

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

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August/September 2016

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

PROGRAM

OCTOBER

Tuesday 11 Annual General Meeting & Dinner ~ Steve's Grill,
Balfour Street, Launceston. 6pm for 6.30pm. RSVP
essential (see additional information this newsletter)

Sunday 23 Field Trip ~ 'Kingston' property at Nile, for
wildflowers and native orchids

Saturday 29 Skemp Day ~ Watermonitoring and a search for
thismia in the dogwood forest

NOVEMBER

Tuesday 1 Guest speaker ~ Simon Fearn ~ *Insects collected at
Dunbarton*

TBA Field Trip ~ Location to be confirmed

Sunday 20 Skemps ~ Bug Day Out with QVMAG, 1 - 3 pm

DECEMBER

Tuesday 6 John Skemp Memorial Lecture ~ Guest Speaker
Dr Jennifer Lavers, *Natural and unnatural history of
remote Pacific Islands* and Photographic competition

Saturday 10 Christmas get-together at Skemps, including The Year
That Was

JANUARY 17

Wednesday 25 to *Crowded leek orchid at Surrey Hills,*
Friday 27 *north-west Tasmania with Phil Collier*

To see the full January to December program visit

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

Skemp Report

Based on a recommendation from Mike, we chose a water based, two pack, clear finish to redo the damaged cork tiles in the Centre. Mike also let us use a little of his left over paint for a test patch which worked well. Thanks to John the painting is completed and the floor has a shiny, even finish.

Also, thanks to John we should soon have a storage cupboard in one of the bunk rooms freeing up space in the library. Alan Burke and his walking group have put in steps and a zigzag to make the steep part of the Tyre Track safer. A big thanks to Alan and crew for this work and they have plans to do more.

Recent heavy rains showed up a deficiency in the storm water drains on the western side of the Centre. This has been fixed with a new section of drain and based on a suggestion by Rob the job was easier and I think better than it would have been with the original design. Thanks Rob for the redesign and the great job digging in the rocky earth to finish it.

The rains and wind have brought down trees and track clearing is an ongoing task. The Watergate Track had to be rerouted around a large tree which fell over it and further along another fell over the fence and onto the road. On our snail hunt we found a major blockage at the bottom of the Fern Gully. We have been promised some work on this one soon. Although a nuisance, some of these falls will add to our stocks of fire wood. If you are out and about please report any track issues you notice to your committee.

Noel Manning

Puggle

August ~ Prue asked 'who am I?' then went on to say that she was a bird with the following description; a migratory shore bird which breeds in the Arctic by the Yellow Sea. An early bird to leave here and one of the first to arrive back in August and early September. This is a coastal bird, unlikely to be found inland, which feeds on crustaceans in the tidal flats, catching crabs and shrimp with a long bill. The colouring is a speckled brown. Noel correctly identified it as an eastern curlew.

September ~ Noel gave a Member's Talk on dolerite and Ben Lomond, then asked members to name the corners on Jacob's Ladder. Tom received a Furry Friend for naming Gateway as the top corner as it was there he had spread some of Ruth Upson's ashes. Noel showed slides of dolerite and Ben Lomond finishing with the corners in alphabetic order. No one answered the question so Noel listed them as Strickland, Black, Hanging, Waterfall, Watchtower and Gateway.

Sightings

August ~ Peter (W) saw nodding green hoods at Carr Villa (unusually early) and another little orchid while Tom (T) saw orchid stems and leaves at Lilydale Falls. Rod saw a wedged-tail eagle pair at Upper Esk, Alma saw honeyeaters at Bridport chasing small birds, Peter (R) saw baby plovers at

Legana and Noel saw two sea eagles on his way to York Town. Rod and Jill saw a spotted quoll at Upper Esk,. Tina saw spoonbills and what may have been a male blue billed duck at Queechy Lakes, Tom (T) saw crescent and new Holland honeyeaters near home while Alison heard a crescent honeyeater calling near her home

September ~ Peter (W) saw echidna at St Leonards, Marion lapwings nesting on a hip roof and one egg rolled into the gutter, Tom (T) swamp harrier at Mowbray and Newnham along the river and Prue suggested she had seen the same ones at Tamar Island. Peter (R) saw forest ravens nesting in a eucalypt with plastic and wire in their nest and there are currawongs in the area. Tina told us that there is sea eagle nesting at Stonesthrow and that she has not seen the night herons for some time just one in mid-August. John said that they may be on the Bass Straight islands and that they could carry Japanese encephalitis.

Library Report ~ Tina reported that the NRM North has donated a copy of *Beneath the Tamar: more than silt* and had received two newsletters from the Burnie Field Naturalists Club.

New Members ~ At the September meeting members were advised that Louise James and her grandson Blake Thomas has joined the Club. We look forward to them joining us at future meetings, field trips and at the Club's property, Skemps.

Calendars ~ Images for the 2017 calendar have been selected and the information is currently with the publisher. The calendars should be available soon at \$12.00 each. If you would like to order some speak to Treasurer, Karen.

Supper for 6 December General Meeting ~ It would be appreciated if members could bring a small plate of supper to share at our final meeting for the year.

Photographic Competition ~ The competition will be held after the Skemp Memorial Lecture at the meeting in December. Due to time limitations to erect the display of entries and judge them, there will be a limit of three entries per member. Members at the meeting will judge and vote on the entries; prizes will be awarded for 1st, 2nd and 3rd places.

