if we decide to get one, including moving a number of items to the barn.

A leak in the barn water supply was quite a nuisance and mainly involved worn connectors and washers. I was ready to give up and replace a major component when Rob stepped in and made a simple repair with a few parts he had in his car.

A number of tree falls just below the steps on the Tyre Track took quite a lot of work to remove with Rob helping out and he also cleared some bracken with a rather fancy device, a sort of modern version of the old hay slasher. Perhaps we should consider getting one as it is nearly as easy to use as the powered one and a lot lighter to carry.

Karen started to clean up where the Blandfordia was just outside the kitchen and to assist I used the push mower to do the first mowing of the season noting that it will soon be necessary to get the ride on mower going.

Jon noted the suspect condition of the cords holding the decorative items above the stove and also suggested we label the Centre electrics and made a start on this. All of us worked on removing, cleaning and replacing the items above the stove and Karen also swept up cobwebs around the outside of the Centre.

Other tasks include further cleaning and vacuuming, sorting books donated by the late Fay Cornish's family, changing of the last of the mattress covers, to take home to wash, cleaning of the filter on the rain water tank, weeding and track clearing, watering of the acacias and watering of the recent tree plantings.

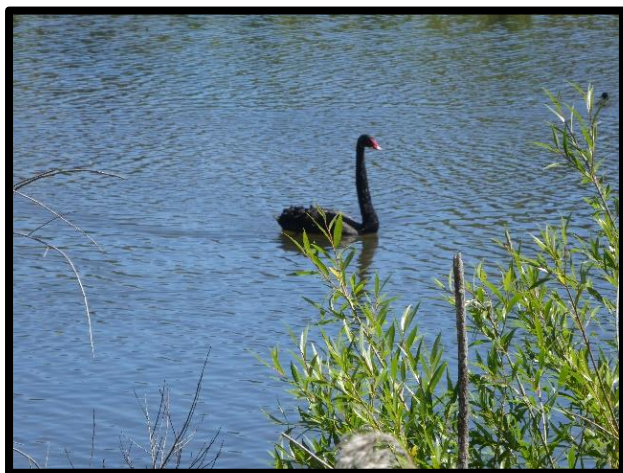
We have seen one bull on the loose near Skemps and we know there are two about. Greg is working on removing them and confirmed what Rob had told us that they are not dangerous, in fact Greg can hand feed them. It is still confronting to see so much beef on the hoof and on the loose. They seem to be much bigger than when we first saw them so our grass must agree with them.

There is still much to do and if you can help let me know and I will add your name to the Monday contact list.

Noel Manning

MONTHLY WALK – QUEECHY LAKE – 5 OCTOBER

For our best attended Thursday Walk so far 10 members met at the carpark above Queechy Lake for a look at the birds. As we walked to the far end of the lake a local came out for a chat. Harry is from Canada



coming to Australia to give his then young children an Australian experience. This was 35 years ago.

With Karen picking up rubbish as we went we were soon on the dam wall and identifying the birds on the wing, the water or in the trees of the island. Although not as many were present as in the past we still saw 20 species.

New member Geoff set up an impressive spotting scope and with his interest in birds was a mine of identification information.

Helen and others were concerned at the way the council had cleared vegetation around the edges of the lake reducing the bird habitat.

A little over an hour later we were at Old Macs Farm for drinks and treats and further bird spotting. It was a pleasant early spring day and the farm was being enjoyed by many families with young children. After refreshments we took a short walk in the

animal enclosures before saying our farewells and heading home after another successful Thursday walk.

Noel Manning

Bird List: - Australasian swamphen, Australian Reed-warbler, Australian Wood Duck, Australian Shelduck, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Black Swan (**Image previous page Karen Manning**), Chestnut Teal, Dusky moorhen, European Greenfinch, Forest Raven, Great Cormorant, Grey fantail, Grey Teal, Hoary-headed Grebe, Little Pied Cormorant, Native hen, Pacific duck, Pink-eared duck, Superb Fairy-wren, Welcome Swallow



Images left and above – Tom McGlynn

FIELD TRIP - CHAUNCY VALE SANDSTONE COUNTRY – 7 OCTOBER

Seven members from the Launceston Field Naturalists joined a large contingent from the Tasmanian Field Naturalists and a few guests for a variety of walks at the Chauncy Vale Nature Reserve on a pleasant mid spring morning.

