

TASMANIAN FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC.
established 1904.

BULLETIN

<http://www.tased.edu.au/tasonline/tasfield/>
Editor: Don Hird. ([email hirdd@primus.com.au](mailto:hirdd@primus.com.au))

Bulletin No. 302 (quarterly) April 2001

The Tasmanian Field Naturalists' Club encourages the study of natural history and supports conservation. We issue our journal *The Tasmanian Naturalist* annually in October. People with a range of ages, background and knowledge are welcome as members. Contact Genevieve Gates (6227 8638) for further information or GPO Box 68, Hobart, 7001.

General Meetings start at 7.45 p.m. on the first Thursday of the month, in the Life Science Building at the University of Tasmania. Outings are usually held the following weekend, meeting outside the to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery entrance in Macquarie Street. Bring lunch and all-weather outdoor gear.

If you are planning to attend an outing but have not been to the prior meeting, phone to check as to the timing of the excursion (with Genevieve Gates; 62 278 638 or Don Hird; 62 344 293). Unforeseen changes sometimes occur.

Program

Thurs. 3 May. 7.45p.m.: Jenny Whinnam from Parks and Wildlife will speak on Sphagnum Bogs and their ecology.

Sun 6 May Excurs. Meet at The Museum at 9.00 a.m. from where we will travel to Mt Field where not only the sphagnum but also the Fagus and berries will be close to their peak. Outdoor clothing and footwear for all conditions are necessary.

Thurs. 7 June Maria Novy and her husband Richard will talk on 'Caring for Reptiles' with real-live demonstrations of this subject and film of the birth of Bluetongue Lizards.

Sat 9 June Excurs. 10.00 a.m.: Two possibilities, details TBA. We will either visit Tas. Museum and Art Gallery for a demonstration and practical session on knapping, the art of creating stone artefacts from chunks of suitable stone. Kim Ackerman, curator of anthropology, will demonstrate this technology which has been of such importance in human history. Alternatively, we will visit the exciting but often hidden world of the microscopical at Tas Uni. Both of these excursions are planned for the near future, the actual one for June will depend on availability of personnel and venue to be advised.

Thurs. 5 July. 7.45p.m.: A talk entitled "Cockles and Mussels" will be delivered by Dr Tim McManus.

Sunday 8 July. 10.00 a.m.: MICROSCOPY: This will be an indoor practical demonstration of the wonderful world at the microbial level. Displays will include diagnostic spores of fungi, planktonic animals and plants, and other curios. Bring your own specimens if you wish. Meet at 10.15 a.m. at Life Sciences at Uni or at 10a.m. at the Museum.

NEWSFLASH:

Our latest publication; *Jewel Beetles of Tasmania, A Field Naturalist's Guide* is at the printers and will be officially launched by Dr Peter McQuillan on Friday June the 20th in the Zoology Gallery of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery at 5.30 p.m. All members are invited; wine and cheese will be served.

SGAP Flower Show – October 2001.

The time for this biennial event is again close, volunteer now. This year's theme is Gondwana. We aim to provide a small exhibition of our activities and specimens.

YEAR 2001 COMMITTEE

President Genevieve Gates

Vice President Kevin Bonham

Treasurer Anna McEldowney

Secretary Julia Scott

Bulletin Editor Don Hird

Walks & Talks Amanda Thomson

Naturalist Editor Owen Seeman

Librarian Janet Fenton

General Cttee Tom Terry

General Cttee Les Rubenach

FEDERATION WEEKEND 16-18 MAR

As we were interested in checking some areas for fungi and snails, David, Genevieve and I missed some of the official program at the recent Federation outing. We did get to see a live snake display (starring a large but very placid reptile called Bruce), and a talk on Tamar Valley landcare, and Genevieve led a microscopy session focussed mainly on fungi. The Federation meeting was short with no business except club reports. Among these, the Scamander flora reserve is close to a major expansion, the Launceston club will be hosting an Australian Naturalists Network conference with extended outings to the east and west coasts next year, and the King Island club noted local concerns about the management of the recent Lavinia Nature Reserve fire.