Conditions of entry

- **Print topics:** subjects are to be related to Tasmanian flora, fauna, minerals, Tasmanian landscapes and astronomical events observed in Tasmania. Animals and plants must occur naturally in Tasmania. Introduced species or garden varieties of Tasmania are not acceptable.
- The subject of each print must be identified. For landscapes, the

identification must include the aspect of nature study that it illustrates.

- **Print size:** up to A4 (30cm x 21cm)
- **Print medium:** colour or monochrome (black and white)
- Must be simply mounted on cardboard at least.
- Entries to have been taken since December 2015
- The competition is open to members only and prints should be brought in on the night and put up prior to the commencement of the meeting.

Christmas at Skemps ~ will be held on Saturday 10 December. Members are welcome to invite their family and friends to join them at the end of year function at Skemps. We will not be having a Secret Santa for the adults, but if you would like to bring a gift for a child to place under the tree, wrap it and put their name on it. Any gifts will be given out prior to afternoon tea.

Please bring your own lunch, the BBQ will be lit if you would like to bring something to cook. A plate of food to share for afternoon tea would be appreciated, coffee and tea will be provided. Prior to afternoon tea we will watch **The Year That Was**, a power point presentation of images from field trips and other activities members have participated in during the twelve months. There will be a lucky door prize so get your ticket on arrival.

GUEST SPEAKER AUGUST ~ KEVIN BONHAM

~ *Snails of Tasmania, especially in the North-east.*

Tom introduced Kevin who spoke on Tasmanian land snails.

Kevin started by telling us that he had only studied land snails and could not give much information about freshwater snails. He followed on by stating that snails found in our gardens would be introduced species, which he also studied, and unless we lived near the bush we would not see native ones.

The common garden snail was introduced as an experiment to see if it could survive and as he said '*...and I think we know the answer to that now*' and although the snail is one of the edible variety it needs to be specially prepared and should not be eaten. There are also a number of introduced slugs and these carry parasites and there have been deaths when people eat them after a drunken dare.

Kevin told us that snails are gastropods like marine shells and a few branches of the marine snails have evolved the ability to live on land. He is often asked the difference between a snail and a slug, stating that a slug is a snail that does not have an obvious external shell and some have a remnant internal shell. There are also crossovers between snails and slugs with a reduced shell which provides some of the functions of the normal shell. There are trade-offs with less shell meaning the animal can live in a low calcium environment, can squeeze into small spaces and does not have as much weight to carry about although there is less protection from drying out and

from being eaten.

Slugs and snails are not different kinds of things in a taxonomic sense as maybe several dozen times, snails have evolved to slugs and back again in several branches of the snail family.

He is also often asked about the yellow slug which is not a slug, it is a flat worm and has no feelers out the front as with snails. These feelers have primitive eyes on them and some have two sets of feelers, the second to check the forest floor.

A slide showed us our largest snail the *Caryodes*, the bush snail also known as the walnut snail, which grows to about 5 cm and is found almost everywhere in Tasmania. Kevin then told us that there are around 200 species in Tasmania, most of them not formally described, and that there are new ones being described, in his words, constantly and that he finds about two new ones on average each year.

We learnt that Tasmanian snails are related to Victorian and southern NSW snails with many in the same genus, although not usually the same species, while our snails are not closely related to those from Western Australia, even at the genus level. He claimed that around 90% of our species are not found elsewhere and that each is also only found in small parts of Tasmania making for a complex Tasmanian snail fauna.

Although native land snails are found almost everywhere from grasslands to the tops of the highest mountains the highest diversity is in the wet eucalypt forests and the mixed forests, with some in the dry forests, only a few in the open woodlands of the Midlands and Kevin has not been able to find any on the top of Ben Lomond.

A slide described the snail life habits and we learnt that they live in any shelter on the forest floor including under rocks, logs and leaf litter and small ones can be in the moss and lichens on trees trunks. They also cling to logs and rocks and Kevin warned us to be careful lifting rocks to watch out for other creatures which might be there and to be careful of the rock's weight.

Their food includes fungi and forest detritus while tiny ones eat bacteria on lichens and he told us that there are carnivorous snails. Kevin said the keeled snail was built for speed with racing stripes down its neck. This description and his gestures amused those present as well as his idea that they have a set of steak knives in their mouth which they can deploy quite fast and that worms are just a mobile piece of spaghetti. He also described huge New Zealand carnivorous snails fighting each other for worms.

Two slides showed families of native snails with, to the amusement of members, Kevin stating we need not remember the names as he would not be testing us afterwards. He started with the Caryodidae, then the Bulimulidae (a tree snail found on the east coast), Succineidae (a salt marsh snail), Helicarionidae (a semi slug with a reduced shell), Cystopeltidae (the only native slug without external shells, and Kevin said '*...and it's got this sort of lumpy appearance, they're not sort of streamlined like the introduced slugs*'), Camaenidae (in Tasmania found only on King Island), Rhytididae

(a carnivorous snail mainly from the north east), Charopidae (a small snail and our most diverse family with over one hundred species in Tasmania) and finally the Punctidae (a tiny snail from 1 to 4 millimetre wide).

Kevin told us of the difficulty in identifying snails from photos sent to him. He likes to have three views of the animal showing both sides and the end view. The underside shows the umbilicus which is the gap between the swirls which is an important identification feature. Pictures of the upper surface need to be done with a zoom as the sculptures (ribs) are again an important identification feature. A slide showed electron microscope images of four different shells with distinctive ridges on each.