Reserve ranger and leader Grahame Green suggested we divide into three groups with him leading the 4.5 hour walk to the Flat Rock Reserve, some to take the steep, rough walk to the famous caves of the area and a gentle stroll around the river for the less intrepid. I chose the long walk and this was mainly a steady climb on old vehicle tracks with the occasional fallen limb to cross. Eventually we arrived at a sign to the Western Lookout (distance not specified) and the Eastern Lookout a further 600 metres away and chose this option and as it was a known distance. There were impressive views to the east and others straggled to the top over 30 or more minutes while some found the going too much and kept to the lower reaches.

As we all gathered around awaiting our evening meal Stephen Forsyth (geologist) gave us a very detailed talk about sandstone in general and specifically the sandstone of the area. After some effort the barbecue and stove were lit and we were soon on the veranda for our evening meal where a guest shared wine and treats from Bulgaria. As predicted the warmth of the day quickly dissipated with the setting sun and we moved into the modestly appointed cabin and a warming fire in anticipation of a few talks. Simon Grove started the talks with a short introduction to his new book *Seasons of the South* and those lucky enough to have a look at the book were impressed and we look forward to its publication in November.



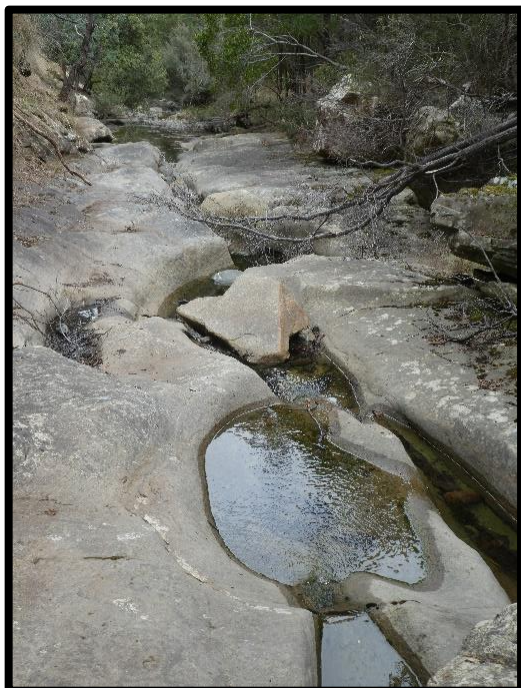
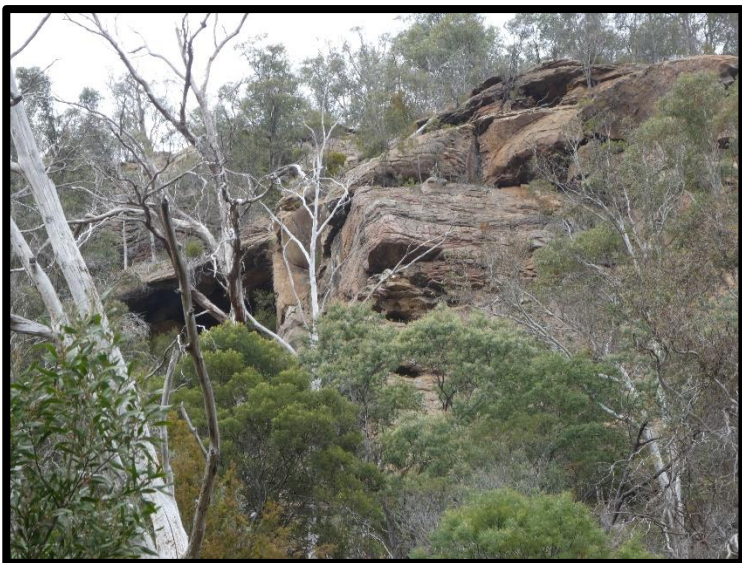
Scarlet Robin (above) K Manning

Helen suggested he might be a speaker for the near future at a monthly meeting. Simon also told us of his unsuccessful search for the small, native fly last seen in 1970s in the very room we were in.

This was followed by Dr. Lyubomir Penev telling us of the conservation values of his home country

Bulgaria and of the conference he was attending in Hobart for those involved in the Taxonomy Data Base Working Group.

This was a very successful field trip with a variety of habitats, good company for the meal and interesting speakers to finish the day and a few camped the night in this wonderful reserve made possible by a generous donation. Noel Manning



Top left: Sandstone cliffs

Left: Mermaids Pools

Right: *Olearia* sp., daisybush (Images K Manning)

FIELD TRIP – SEAWEEDS @ LOW HEAD – 18 OCTOBER WITH APS MEMBERS

About 8 field naturalists joined Plant society members on a field trip to Low Head to look for seaweeds as a follow up to a talk on the subject by Fiona Scott at their October general meeting. Around 20 members and visitors met at the Low Head light house and after a short wait for our guest we moved in convoy to East Beach at the suggestion of Karen.



