

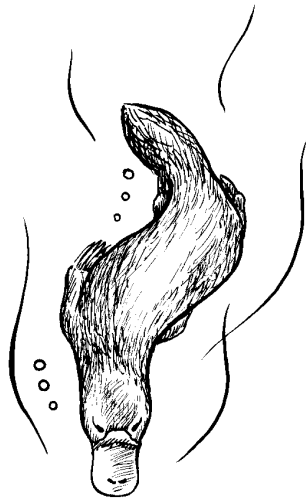
Bulletin

Quarterly Bulletin No. 386 April 2022

<https://tasfieldnats.org.au>

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We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we study natural history.



Excursion to the Old Convict Road, Orford

Saturday 5th February 2022

Approaching Orford on the road beside the Prosser River, a glance to the left shows a benched track on the opposite (northern side) of the river. This is the location of the Old Convict Road which ran from Buckland to Orford, built by convicts stationed at the Paradise Gorge Probation Station from about 1844-1847.

Nineteen Field Nats met at the start of the Old Convict Road at its junction with the Tasman Highway on the northern side of the Orford bridge. The day was warm and sunny with no threat of rain.



Field Nats on the Old Convict Road
Photo: Amanda Thomson

The road is an easy walk, benched as it is to be almost level. The Orford water supply pipes run alongside, and the road is navigable by 4-wheel drive vehicles.

We proceeded through open woodland, and it was not long before, in usual Field Nats custom, the group was strung out over a fair distance, while members stopped

to photograph and examine invertebrates and plants, many of which were still flowering. Our eyes were caught by the intense blue of many *Wahlenbergia*, and of the smaller flax flowers (*Linum*). There were also small white *Brachyscome* sp. growing beside the track.



Brachyscome rigidula (left), *Wahlenbergia* sp (right)
Photos: Amanda Thomson

The road dips into Station Creek - a small gully piled with stranded river stones, tree trunks and branches from recent flooding – the convict station is reached soon after crossing the creek and climbing a low hill. The road peters out here and divides into a number of smaller tracks. The walk is probably less than 2 km.

Numerous piles of the native dolerite rock mark the locations of the cells and other buildings, now collapsed and with only remnants of the stonework still in place. There is an extensive brick scatter, and in one place there is an area of brick flooring still in place. According to blogs about the probation station (links below), vandalism has left its mark, and all the bricks marked with broad arrows have been removed.

There was a wire gabion which had been filled with neatly stacked bricks, and another 2 or 3 filled with

rocks. We speculated as to the purpose of these – was it in preparation for the removal of artefacts (either legal or illegal), some sort of art installation, maybe an attempt at increasing lizard/skink habitat?? We remained perplexed.



Castiarina ocelligera
Photo: Amanda Thomson

The group lunched at the probation station site and used the time productively to search for interesting invertebrates and to wander the ruins. One interesting observation was the presence of many mini-gahnia growing among the rocks. *Gahnia rodwayi* is a diminutive grass-like herb growing, its tufts with blades benign, unlike its fiercer *G. grandis* cousin.

A small number of grey shrike thrushes were observed both by vision and by call and one member reported a sighting of a shining bronze cuckoo.

The return stroll took us back to the carpark by afternoon.

Mick and I took the opportunity to visit the Bush Garden near Buckland on our return and found it to be in good condition with many of the shrubs still flowering. The waterfall obediently turns on as visitors approach it, and we noted the addition of further activities for small children in the form of a well-stocked sandpit and twiggy cubby, and a new shelter and BBQs. The volunteers who built and maintain this garden deserve great praise and thanks. The Bush Garden is well worth a visit, whether or not you have children in tow.

These two blogs provide descriptions and further information about the road and convict station:

<https://ontheconvicttrail.blogspot.com/search?q=Paradise>
<https://thevelv.blogspot.com/2012/06/old-convict-road.html>

Deirdre Brown

Excursion to the Port Huon to Geeveston Walkway

Saturday March 5th, 2022

On a warm and sunny March morning, 22 members met at the Port Huon Sports and Aquatic Centre. Their objective was to explore the Port Huon to Geeveston Walkway, a recently constructed 3.5 km track along the estuary of the Kermadie River. The track divides into three approximately equal parts: firstly, a raised walkway over saline sedgeland; then a well-constructed footpath along the Huon Highway; and, finally, to Geeveston along the forested section of the Kermadie River.