The next identification feature is the radula, a tongue like mouth part of the snail which has small teeth all over it. The anatomy is also an important identification feature and Kevin wondered how people dissected an animal which was 2 mm wide. We also learnt that DNA analysis was not up to date and well behind other species.

Kevin's talk moved on to the snails of the north east and he started with the Skemps snail with identification features. The snail is in the *Scelidoropa* genus which has 15 species in Tasmania, they are small and nearly all have coloured stripes. The Skemps snail has a wide umbilicus of around a third of its size and the first slide showed the snail and the next a comparison between it and a similar looking snail. The next slide had an extract from a late 19th century book on Tasmanian snails describing the animal and placing it at Mt Wellington, Recherche Bay and Myrtle Bank.

We were then shown the almost heart shaped territory of the animal with the point at the bottom starting at Nunamara going NW to include Lilydale and Tunnel curving to the east to include Lebrina, Golconda and Nabowla before curving south to include West Scottsdale then going south to the east of the Tasman Highway and following it back to Nunamara.

Kevin told us that he had done a survey of the snail in May and that it lived in wet eucalypt forests and rain forests, although finding it is unpredictable as it may be bio sensitive, found in large numbers in one place and not at all not too far away. Kevin surmised that it may get burnt out with fire disturbance if there are logs with few rocks and it survives better where there are rocks. Kevin told us that this snail needs wide strips of reserved forest to survive. 15 metres is not enough while 40 appears to work.

We learnt that the Cataract Gorge snail, *Pasmaditta jungermanniae*, is the easiest to find in the Launceston area, although as it is very small you will need good eyesight. It can be found on the main walk near the lookout in the lichen covered rock faces after rain or in misty conditions.

Kevin next mentioned the North-east Forest Snail, *Anoglypta launcestonensis*, which is found in the so called "Plomleys Island" the inland very wet north east and we were told that a lot of invertebrates are confined to it.

This snail had been first described by RC Gunn and then not seen again until 1970 when a reward was offered and 16 were found. It was placed on

an endangered species list in 1983 with the notes stating there were only 5,000 animals in an area of 3,000 ha. Kevin found that this was false with a conservative 1,200,000 ranging over 40,000 ha and that altitude was not a factor.

Kevin then mentioned two genuinely rare animals, the Distillery Creek snail, *Roblinella roblini*, found in 2005 at Waverley near the woollen mills and also at a more secure site on The Sidling. Kevin noted that Tamar Island is a degraded piece of land almost everything there is introduced and it has the Tamar Island snail which is only found there.

We learnt that in the north east there are a high number of snails which only live on mountains and Kevin mentioned that Mt Albert, Mt Victoria and Ben Nevis had not been surveyed. One place he had been with much success was Mt Arthur, Lilydale where he found 22 species of snail in one day, a personal record.

After around 18 minutes of questions and informative answers, Noel thanked Kevin and asked members to show their appreciation.

Noel Manning

FIELD TRIP ~ Sunday 14 August ~ HOLLYBANK ~ On the trail of the snail

Our trip to a location on Whites Mill Road at Underwood was cancelled after Noel's trip to check out the road conditions following recent bad weather. He found the road unsuitable due to washout and tree limbs across it. Rallying around it was suggested on the Saturday that we go instead to Hollybank Forest Reserve, an area not too far from our original destination.

On the Sunday morning the weather was fine but cold, five members and Peter's grandchildren, Adelaide and Edward, met at Inveresk for a field trip to look for native snails near the banks of the Pipers River. Once there we were joined by another member and headed off down the nearest trail. Finding ourselves nowhere near the river we were soon back at the cars and moved down to the next car park. Noel headed off to check that we were on the right track to get to the river and when he did not return we started along the track noting the native plants, commenting on the lack of flowers on orchid leaves to help with identification and also took some photos of fungi.

At the river, Noel had picked a spot in sight of the Pipers River junction with Butchers Creek and started digging around with a garden fork sifting the leaf litter and was rewarded with a small white millipede. He found two partial shells which could have been the Skemps Snail, another white millipede and coral fungi. As well he found the twin leaves and the heart shaped leaf of two orchids.

As the forest started sloping toward the river, we began lifting rocks, fallen limbs, and moving the leaf litter hoping to find a snail. John seemed to be the only one having any real success with two live species, and a few empty

shells. He also found the two smallest shells which were about 3mm. Other members were finding spiders, centipedes, worms and jumping insects. Karen became very excited when she found a shell, having already given up any expectation of finding one.

Around noon, the sky became overcast and the temperature seemed to drop so we headed back to the cars, finding more interesting fungi to photograph on the way back. Before leaving the river John lifted a rock and showed Noel a mother scorpion, in a hole barely bigger than her, surrounded by many young scorpions. At the carpark we had a long cold wait for a tardy member, who was attempting to get the perfect shot of the river and creek.

We returned to the first carpark for lunch as there was a shelter, seats, table and a high bench. After lunch we set to work identifying our find. There were a number of shells, two live snails, Karen's laminated sheets featuring pictures of eight snails and hand lenses. The live snails were *Carpodes dufresnii*. Shell samples will be sent to Kevin for confirmation of identification. Prue reeled off the names of birds she could hear calling in the area, and a friendly eastern spinebill stayed around to be photographed as he fed on the nectar of a flowering non-native grevillea.