My most successful snail site on the weekend was Notley Gorge where I found 13 species including some not previously recorded from the Gorge. The most surprising of these was the uncommon *Thryasona marchianae*. I also found *Pernagera kingstonensis* in the Gorge, making this only the second locality in the state (St Columba Falls is the other) where *P. kingstonensis* and its dry-forest relative *P. officeri* have been found together. Another interesting snail find was a striking albino form of *Planilaoma luckmanii*, which may have been responsible for false records of the Cataract Gorge snail *Pasmaditta jungermanniae* from Notley Gorge in the past. The other sites we surveyed did not have as many snails, but I did find the undescribed Skemps snail (a listed rare species) at Lilydale Falls. This was the second specimen which I have found there.

EXCURSION REPORTS

Bruny Island Trip 6/7/8 April 2001-04-10 report by Anna McEldowney

Those of you who like abalone will be sorry you missed the trip to Bruny Island this month! When Genevieve, Mark and I arrived at the Forestry house at Adventure Bay late on Friday night we were greeted by Don cooking abalone freshly caught in the bay.

David, Gilbert and John arrived next morning by the early ferry and we set off for Mt Mangana. The rainforest is very interesting and exists as an understorey to the eucalypts. It had obviously suffered in the drought this last summer with the most affected species appearing to be the young celery top pines. In true Field Nats style it took us about 4 hours to reach the summit- Kevin found the hunting to be successful and recent rains had brought the fungi out including some fine *Agaricus* which we collected for dinner. Echidnas had been

digging alongside the track and although the day was very warm the only snake seen was a very small whip snake. There were not a lot of birds about, even in the more open parts of the forest. From the summit the views would have been splendid if it wasn't for all the smoke from the regeneration burns but it was a chance to have lunch and for Luis to have a nap! Having looked at everything on the way up it only took us 25 minutes to get back to the vehicles!

We had arranged to meet Tonia Cochran at her property "Inala" between Lunawanna and Cloudy Bay. Tonia runs an ecotourism business (Inala) based on the birdlife, orchids and interesting plant communities on her property and she includes tours of Bruny Island and the rest of Tasmania according to the interests of her visitors. "Inala" is home to about 70 forty-spotted pardalotes and is a nesting site for swift parrots. It is fast becoming a desirable destination for bird watchers from all over the world. Tonia took us for a walk over her property and we were able to see where she is replanting the *E. viminalis* which is the preferred tree of the pardalotes and fencing areas of the farm to make them exclusively wildlife habitats.

More abalone for tea that night before we were reminded about the realities of life in the country when the water tanks ran dry- it was a good thing there were only nine of us staying in the house.

Sunday morning saw us running the gauntlet of the leeches on the Mavista falls track in search of fungi and birds then it was out to Fluted Cape before the cold change made some of us wish we hadn't worn our shorts. It was still too dry for any fungi along the coast track and we were mindful of David Leaman's warnings about edges of cliffs suddenly collapsing as Luis, Patrick and Mark played games of brinkmanship.

With excellent timing the rain was just beginning to set in as we boarded the ferry.....

Footnote: The "egg" of the starfish fungus *Aseroe rubra* "hatched" when I got it home and fully expanded in about an hour. While it is very beautiful it is not a good thing to have in the kitchen as it has the smell of a teenage boy's socks!