Passing the new barbecue facilities we descended the short boardwalk to the beach stopping at the high tide mark. Enthusiastic explorers started bringing their samples to Fiona to examine and what seemed to be dried bits of seaweed turned out to be very interesting. Many of the finds were more than one seaweed, often featuring an epiphytic growth of another genus or species and the list of species quickly mounted.

We were only a few metres onto the sand and already we were



finding a surprising number of different seaweeds. With the tide quickly rising, after the neap minimum, we

moved to the rocky headland to look for living seaweed in the rockpools and Fiona did not disappoint as she found and identified a surprisingly long list.

With the tide fast coming in and the less able struggling, we moved back to the barbecue area for lunch and afterwards said our farewells and thanked Fiona for a successful and informative field trip.



LFNC member Ann had told us of a community and native garden nearby and took us there and what a treat it turned out to be. While one section featured edible plants of the community garden the other section was more a decorative native garden and Ann had told us some of the artificial ponds had green and gold native frogs basking nearby and we saw four or five.

Karen and I drove into George Town for a coffee which we took into the recently revamped public space behind the Council Chambers. We headed home after a successful trip to a familiar place made special by the different perspective provided by Fiona.

Noel Manning

SKEMPS DAY - MACROINVERTEBRATE MONITORING – 21 OCTOBER



Today's event at the property was not well attended due to the constant wind and rain of the last few days. Five members and a visitor braved the weather to attend. Noel and I arrived early to obtain the water sample from the riffle on Skemps Creek. On heading to this spot, we found that recent winds had brought down five rather large trees and the growth of bracken fern made it difficult to transverse the area. After wading through ferns and climbing over the trees, we found that the flow in the creek was very low. Returning to the Centre with the water sample, we set

up inside due to the warmth and once the water had settled, commenced looking for the water bugs. We located the following and was relieved to find that we had 6 taxa, which gave a signal 2 score of 6.2. This translates to the water quality being "excellent" and that there is little or no environmental degradation.

Karen Manning





Damselfly (Odonata), Caddisfly larva cased (Trichoptera) image right, Diving beetle (Coleoptera) Water Boatman (Coleoptera), Mayfly (Ephemeroptera) image left, Segmented worm (Oligochaete), Stonefly (Plecoptera), Dragonfly (Odonata)

TAMAR NRM's CATCH-IT-IN-THE-CATCHMENT – MONDAY 6 NOVEMBER

Five members of the LFNC joined with members of Litter Free Launnie to participate in the clean-up. We walked along the Kings Meadows Rivulet behind the Kings Meadows Hotel, collecting 27kg of rubbish in 2 hours, between Blamey Road and Hobart Road.



MEETING – AGM – 7 NOVEMBER

The meeting opened with 24 members in attendance. Jeff Campbell gave his Presidents report

“I am pleased to present the 74th Annual Report. In November next year it will be the 75th year since the inauguration of the Club. Thought needs to be given whether we celebrate it and how. Please let your Committee know your thoughts about this.

This past 12 months has seen many things take place. The most innovative was by our Program Manager Helen who instigated a local Thursday outing following the Tuesday General Meeting. Although not well patronized at present it is hoped that this will continue and flourish. Helen has organized a varied program of guest speakers and member's contributions with some help. A local day time meet in lieu of the July and August General Meeting has also begun.

I thank Andrew for his great contribution towards running the Club, sorting some of our problems especially IT and generally providing sound advice and help in many fields. Karen has

worn herself out working for the Club as usual and recently took a well-earned break to the “Big Island”.

I thank the Committee for their work and commitment, Noel as Secretary until he stepped down, Andrew as Vice President stepping up in his place, Karen as Treasurer, and Helen, Steve and Tom as Ordinary Committee Members. Much has been achieved during their tenure. I also thank the non-Committee holders, Karen as Newsletter Editor and all the other unsung jobs she does willingly and without complaint, Louise for maintaining our Membership information and Caitlin for her work in the Library, sometimes with help from others and Lynne our great supper hostess.

The Tuesday gang has done great work this past 12 months, not least the last 2 months with those 2 large silver wattles coming down creating problems. Skemps would not run without their work.

Skemps accommodation rates are slowly improving following the Covid and Occupancy Permit fiasco, a permit we didn't need but the Council insisted we have.

I would be remiss if I did not mention and thank all those members who provided supper for the meetings. Finally I thank you all for the support you have given the Club”.