To round the day out we went along Goullees Road to find Butchers Creek for a last unsuccessful search for snails or anything else of interest. The road area near the bridge over the creek had been damaged in recent flooding and with the volume of water still flowing, the creek had breached its banks and the immediate surrounds were difficult to access and boggy. A lone engaeus mound was seen in a once flooded area.

We noted the whimsical art work, mostly made from scrap, in the front yard of a property near the creek.

Too cold to stay around we headed home knowing the snail was in the area and that the Launceston Field Naturalists had started another interest, the humble and usually unappealing snail.

Noel & Karen Manning

***Victaphanta lampra* found
at Hollybank**



Birds ~ *Acanthiza ewingii*, Tasmanian thornbill; *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*, eastern spinebill; *Acanthornis magnus*, scrubtit; *Anthochaera paradoxa*, yellow wattlebird; *Calyptorhynchus funereus*, yellow-tailed black-cockatoo; *Colluricincla harmonica*, grey shrike-thrush; *Corvus tasmanicus*, forest raven; *Cracticus torquatus*, grey butcherbird; *Lichenostomus flavicollis*, yellow throated honeyeater; *Malurus cyaneus*, superb fairy-wren; *Petroica boodang*, scarlet robin; *Strepera fuliginosa*, black currawong.

Dicots ~ *Acacia dealbata*, silver wattle; *Acacia melanoxylon*, blackwood; *Bedfordia salicina*, Tasmanian blanketbush; *Coprosma quadrifida*, native currant; *Cyathodes glauca*, purple cheeseberry; *Eucalyptus delegatensis* subsp *tasmaniensis*, gum-topped stringybark; *Eucalyptus viminalis* subsp *viminalis*, white gum; *Exocarpos cupressiformis*, common native-cherry; *Geranium potentilloides*, mountain cranesbill; *Gonocarpus* sp., raspwort; *Hakea lissosperma*, mountain needlebush; *Micrantheum hexandrum*, river tridentbush; *Notelaea ligustrina*, native olive; *Olearia argophylla*, musk daisybush; *Olearia lirata*, forest daisybush; *Pomaderris apetala*, dogwood.

Fauna ~ *Thylogale billardierii*, Tasmanian pademelon.

Ferns ~ *Blechnum nudum*, fishbone water fern; *Blechnum minus*, soft water fern; *Dicksonia antarctica*, soft treefern; *Grammitis billardierei*, finger fern; *Histiopteris incisa*, bat's wing fern; *Polystichum proliferum*, mother shield fern; *Pteridium esculentum*, bracken fern.

Fungi ~ *Aleuria rhenana*, stalked orange-peel fungus; *Aleurina ferruginea*; *Aleurina ferruginea*; *Ascocoryne sarcoides*; *Australoporus tasmanicus*; *Calocera* sp; *Clavulina subrugosa*, yellow flame; *Clavulinopsis amoena*; *Discinella terrestris*; *Geostrium triplex*, earthstar; *Laccaria* sp; *Lentinellus* sp; *Leotia lubrica*, jelly baby; *Lycoperdon perlatum*; *Pleurotopsis longinquus*; *Ramaria lorithamnus*; *Sphaerobolus stellatus*, cannon-ball fungus; *Stereum illudens*; *Sterocaulon ramulosum*; *Trametes versicolor*; *Trichia decipiens*.

Miscellaneous ~ Segmented worm, pink; Grey and white flatworm (Platyhelminthes), *Cercophonius squama*, forest scorpion and her nest; *Nicodamus peregrinus* (spider with red legs and black body), Centipede, black with white stripes, white feet; Centipede, pale yellow; Millipede portugese.

Monocots ~ *Dianella tasmanica*, forest flaxlily; *Chiloglottis* sp., bird-orchid leaves; *Corybas* sp., helmet-orchid leaves; *Gahnia grandis*, cutting grass; *Lepidosperma* sp., swordsedg; *Lomandra longifolia*, sagg; *Pterostylis* sp., greenhood leaves.

Moss ~ *Hypopterygium* sp., moss.

Snails ~ *Caryodes dufresnii*; *Elsothera limula*; *Stenacapha hamiltoni*; *Thryasona* sp (cf *marchianae*); *Victaphanta lampra*, Northern Tasmanian carnivorous snail.

Many thanks to Kevin Bonham who has been in contact with the identity of the snails found at Hollybank. He advised that although two of the species above were about the size of the Skemp snail, that Hollybank was just outside the known range of this snail so we would not have found Skemp snails that day. He said he had found them at Lilydale Falls but only in small numbers.

SKEMPS DAY ~ Saturday 27 August ~ Search for the Skemps Snail

16 members and two guests arrived at Skemps on a fine mild late winter day to look for the Skemps snail, to socialise and enjoy lunch with fellow members.