Snails of Bruny Island

Bruny Island has a rich native land snail fauna. On the club's trip there I increased the number of species known from Bruny from 25 to 30, and more will probably be found once North Bruny receives more attention. The deep mixed forest leaf litter, moist mossy conditions and abundant dolerite boulders on Mt Mangana in particular are ideal for snails, and I found a massive 14 species during our walk there. These included *Prolesophanta* sp. "Francistown", a tiny glossy yellow and red striped snail which was previously known only from the area between Dover, Recherche Bay and Precipitous Bluff. The Fluted Cape walk, featuring dry forests more reminiscent of Mt Nelson than the rest of South Bruny, also yielded some surprises. Along the clifftops I found *Pedicamista* sp. "Southport", which is known from only a few coastal localities and has not been recorded so high above the sea before. Walking down off the Cape through sedgy forests I rolled several dozen rocks without finding any snails, until one revealed *Pernagera tasmaniae*, a species more at home in very wet forests and surprisingly unrecorded from the island before. In general, South Bruny's snail fauna seems most similar to that of far southern Tasmania, rather than the Cygnet and North Bruny areas.

Obituary for Marcus Hurburgh, contributed by Len and Margery Wall.

The Tasmanian Naturalist in October 1926 recorded in the Annual Report "One aspect to which it is desired to draw attention is the increase in membership as regards juniors. A large number of boys from the Hutchins School have joined the club, and under the guidance of Mr Norman Walker are taking a keen interest in natural history and the interest aroused in

early life may be of great benefit in future years."

In the October 1927 Naturalist the annual report recorded that lecturettes had been given by seven of these boys, two of which were

On a trip to Dodges Ferry, by Alan Hewer, and

On the Friendliness of Wrens, by Marcus Hurburg(h).

We are still today indebted to Mr Norman Walker for encouraging these two valuable members who gave so much to our club.

After the war Marcus and Isa took a keen interest in the affairs of the club, attending meetings outings and camps with their children Heather, Pam and David, Marcus also served for a term as president.

This interest remained with him, as he and Isa attended meetings until recent months, and he nearly always had interesting questions for the speaker.

Marcus died on December 19th 2000. We give thanks for his life and may the memories of his full life help Isa and her family in this time of sorrow.

Conservation Notes

Don Hird hirdd@primus.com.au

see also our website <http://www.tased.edu.au/tasonline/tasfield/conserv/>

Two different but related notes, each on the public face of conservation. First, recently I met some young people collecting donations to Greenpeace at Salamanca Place. On enquiry they assured me that Greenpeace is active in local issues, but, as they had recently arrived from overseas, they were unable to provide details of these activities. I had previously seen work of this sort advertised by Greenpeace, no knowledge of or commitment to conservation required, just skills in presentation and fundraising. This reminded me of a Greenpeace activity two years ago where they heavily criticised CCAMLR (the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources) for its supposedly inadequate control of Antarctic commercial fisheries. To me the control initiatives seemed at least a step in the right direction, but when I looked behind the headlines on the Greenpeace internet site there was no justification for or explanation of its stand. Both of these indicate to me the superficiality of some conservation groups, we need critical analysis of many environmental issues but there is a substantial risk that fundraising and related attention-seeking mar the likelihood of constructive outcomes.

Secondly, in January I ascended the magnificent Mt Picton from the Picton Valley. As well as being an interesting place in itself, Mt Picton provides a fine viewing platform. Part of this view, however, is the large-scale logging coups of the Picton Valley, some of them in areas excised from the Hartz Mountains National Park specifically for logging. Having seen a spotted-tailed quoll in the rainforest on the walking track and a potoroo at the nearby Reuben Falls, and with my general interest in marsupial ecology, I later checked the Tasmanian fauna database for mammal records. None were evident for that large and often heavily impacted area. Regeneration of such logging coups usually involves use of the 1080 mammal poison, targeted at browsing and grazing marsupials, but with the inherent potential to kill greater numbers of non-target protected species ("collateral damage"). This is a topic which is inadequately discussed, including with recent Sunday tabloid newspaper reports. There is almost no evidence for the precautionary principle being applied to mitigate this collateral damage, especially in conservation review documents like the State of Environment Report or in the Regional Forest Agreement documents. There are some erroneous rhetorical claims against 1080 but these don't excuse the official silence and misinformation.

Lastly, having dealt out some criticism myself, as editor I am willing to consider publishing responses – a discussion we all deserve.