This was followed by the nomination of committee members. Roy Skabo acted as Returning Officer. Roy was assisted by Jeff Campbell with the more complicated Committee member election after Jeff was elected Vice President.

The election for office holders and ordinary committee members was held for all positions except the Secretary and Treasurer, where there had only been one nominee, Bernadette Willey as Secretary, Karen Manning as Treasurer. Following the counting of votes, Andrew Smith was elected President, Jeff Campbell as Vice President, and Stephen Grieve, Noel Manning and Rod Holden as Committee Members. Professor Nigel Forteath has agreed to continue as Patron and Jeff Battersby as Auditor.

Following the meeting, members enjoyed a supper provided by the outgoing Committee Members.

MONTHLY WALK - TREVALLYN RESERVE – 9 NOVEMBER



Members met at the Hoo Hoo Hut at 10am for a short walk. Today we wandered along the Trevallyn Dam Track, continuing uphill to the Pony Trail and along Snake Gully, down to the Powerline Fire Trail, continuing on to Deadman's Knob track and arrived back at the carpark about 12 noon with a bag of rubbish collected along the way. We saw wallabies and 2 echidna and many large areas of Resurrection Fern (pictured right - Image KManning). We were lucky to have Fay along with us today who lives locally. We appreciated her knowledge of the trails and guiding us around area.



Karen Manning

Animals: Wallabies, Echidna x2

Birds: Blue wren, Butcher bird, Forest raven, Green rosella, Grey fantail, Kookaburra, Little wattle bird, Sulphur crested cockatoo, Welcome Swallow, White cockatoo

Ferns: *Cheilanthes austrotenuifolia*, resurrection fern; *Pteridium esculentum*, bracken

Insects: Caterpillar, slater, huntsman spider

Plants: *Acacia mearnsii*, black wattle; *Acaena novae-zelandiae*, common buzzy; *Bulbine bulbosa*, bulbine lily; *Bursaria spinosa*, prickly box; *Cassytha aculeata*, dodderlaurel; *Clematis aristata*, mountain clematis; *Dianella tasmanica*, forest flaxlily (in flower); *Lomandra longifolia*, sagg; *Oxalis* sp., woodsorrel; *Pomaderris apetala*, common dogwood; *Stylidium graminifolium*, narrow leaf triggerplant; *Viola hederacea*, native violet; *Wahlenbergia* sp, bluebells

FIELD TRIP – CONARA NATURE RESERVE – 11 NOVEMBER



Five members met on a warm late spring day to look at the reserve near the road into Conara. Though rain was predicted it remained dry with a light breeze.

Before we had started our walk Andrew noted the hopbush just in front of the cars and on closer inspection we saw three trees at different stages. While the first caught our eye due to the conspicuous red fruits another nearby had quite green fruit and with the third the fruit was more pink.

Heading into the bush we were soon identifying plants, including orchids, with much in flower. Progress further into the bush often stopped as we were reluctant to break spider webs spanning small spaces between trees. The ground was covered with introduced grasses and there were patches of a weedy pink flower.

By the end of the walk we had a large bag of rubbish including four bottles, a road marker and the usual take away containers.

On the way

home we were disappointed not to be able to confess our thirst as The Confessional coffee shop was closed. Over the highway the servo had a variety of snacks and drinks and we chatted away for a short break before heading home.

This was a very enjoyable walk seeing all the plants in flower.

Noel Manning



Birds - Fairy wren, Magpie, Pardalote

Other - Skink

Orchids - *Diuris sulphurea*, tiger orchid; *Thelymitra imbricata*, broad sun-orchid; (image below J Campbell) *Thelymitra nuda*, plain sun-orchid (image above J Campbell)

Plants - *Acacia dealbata*, silver wattle; *Acaena novae-zelandiae*, common buzzy; *Allocasuarina littoralis*, bull oak; *Allocasuarina verticillata*, drooping sheoak; *Arthropodium strictum*, chocolate lily; *Banksia marginata*, silver banksia; *Chrysocephalum* sp., everlasting daisy; *Comesperma volubile*, blue lovecreeper; *Coronidium scorpioides*, curling everlasting ; *Daviesia latifolia*, hop bitterpea; *Dianella revoluta*, spreading flaxlily ; *Eucalyptus*



amygdalina, black peppermint - in flower; *Eucalyptus* sp. gumtree; *Exocarpos cupressiformis*, common native-cherry; *Goodenia lanata*, trailing native-primrose; *Hibbertia riparia*, erect guinea-flower; *Hibbertia* sp, guineaflower; *Hypericum* sp, St John's Wort; *Leptorhynchus squamatus*, scaly buttons; *Linum marginale*, native flax; *Lomandra longifolia*, sagg; *Ozothamnus* sp. everlastingbush; *Pimelea humilis*, dwarf riceflower; *Pultenaea pedunculata*, matted bushpea; *Senecio* sp., fireweed; *Thysanotus patersonii*, twining fringe-lily; *Styphelia humifusa*, native cranberry