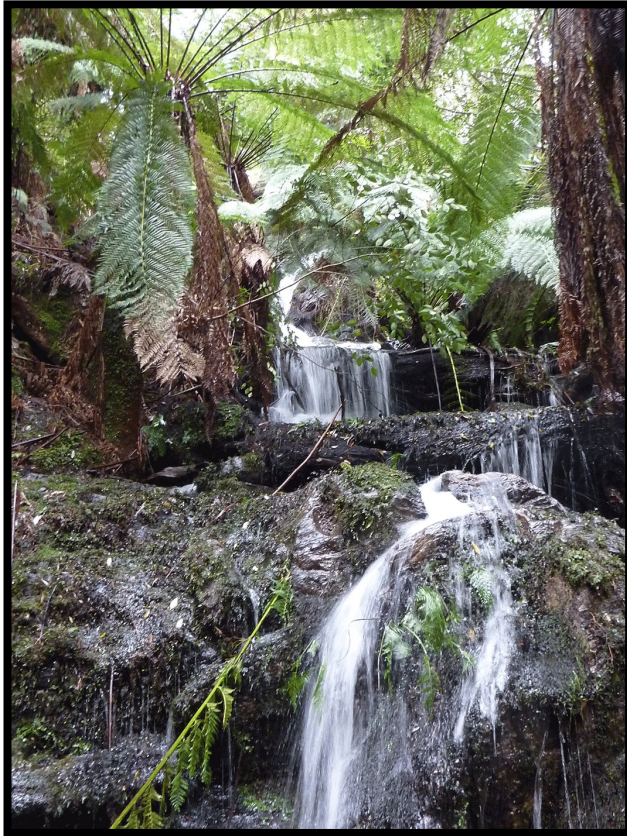
Clouds and a few spits of rain did not dampen our enthusiasm as we headed off along the Power Track to the Tyre Track stopping, as always, to look at and photograph fungi. Logs and stones were upended revealing worms and millipedes although no snails.

By the time we reached the Fern Gully we were seeing evidence of the recent heavy wind and rain. The deeper in the more damage we saw until we arrived at the far side of the gully to the new track connecting through to the bottom falls and found a large *Sassafras* fallen across our path. We took the optimistic view that this allowed us the opportunity to see in close up the flowers which are normally too high to study and Noel collected leaves for *Sassafras* tea.

While nine members struggled over this barrier only three continued on to the bottom falls finding more blockages along the way and the falls easy to see and photograph as much of the vegetation near them had been washed away. They completed the round trip back to the Centre where others waited anxiously for the barbecue to be lit.

Two members walked from the bottom falls to the top falls up the creek. They were checking the location of the creek with a GPS for inclusion on a map currently being drawn up, which has additional points of interest and other information.

Meanwhile those who chose not to continue on to the falls had more luck finding snails. During the lunch break we had three live snails and five shells to study and identify. The live snails were identified as the *Caryodes dufresnii* and *Victaphanta lampra* both of which had previously been found at Hollybank. There were shells of both live snails, and John sent images of the only unidentified shell to Kevin Bonham for identification.



Waterfall on Skemp Creek

During lunch the rains started in earnest and by mid-afternoon most members had to wait for a break in the weather to get to their cars when they left. When the rain did finally stop, a few of us headed up to the Top Pond area to release the live snails and then walked down the far side of the creek to look over the plants from an earlier revegetation project, noting that many needed to be removed from or placed in larger plant surrounds; another job to add to the list.

Walking back up the roadway, Taylor pointed out a dead stump where there was extensive colonies of bracket fungi growing on every side, it was quite a picture. Before we headed home, we showed our visitor, Vivienne, the old homestead site and visited the interpretation booth to show her where the Skemps had lived and copies of artworks of how the site looked all those years ago.

Karen & Noel Manning

A big thankyou to Kevin for his very prompt reply on the Sunday, advising that the shell belonged to a *Thryasona diemenensis*.



**Looking for snails in the leaf litter
in the Ferngully**



Trametes versicolor

GUEST SPEAKER SEPTEMBER ~ PHIL COLLIER ~ *Monitoring with a purpose: the crowded leek orchid at Surrey Hills, north-west Tasmania*

Tom introduced Phil Collier who was to talk on the monitoring of the crowded leek orchid, *Prasophyllum crebriflorum* over a 12 year period.

Phil started the talk by telling us that the monitoring is done at Westwing Plain, a grassland in the Surrey Hills estate of NW Tasmania, on fertile, basalt soil. It is a mosaic of sub-alpine grasslands at around 600 metres with forests and a few mountains mixed in as well. It is mostly private tree plantation land owned by Forico making it difficult to access.

The talk would also be run as a workshop with the audience in the seat of the managers and when the talk gets to a critical point we would be asked to make decisions about what to do.

He went on to describe the orchid as an endangered species known only from these basalt plains in a remote area of North West Tasmania. One of many green/brown leaf orchids in Tasmania distinguished by the quite significantly reflexed dorsal sepal, sometimes twisted and reflexed, making it easy to identify from others in this group. The exception is when there is only leaf to examine and it can then be confused with another from the area, *P. mimulum*, the highland leek-orchid.

Phil suggested the name came from the crowding of the flowers along the stem and showed us a slide with three pictures of the orchid with a large wasp on one. The wasp is not a specific pollinator, seen quite regularly by the monitoring staff and tame as it waited to be photographed. Since being discovered in 1999 the orchid's habitat has been extended quite significantly and it may no longer be endangered and the plains hold few threats.

It was discovered by Mark Wapstra and other colleagues and quickly described as David Jones was publishing about new orchids at the time. It is most closely related to *P. incorrectum* and we saw a slide of this, the golfers leek-orchid, known from only a few locations which include the Campbell Town Golf Course.

When Sue Botting was on Cradle Coast NRM she had a soft spot for these grasslands and quite often provided funding for projects there. In 2008/09 Matt Larcombe, the orchid recovery project officer, initiated the capture release monitoring project we were to learn about tonight. Matt also allowed others to take control of the project as he would soon move on.