Field Nats at Port Huon
Photo: Geoff Carle

The walkway was constructed with COVID-19 stimulus funding in 2020, forming a high quality, recycled plastic boardwalk cross the saline sedgeland. Some members decided to make their observations from it, but others headed down into the moist surface for a closer look. On a previous excursion to Marchwiell Marsh, Vishnu Prahalad introduced us to saltmarsh wetlands. His book *A Guide to the Plants of Tasmanian Saltmarsh Wetlands* became invaluable.

One of the first plants found in flower was the purple and yellow creeping monkey flower (*Thyridia repens*, name recently changed from *Mimulus repens*). There were small saltbushes *Atriplex paludosa*, *A. prostrata* and *Chenopodium glaucum* as well as mats of beaded glasswort (*Sarcocornia quiqueflora*). Most of the wetland was densely covered with sea rush (*Juncus kraussii*) and chaffy sawsedge (*Ghania filum*). Fry and fingerlings were swimming in drainage channels, including a school of *Galaxias maculatus*. We expected to see a variety of seabirds in such a suitable nesting

environment but there were few waders and surprisingly few gulls.

The boardwalk ended in a remnant black gum (*Eucalyptus ovata*) forest. Many of these trees have previously been cleared for agricultural purposes. The understory was a mix of native shrubs and sedges and weed species.



Thyridia repens
Photo: Eddie Gall

The temperature rose, and the sun was strong, and the party split into those wanting to continue along the hot and sunny roadside and those intent on exploring in the shade. The path to be well constructed and seemed to have been made to also serve children at the Sacred Heart Catholic School. Along the side of the path, weeds such as cotoneaster, thistle, gorse, and Spanish heath were prevalent. The smell of roadkill punctuated the walk.



Photo: Composite of observations by Geoff Carle

On the last stretch of the walk, stringbarks (*Eucalyptus obliqua*) and white gums (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) provided shade and a waft of eucalyptus oil. Here, the

Kermadie River is a wide, babbling brook. Locals had told us that platypus had been seen earlier in the day, but luck deserted us. There were patches of blackberries with ripe fruit, so we did our best to reduce the seed! Heart berries (*Aristotelia peduncularis*) were also fruiting in their full colour range of white, pink, red and black. Some mosses covered the rock cutting beside the track. Bulrushes grew in a small dam in the nearby pastures. There were a few ferns such as *Dicksonia antarctica* and *Blechnum nudum*. The understory included several different acacias: coast wattle (*Acacia longifolia*); silver wattle (*A. dealbata*); prickly mimosa (*A. verticillata*); and hop wattle (*A. stricta*). A large ochre-coloured fungi *Gymnopilus junonius* was shedding yellow spores under a gum tree.



Gymnopilus junonius
Photo: Eddie Gall

We saw a few birds: a firetail *Stagonopleura bella*, welcome swallows *Hirundo neoxena*, blue wrens *Malurus cyaneus* and forest ravens *Corvus tasmanicus*.

The track ended after crossing an attractive, well-constructed bridge. Seats provided for a comfortable lunch break. Some members continued a short distance to Geeveston for cake, coffee, or sushi.

The sea breeze had started, and some clouds had moved over, so the return walk was much more comfortable.

Ruth Bucher and Eddie Gall

AGM President's Address: The Hole in the Donut

Eddie Gall presented *The Hole in the Donut* at the Annual General Meeting, on March 3rd, 2022.

The Hole in the Donut is the area north of Lake Gordon that is now part of the Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park. When the park was established in 1980, it was a narrow strip along the Franklin River joining the Southwest National Park to Cradle Mountain Lake St Clair National Park. As a large area was bounded by these parks and to the east by Mt Field National Park, it became known as the "Hole in the Donut". In 1990, much of the Hole in the Donut was absorbed into the expanded Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park and the name fell into disuse.