SKEMPS DAY – SPRING CLEAN AT THE JOHN SKEMP FIELD CENTRE – 18 NOVEMBER



Nine members attended Skemps to participate in our annual Spring Clean. I finally found the correct way to clean windows without leaving that noticeable film and applied it to the big windows in the main room, although I have since noticed that I did not get to the very edge. Tina and Tom did all the other windows and frames, inside and out. The kitchen cupboards were sorted and some stained and broken items were removed. Irmgard removed cobwebs in the main room and guided Karen from the floor in the removal of cobwebs (including spiders with the help of Tina and Claire) from the bunkroom rafters. Like fishermen tales the spiders removed by Claire were remarkably large. Andrew and Tom T did a thorough job of the bathrooms, while Claire used the pressure washer on the concrete out front removing many of the stains. I used the pressure washer as an option to clean the outside tables and the barbecue. Jon steam-cleaned the 20 upholstered dining chairs and Tom T also thinned out and cut back the *Dicksonia* behind the Centre as he usually does this time each year. Mattress protectors came off and were washed at our place, with four left for our next Tuesday visit, and lastly the vacuum was put



through the bedrooms and the main room. A very busy and productive day, thank you to everyone for your contributions.

Noel Manning

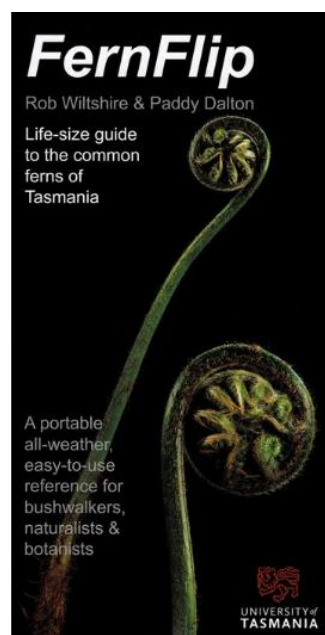
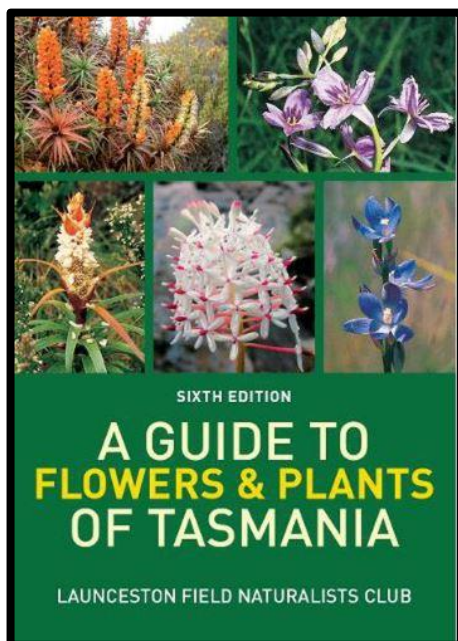


PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE

At the December 5th General Meeting/Members' Night, copies of the club's publication ***A Guide to Flowers & Plants of Tasmania*** (6th Edn) will be available for sale. The guide would make a great Christmas gift or a purchase for yourself, they sell for \$30 each.

There are also two copies of the ***FernFlip*** available for sale at \$8 each, published by the University of Tasmania, Biological Sciences Department.

Please contact Karen (Club Treasurer) on 0419 596 261 if you are interested in making a purchase.



Additional Information

Club Outings:

- Are held during a weekend following the General Meeting. Until further notice, members should make their own travel arrangement to participate, please contact the Program Coordinator (Helen Tait) if you require further details or wish to share a lift.
- Provide your own food and drinks for the outing and wear/take clothing/footwear suitable for all weather types.
- The program is subject to alternation at short notice. Notification of changes to field trips will be advised at the General Meeting prior to the event. Please contact the Program Coordinator to confirm details if you are unable to attend the meeting. Email notification will also be sent.

Name Tags: Please wear your name tags to 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. Please contact our Booking Officer, Noel Manning bookings@lfnc.org.au or by phone on 0458 030 767 regarding availability and keys.

John Skemp Field Centre Phone Number: (03) 6399 3361

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