Having explained other aspects of the talk title Phil told us that it was not just monitoring it had a purpose and he asked what the purpose might be. The first suggestion was to see that it did not disappear and he confirmed that as a threatened species we wanted it to continue. He described what was being done as adaptive management in that what was done would change if it was not successful or if other factors cropped up. We saw a chart of what he described as the gold star of this type of management showing feedback loops which allowed the project to adapt if errors were found in the methods.

A slide showed the management objectives which was to sustain the

population, identify threats and reduce their impact. Phil suggested that as well we may wish to replicate some previous land management practices, telling us that although he did not know, these grasslands may have come about due to aboriginal burning. This burning over many thousands of years may have driven evolution to produce this species and stopping the burning may change evolution and this species may not survive. There are other issues and on these grasslands it is the Ptunarra Brown Butterfly (*Oreixenica ptunarra*) which flies in March dropping its eggs on the tussock (poa) grasses which then hatch in April/May so you cannot burn in those months, a typical time for such burns. When hatched the caterpillars overwinters by burrowing into the centre of the tussock grass and will survive the burn.

Phil told us that we had an objective, a plan of action to meet the objective and this must be followed by observations to see if the action has been successful, that is, monitoring with a purpose, and he referred to the adaptive management flow chart. Phil described the area under observation as a transect.

He told us that we would be looking at how the monitoring was done and how the information was analysed to see what was going on. He also told us that Forico may favour burning as it reduced the chance of a fire spreading from one coup to another making it easier for the monitor team to introduce burning and this they did in August 2008.

He showed images of the monitoring process before the burn including a Google Earth view of the area with places marked and another without, people in the field doing the work, the markers used, a schematic of the area showing what was found and where, and a graph showing the number of plants on 14 and 29 January and 6 February, numbers on those days were 80, 46 and 23. He also showed an image of the work sheet for the area showing species, how much of the plant was found and a grid reference. Each plant is marked by a bracken stem which can be seen by the monitors but does not attract the interest of passing motorists.

It is a capture recapture monitoring in that plants previously seen are looked for again and new finds are added to the list for the next round of monitoring. Each plant is marked with a metal pin and numbered marker at ground level and the coordinates allow them to be easily found or you can use a metal detector.

An image from 2009 and 2012 showed how well the tussock grass grew back on the rich basalt soil after the 2008 burn and we were set another management decision. By 2012 the tussock seems to be crowding out the orchid, it is windy winter day, the helicopter is in the air and we have to decide whether to do another burn.

The burn went ahead and Phil explained that in these sub alpine plains the wind will push the fire through the tussock but stop at the forest which has a lot of moisture at ground level. The burn was also a bit patchy leaving areas unburnt in the transect and an opportunity look for differences.

And there was. After 13 months twice the percentage of plants had

flowered in the unburnt area compared to the burnt, although those in the burnt area had a wider leaf width. Phil explained that orchids seem to save their best for a burn which eliminates competition but this also means they are exposed and are inviting to grazing animals.

In January 2014, 38 were found with many in bud and two weeks later 53% had gone and the survivors were wilting in what Phil described as one of the driest years he had seen.

Phil then told us that data indicated that there was an increase in grazing pressure as the season progressed with 25% being grazed each day in the last days of the season with these plants not producing seeds. The pressure was on the management team to decide whether to burn the Greater Westwing Plain and a member had already suggested that a small burn would see grazers foraging near the burn site and maybe notice emerging plants.

This was a real situation and Phil had made the decision to go for a complete burn and the result was positive with much less grazing and a greater survival of the plants to leaf stage.

With no real evidence of animal grazing the decision was made to cage half the plants and the data showed that grazing appeared to be the problem causing the reduction in leaf appearance. A slide showed that the caged plants did much better than those not caged.

Phil's conclusion from all the years of monitoring were that the plant is fire dependant with winter burns encouraging robust plants, grazing pressure increases during the season, grazing takes a heavy toll especially when smaller areas are disturbed and that cages protect plants from grazing.

Phil told us that regardless of the conditions every year they found another 20 plants suggesting a strong natural propagating process and he told us that although the monitoring taught us a lot we still did not know how long the plants lived. After a member question he told us that a plant seen this year would have been seen one or two years ago but no plant would emerge five years later.

Members had commented and questioned Phil throughout the talk so that there was only a short question time before Peter Ralph thanked him and asked members to show their appreciation.

Noel Manning

MEMBERS TALK ~ Noel Manning ~ *Dolerite and Ben Lomond*

In Tasmania dolerite is an igneous (molten) rock from the Jurassic period about 180 million years ago which pushed its way up from deep within the earth through weak points in the crust. As it failed to break through the crust it was insulated by sedimentary rocks above and unlike basalt lava flows did not spread out in a thin layer. This meant that the thicker, insulated mass cooled slower than basalt and formed bigger crystals and is very hard and slow to wear down resulting in the familiar dolerite mountains and cliffs dominating the Tasmanian coastal scenery. It is used as road base, concrete

aggregate and for construction.

Despite its majestic appearance, dolerite's physical properties have not always been warmly received, being a very hard rock, difficult to drill, shape or quarry, and forming only thin, rocky soils.

A government report in 1937, noted: "... in the central plateau and the higher portions of the State all the overlying sedimentaries have been denuded away and the dolerite forms the surface. It destroyed the coal measures and itself is barren of all mineral wealth and use, except as road metal. It is so dense and hard that the soil washes away as rapidly as the rock decays. It is Tasmania's curse."

Tasmania's dolerite correlates with similar formations in Antarctica and South Africa supporting the idea of Gondwana. Launceston's most notable dolerite peak is Ben Lomond with its plateau used for skiing. As well as dolerite it also had a seam of a commercial quantity of coal, which surprised him.