The area is a rarely visited, rugged wilderness. Much of it is ridges, mountains, and untouched river valleys.



The mountains The Camel and The Flame on the Spires Range with a Brocken spectra in the cloud
Photo: Eddie Gall

It is virtually trackless and has a deserved reputation for tall, thick scrub that impedes walkers' progress. The dominant scrub species include *Melaleuca spp.*, *Leptospermum spp.*, and *Banksia marginata* which are often tangled with *Bauera rubioides*. Some parts dominated by buttongrass (*Gymnoschoenus sphaerocephalus*).

The area includes several mountain ranges, the most significant being The Spires, The Pleiades, and the Denison Range as well as an unnamed range incorporating Shining Mountain, Conical Mountain, and Mt Curley. These ranges are folded quartzitic rocks, schists, and conglomerates. They were glaciated giving rise to spectacular topography including lakes and tarns. The mountain tops and higher ridges hold alpine vegetation. A few of the lakes shelter small pockets of remnant rainforest featuring King Billy Pine (*Athrotaxis selaginoides*) and Fagus (*Nothofagus gunii*).

Eddie's talk showcased some stunning photographs. See the back page for a few more selections.

Presentation of Le Souef Memorial award



Kristi Ellingsen and Tony Daley

Photo: Keith Martin-Smith

The Entomological Society of Victoria's Le Souef Memorial award was presented to Kristi Ellingsen and Tony Daley for their major contribution to Tasmania's insects through their websites, previously the 'Insects of Tasmania' and now 'tasmanianinsectfieldguide.com'. Although the award was made in 2021, the TFNC General meeting of April 7th was the first opportunity for the presentation of the framed awards to Kristi and Tony.

In her presentation after accepting the award, Kristi acknowledged the essential contribution of Yoav Bar-Ness in transferring the website (IOT) to the new one, stressing that there are 3 people involved in this project.

Amanda Thomson

Kristi Ellingsen's Presentation - Alert not Alarmed: Improving the Public Perception of Insects

After receiving the Le Souëf Award, Kristi gave an entertaining talk on the bizarre and interesting world of insects - starting with the "cuties, crazies, the violent, the lovers and the controllers".

Unlike most talks when phones are silenced, Kristi asked everyone to turn their phones on and search for *Kahoot*, which she used to conduct an onscreen quiz and found a fairly informed audience.

Kristi went on to share her passion for engaging adolescents in nature and science. She advocated for approaching children and teenagers using the digital technology that they use and can relate to, rather than books. And she told us that young people will delve further into the world of insects if their interest can be sparked.

Kristi also wants to overcome intergenerational dislike and fear of creepy-crawlies. As there are only a limited number of dangerous spiders and insects, the ability to recognise these might help teenagers to approach the rest with confidence. Kristi suggested the production of posters or flips of the hazardous creepies for schools.

Photos and an MP4 movie of her presentation are available from <https://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/news/>.

Eddie Gall & Amanda Thomson



Kristi Ellingsen presenting to TFNC

Photo: Keith Martin-Smith

Where? Where? Wedgie! 2022

Many TFNC members have taken part in the citizen science project Where? Where? Wedgie!, monitoring threatened wedge-tailed eagles over the last four years. The project is up and running again for 2022 with two survey long weekends on 13-15 and 27-29 May.

Clare Hawkins and her team are hoping for as much participation as possible to both engage citizens and achieve robust scientific results. So, if you can get a team together and get out on any of these days to scan the skies for eagles and other raptors, you'll be rewarded with a fun day out whilst helping conservation efforts. Encourage your family and friends to do the same!

All the information required to take part is available on the newly revamped website at <https://naturetrackers.com.au/projects/where-where-wedgie/> including instructions, the booking map and many other resources.

Eyes to the skies & good luck!