The mountain is composed of a central massif with an extensive plateau above 1,200 metres with Legges Tor in the north reaching to 1572 metres and the more impressive Stacks Bluff dominating the south at 1,527 metres. Stacks Bluff features an imposing 600 metre cliff line above the surrounding hills. Ragged Jack, Mensa Moor and Tower Hill are other peaks which surround the plateau. During the Pleistocene it was the only peak in the north east to be glaciated explaining the contrast in alpine scenery with other peaks of the area.

Although much of the plateau is stony with areas of low and often stunted forms of vegetation, the remainder of the mountain contains a wide variety of habitats ranging from alpine moorland to dense forest. A total of 222 plant species have been recorded on the Ben Lomond plateau.

It has a rich and diverse fauna and you will certainly see Bennett's Wallabies and wombat scats and Noel said that he had seen a macropod that looked too tall for a wallaby and Forester kangaroos are recorded there. He had also seen a quoll in the village during the ski season and bird and insect life abound.

But how do you get there? Jacobs Ladder is described on some internet sites as a dangerous road but for us it is just how you get to this wonderful place. Noel offered three Furry Friends to anyone who could name the corners of Jacobs Ladder in order either ascending or descending. Tom (T) named Gateway as the top corner as he had spread some of Ruth Upson's ashes near there and received one chocolate for his efforts. Noel then showed a slide with the names in alphabetic order and still no takers. Noel read the name of the corners in order, from bottom to top they are, Strickland, Black, Hanging, Waterfall, Watchtower and Gateway. He gave two chocolates to our guests.

A sample of dolerite, basalt and Skemps mudstone were on the table for members to look at.

FIELD TRIP ~ Saturday 10 September
~ Wildflowers and orchids at Bridport Wildflower Reserve

Eight members and a guest travelled to Bridport for today's field trip to the Wildflower Reserve which is part of the Granite Point Conservation Area.

We met up with the Geeves at the Pavilion in Bridport where we had a hot drink and comfort stop before heading to our walk departure point. The morning was sunny and we could hear the frogs calling from Frog Lagoon on arrival in the carpark, so decided to visit there first not reaching the lagoon as the track was flooded. The main walking track to Adams Beach was blocked off with a sign stating that it was damaged by erosion and on further investigation we found that the track ended in a metre plus drop to the beach with a number of trees uprooted and laying on the beach.

Turning back we made our way along the main track in the reserve noting large prickly box and silver banksia trees, among the flowering coast wattle. Flowering also were riceflowers, lovecreeper and the common heath was seen in white, pale pink and a deeper pink, orchid leaves were seen with none in flower.



***Comesperma volubile*, blue lovecreeper**

Further along we noted that there had been a fire in the reserve to the right of the track and we split up to have a look around. Regrowth included bracken fern, sagg, peppermints, many short purple flag irises and other small plants.



Leucopogon parviflorus,
coast beardheath

Re-joining other members who were back on the main track, we found prickly moses, needlebush and wedding bush, and plenty of flatpea leaves which will be a picture when they flower.

We lunched at the picnic tables in the carpark, which was followed by a scramble over the giant granite boulders nearby. A look in the rock pools revealed Neptune's necklace seaweed, coralline algae, limpets, a cushion seastar and a snakeskin chiton. A few members ventured further along the coastline to the point, returning along a rough bush path to the carpark.

Back at the Pavilion carpark, we took a stroll along the Foreshore Track to look at the eucalypts affected by the ginger syndrome, before heading to the Bridport Café. We enjoyed coffee, cake and chat before heading home following an enjoyable day in the spring sunshine. Karen Manning



***Bossiaea cinerea*, showy bossiaea**

Birds ~ *Artamus cyanopterus*, dusky woodswallow; *Eolophus roseicapillus*, galah; *Cacomantis flabelliformis*, fan-tailed cuckoo; *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*, silver gull; *Coracina novaehollandiae*, black-faced cuckoo-shrike; *Corvus tasmanicus*, forest raven; *Dacelo novaeguineae*, laughing kookaburra; *Haliaeetus leucogaster*, white-bellied sea-eagle; *Larus pacificus*, pacific gull; *Pachycephala olivacea*, olive whistler; *Pardalotus striatus*, striated pardalote; *Strepera versicolor*, grey currawong; *Vanellus miles*, masked lapwing with two juveniles

Dicots ~ *Acacia dealbata*, silver wattle; *Acacia longifolia* subsp *sophorae*, coast wattle; *Acacia melanoxylon*, blackwood; *Acacia retinodes*, wirilda; *Acacia suaveolens*, sweet wattle; *Acacia verticillata*, prickly moses; *Allo-asuarina littoralis*, bull-oak; *Allocasuarina monilifera*, necklace she-oak; *Astroloma humifusum*, native cranberry; *Atriplex cinerea*, grey salt-bush; *Banksia marginata*, silver banksia; *Bossiaea cinerea*, showy bossiaea; *Bursaria spinosa*, prickly box; *Clematis microphylla*, small-leaf clematis; *Comesperma volubile*, blue love creeper; *Correa alba*, white correa; *Epacris impressa*, common heath; *Eucalyptus amygdalina*, black peppermint; *Exocarpos cupressiformis*, native cherry; *Hakea teretifolia*, dagger hakea; *Hibbertia sericea*, silky guinea-flower; *Hovea heterophylla*,

winter purplepea; *Leptospermum laevigatum*, coastal teatree; *Leucopogon parviflorus*, coast beardheath; *Melaleuca squarrosa*, scented paperbark; *Patersonia fragilis*, short purple-flag iris; *Pimelea humilis*, dwarf rice-flower; *Platylobium* sp., flatpea; *Ricinocarpos pinifolius*, wedding bush; *Tecticornia arbuscula*, shrubby glasswort; *Tetragonia implexicoma*, bower spinach