2022 TFNC COMMITTEE

At our March AGM we welcomed Keith Martin-Smith as a general member of our 2022 committee replacing Jenny Schorta. Although Kristin Groom edited her first Bulletin in October 2021 when we welcomed her, her appointment as Bulletin Editor was formalised at the AGM.

In case you were wondering, in the last Bulletin we were asking for nominations for the position of Vice President, but we were very pleased when Anna McEldowney decided to continue in this role for a third year alongside her role as TFNC's Book Salesperson.

AUSTRALIAN NATURAL HISTORY MEDALLION (ANHM)

You may remember in 2021 our club submitted a joint nomination for Drs Genevieve Gates and David Ratkowsky for the ANHM. The ANHM committee has subsequently decided to retain the rule, in operation in its implementation in 1940, that "***the Medallion will be awarded to a single living person.***" Therefore, in April, the Club submitted a nomination of our Life member **Dr Genevieve Gates** for the 2022 Australian Natural History Medallion for her work primarily in the field of Mycology. This was at the suggestion and with the support of David Ratkowsky. The winner of this award will be announced in October 2022. If we are unsuccessful this year, the nomination has another two years/opportunities to win.

BOOKS, PUBLICATIONS and LIBRARY

All 2,000 copies of the reprint of the 2nd edition of **A Field Guide to Tasmanian Fungi, by Genevieve Gates & David Ratkowsky** have now been distributed to book shops. This makes a total of 6,000 copies sold! The club no longer retains any stock. If you still want to buy a copy, check your local bookshop **now**, they may still have a few copies! Many nomenclature changes have been made since the last edition was published, which is why there will not be another reprint of the 2nd edition. The authors have no plans to publish a 3rd edition. The Club thanks both Genevieve and David for the work and dedication that was required to publish Edition 1 in 2014 and Edition 2 in 2016. It has been such a best seller for them both as well as the club.

The TFNC committee continues to explore other book publishing projects, and as soon as a Business Plan has been approved by the committee, it will be taken to members for approval. But as with many things, good books take time to write/produce!

Book Review title suggestions:

The editor of 'The Tasmanian Naturalist' - Sabine Borgis - is asking for any suggestions for books which could be reviewed for the 2022 edition of 'The Tasmanian Naturalist'. If you have a suggestion, please email her at editor@tasfieldnats.org.au

A reminder that members are able to obtain one free copy of the Clubs' history book - 'A Century Afield' by Janet Fenton. This book was published for our centenary in 2004, please ask our 'books salesperson' Anna McEldowney for one at any General Meeting.

The Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL) in Melbourne has finally finished scanning all editions of:

- The Tasmanian Naturalist from 1907 (when published)
- Easter Camp Reports 1906-1961 (when it was published separately from the newsletter/Bulletin)
- Our Newsletters and Bulletins from 1909 onwards

and they are now online and available to a world-wide audience at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/browse/contributor/TFNC#/titles>

We began this project in 2018, but COVID-19 delayed it by two years. In future all we have to do is to send them annually (but allowing for our one-year on-line embargo of our publications) the appropriate links for 'The Tasmanian Naturalist' and for our Bulletins Newsletters.

OUR LIBRARY

Whilst our library remains in the foyer of the Life Sciences Building at UTAS, we ARE now able to access it. Our library catalogue can be found on our website at: <https://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/library/>

By emailing any book requests to our Librarian Kevin Bonham (k_bonham@iinet.net.au) *at least a few days in advance of the meeting*, he will be able to bring the book to the next General Meeting for you to collect. The same rules apply as pre-COVID, that book loans are usually for a maximum of two months.

Any outstanding books currently on loan should be returned to the Librarian at any General meeting.

DONATIONS 2022

In March the committee agreed that TFNC will make \$500 donations this year to each to the following organisations:

- Inala Foundation
- Raptor Refuge
- Derwent Estuary Program
- Tasmanian Land Conservancy
- Threatened Plants Tasmania
- Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary

GENERAL MEETINGS, SPEAKERS and EXCURSIONS

Observation Book entries and photographs at General Meetings

The tradition of our observation book goes back to the late 1930s. We encourage members to report natural history observations from the previous month(s) at our general meeting and then to record them in the Observation Book. Last year we completed the transfer of these entries to our website as two searchable documents "TFNC Conservation Matters, Fauna and Flora Observations" <https://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/about-us/> (scroll down to the bottom of the page.)