Ferns ~ *Pteridium esculentum*, bracken fern

Frogs ~ *Limnodynastes dumerilii insularis*, southern banjo frog; *Litoria ewingii*, brown tree frog

Monocots ~ *Dianella revoluta*, spreading flax-lily; *Lepidosperma concavum*, sand sword-sedge; *Lomandra longifolia*, sagg

Rock pool inhabitants ~ *Cellana solida*, orange-edged limpet; *Corallina officinalis*, tufted coralline; *Hormosira banksia*, Neptune's necklace; *Meridiastra calcar*, orange pattern; *Sypharochiton pelliserpentis*, snakeskin chiton

SKEMPS DAY ~ Sunday 18 September ~ Setting up tree monitoring sites on the property

On our way out today, Karen and I passed the boom gate and went further along Myrtle Bank Road to look at forest coups over the hill from Skemps. The previous day, when our family was there to mark out the Tree Decline Monitoring plots, Karen had been able to see through the trees near the Bedfordia Track and realised that the coups behind there had been logged. We could see large areas cleared and machines in the field waiting to finish the job. Continuing further along the road, we went to look at the washout from the June flooding and there seemed to be more damage than before.

We opened the boom gate and soon had the fire going and the kettle on and as time went by wondered if the others were put off by the prediction of 95% chance of rain. Seven others did arrive and the chance of rain turned to 100% with some heavy squalls and a thick fog later in the day. We decided that it was too wet for our chosen task of numbering the trees in our plot and found inside jobs and conversation a much better choice. All that talking must have given everyone an appetite as food was out earlier than usual.

As for the jobs our raptor poster went up, Tina worked in the library and removed a dead wallaby from near the back door and a plant guard was put back around the *Blandfordia* as it was being grazed. Karen had collected many tree bags yesterday that had blown into the tree line along the paddock and these were cleaned up and the damaged ones put in the garbage while

the Centre was tidied up and general supplies checked as no one will be about to do these tasks for a while.

The fire was built up to keep everyone warm, but with the continual deterioration of the weather, members called it a day and left when there was a break in the rain. This left Tom (T) and us with the task of locking up. It was still a pleasant day and everything is ready for the trees to be numbered and checked at a later date.

Thanks to Rhys we have one accurately marked out plot with one corner just in from the start of the Geoffrey Martin Nature Trails. We realised the other, on the track to the Bottom Falls where there are a few eucalypts with ginger syndrome, was far too steep and dangerous and we will need to look for an alternative location.

Noel Manning

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:

October 18 ~ Mark Wapstra ~ *Tasmania's Grassland Orchids: sex fiends in desperate need of help*

November 15 ~ Dr Miguel de Salas ~ *Herbarium work on the osothamnus and violacae species*

Plant Sale:- The APS will hold their spring native plant sale at the Max Fry Hall on Saturday 8th October from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm. The plants, propagated by APS members and grown at the APS nursery, are available at very reasonable prices. Tell you family and friends.

WILDLIFE SPOTTER ~ ONLINE CITIZEN SCIENCE PROJECT

Australia is a vast country. Researchers have set up automatic cameras that are snapping wildlife day and night. Now we need your help to analyse the millions of photographs captured in tropical rainforests, the dry rangelands, and around our cities.

From emus to superb lyrebirds, from bettongs to bandicoots, from brush turkeys to Tassie devils, and even feral cats and foxes—scientists want to know which species are roaming both in the wild and in urban areas.

The research will help answer questions including: how many endangered bettongs are left; how well native predators like quolls and devils are

competing with cats for food; and how common are common wombats.

So join in and help save threatened species and preserve Australia's iconic wildlife!

Visit <https://wildlifepotter.net.au/about/> if you would like to get involved in this interesting project.

Source: <https://wildlifepotter.net.au/> accessed 13/9/2016

TAMAR NRM EVENTS

The Sustainable Living Working Group of Tamar NRM presents **Dirt the Movie : a story with heart and soil.**

Where: West Tamar Council, Eden Street, Riverside

When: 6pm, Tuesday 18 October 2016

Cost: Donations appreciated

DIRT! The Movie brings to life the environmental, economic, social and political impact that the soil has. It shares the stories of experts from all over the world who study and are able to harness the beauty and power of a respectful and mutually beneficial relationship with soil. But more than the film and the lessons that it teaches, **DIRT! The Movie** is a call to action "When humans arrived 2 million years ago, everything changed for dirt. And from that moment on, the fate of dirt and humans has been intimately linked."

Source: <http://www.tamarnrm.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/SLWG-TNRM-Film-Nights-2a.pdf> accessed 12 September 2016

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. Provide your own food and drinks for the outing and wear/take clothing/footwear suitable for all weather types.
3. When travelling by car in convoy, each driver is responsible to ensure that the vehicle behind is in sight immediately after passing a 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: 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, but should contact our booking manager, John Elliott on 6344 9303 or skempbookings@yahoo.com.au 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

Find us on 