Often members show photographs in this segment of the meeting, but these are often 'lost', as they not recorded in the observation book. With your help, there are two ways we can avoid this:

- Preferably email a copy of your selected images (maximum of three) to Annabel Carle at acarle90@gmail.com
- or leave hard copy photo(s) in the book as part of the entry and which can be subsequently scanned for the on-line version.

Excursions and iNaturalist:

As members know our Bulletin newsletter has always contained a report of our Excursions. But since 2021 our excursion observations have been entered into iNaturalist (and can be viewed) at <https://inaturalist.ala.org.au/projects/tasmanian-field-naturalists-club-tfnc>

We are encouraging/asking **more members** to record their observations on iNat - the same three or so members have been entering data for some of the *recent smaller excursions*, and this has meant we have not captured our *usual expected range* of observations. As always, it would be good to record on iNat **all** forms of natural history as we always have done and this includes fungi, lichens and birds, even if it is, as we have always done, just as an observation without a photo. iNat records these as 'casual observations' and although they will not be uploaded to the NVA or ALA, it does mean we retain the record for our own reference.

Annabel Carle is volunteering to enter into iNat those missing records for any member reluctant to use iNat, these will of course be noted as your observation. Please email them to her at acarle90@gmail.com

There are two ways to do this, please provide:

1. a list of named observations (i.e. without photos) which will be recorded as casual observations
2. suitably named photos on a USB or via Drobbox, which if your ID is agreed with according to the iNat rules these WILL be uploaded to NVA/ALA.

Excursions guidelines

A gentle reminder to members that in our excursion guidelines which can be found on our website at: <https://tasfieldnats.org.au/data/documents/2020-TFNC-Excursion-Guidelines-final.pdf>

We state:

"If you do arrange to share vehicles, please be ready to leave at the appointed time and to remember to pay the driver a reasonable share of vehicle costs at the end of the trip.

Please note: this a contribution towards travel costs, it is not a fare. The current recommendation is:-

- \$5 *per passenger* for short trips e.g. Hobart environs up to 50km return
- \$10 *per passenger* for longer trips – e.g. East coast, Tasman Peninsula or excursions greater than 50km return.

Please discuss payment with your driver as some trips may be more flexible or longer/shorter..."

Speakers:

Field Nats have only ever recorded the speaker's name and topic for talks presented at meetings, but never the topic. At the last committee meeting, we agreed that we would like to keep a better record of the talks, and that we would ask our future speakers for a *short* synopsis of their talk for publication in the Bulletin. As a further innovation, presentations will also be recorded and uploaded to our 'Speakers and Topics Archives' found on our website.

To this end, in this Bulletin there is a short synopsis of the talk that Eddie Gall gave as his President's address at the AGM 'The Hole in the Donut' and Kristi Ellingsen's presentation.

For those of you who missed the April General meeting: our first recorded presentation - Kristi Ellingsen's "**Alert not Alarmed - Improving the Public Perception of Insects**" - is on our website at: <https://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/news/>

Welcome to all New Members!

We always welcome new members and returning members at our meetings, but they are not always there to hear it! Please check out our website and contact any of the committee members with any queries or suggestions.

Our committee and contact details can be found at <https://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/membership/>

Information about our upcoming Speakers and Excursions can always be found on our website <https://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/>

Betsey Island Excursion dates for your diary!

The excursion will be held on **either June 4 or 5th 2022**. Fingers crossed for good weather this year! More information including cost will be available soon.

Errata: In the Bulletin January Bulletin #385. The date of the Inala Excursion was 27 November 2021 (and not 29 November 2021)



Mt Humbolt from Shining Mountain. Photo: Eddie Gall



Lake Curley & Mount Curley with *Dracophyllum milliganii*. Photo taken on Conical Mountain by Eddie Gall.