



# Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc.

# BULLETIN

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Quarterly Bulletin

No 354

April 2014

The Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club encourages the study of natural history and supports conservation. People of any age and background are welcome as members.

For more information, visit website <http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/>; email [info@tasfieldnats.org.au](mailto:info@tasfieldnats.org.au); write to GPO Box 68, Hobart, 7001; or phone our secretary on (03)62278638.

**We welcome articles and interesting photos for the Bulletin. If you would like to contribute to the next edition, please email the editor with your article or photos by June 1.**

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## Program

**General Meetings** start at **7.15 pm** for 7.30 pm on the first Thursday of the month and feature a guest speaker on natural history (no meetings or excursions in January). Meetings are held in the Life Science Building at the University of Tasmania.

**Excursions** are usually held the following Saturday or Sunday, meeting at 9.00 am outside the Museum in Macquarie St, Hobart. Bring lunch and all-weather outdoor gear. If you are planning to attend an outing, but have not been to the prior meeting, please confirm the details on the club website as late changes are sometimes made.

<b>Thurs 3 April</b>	Guest Speaker: <b>Sue Robinson</b> " <i>Rainbow Lorikeets in Tasmania</i> "
<b>Sat 5 April</b>	<b>Excursion:</b> Kingston Beach area
<b>18-20 Apr</b>	Easter Camp – Valley Campus (Fawltly Towers) Fingal valley
<b>Thurs 1 May</b>	Guest Speaker: Dr Nigel Swarts " <i>Tas. Orchid Conservation &amp; their Mycorrhizal Fungal Specificity.</i> "
<b>Sat 3 May</b>	Excursion to be decided
<b>Thurs 5 June:</b>	Guest Speaker: Dr Geoff While " <i>Promiscuity, Parental Care &amp; Evolution of Social Organization in a Lizard</i> "
<b>Sat 7 June</b>	Excursion (not related to above talk) to be decided
<b>Thurs 3 July</b>	Guest Speaker: Dr Roger Proctor " <i>Oceans of Data-Australia's Integrated Marine Observing System</i> "
<b>18-26 Oct</b>	Australian Naturalists Network get-together 2014 at the Lea <a href="http://tasfieldnats.weebly.com/australian-naturalists-network.html">http://tasfieldnats.weebly.com/australian-naturalists-network.html</a>
For details of talks and excursions beyond this date, please check the website at <a href="http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/">http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/</a>	

## Subs due now

A reminder that 2014 subs were due on 1 January, and can be paid by cheque to the Club address, by Paypal (follow the links on our website <http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/>) or by EFT to the Club account BSB 067 102 A/c 2800 0476. Please identify your payment with your name and initial.

Family \$35                      Single \$30                      Single Junior or Concession \$25

## Murdunna Excursion 10 November 2013

Don Hird

On Sunday 10th November 16 members and two visitors met at Murdunna on a breezy late spring day with the odd light shower about.



Looking for orchids. Photo: Geoff Carle

Our destination, approximately 2.5 km further along the Arthur Highway, had been recommended for its orchids by Mark Wapstra, and was more conveniently located than the originally planned destination of Lime Bay.

Even before we alighted from the vehicles we could see orchids blooming. The species list grew as we initially explored the northern side of the road along a bush remnant. Later we crossed the road, and wandered up a hill with outcropping dolerite and woodland of several eucalypts including stringybark, white and blue gum. The orchid list continued to grow although not all specimens seen were fully open.

Birds seen were fantail and pallid cuckoo, grey shrike thrush, striated and spotted pardalote, Australian magpie, blue wren, yellow-throated honeyeater, yellow wattlebird, grey fantail and dusky robin. Froglets, *Crinia signifera*, were heard calling. Echidna diggings were prominent.

Tea-tree flowers were being visited by honeybees and the odd hoverfly, but no jewel beetles were spotted.



*Calochilus herbaceus*. Photo: Geoff Carle

The following fungi were observed (List from Genevieve Gates).

*Leratiomyces ceres*

*Pisolithus microcarpus*

*Pycnoporus coccineus*

*Psathyrella candolleana*

*Laccaria* sp.

*Amanita* 'silvery grey, no volva or annulus'

*Lichenomphalia chromacea*

*Mesophellia glauca*

*Poronia ericii*



*Poronia ericii*. Photo: Margaret Warren

Orchid species (list supplied by Kevin Bonham.)

*Caladenia carnea*

*Caladenia fuscata* – probable

*Caladenia gracilis*

*Caladenia alata*

*Calochilus herbaceus*

*Calochilus paludosus*

*Calochilus platychlila*

*Prasophyllum lindleyanum*

*Prasophyllum brevilabre*

*Prasophyllum concinnum*

*Prasophyllum apoxychilum*

*Prasophyllum* cf *pulchellum* (extreme form of *apoxychilum*?)

*Microtis* spp (not identified to species)

*Thelymitra erosa*

*Thelymitra aristata*

*Thelymitra juncifolia*

*Thelymitra nuda*

*Thelymitra pauciflora*

*Thelymitra rubra*

*Thelymitra* spp (c. 3 other species in *nuda/pauciflora* group)

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## Shorebird Habitat Excursion, 8 February, 2014

### Deirdre and Mick Brown

**E**ls Wakefield led 12 others on Saturday's excursion to shorebird habitats, mostly around Orielton Lagoon which is part of Pittwater Nature reserve. The day was hot (29 degrees) and sunny. At the time of the excursion the tide was fully out and on the turn, so the birds were mostly in the distance. However Els's main purpose was to show us some good sites for observation of shore birds, including some less common species.

Our first stop was at Sewage Point on the western shore of Orielton Lagoon. Little Black Cormorants and Black-faced Cormorants were observed fishing, and a Musk Duck was splashing about in the typical behavior adopted to attract a mate.



*Field Nats at Midway Point. Photo: Beth Heap*

#### Birds observed on the lagoon at this point were:

- 5 Chestnut Teal
- 9 Silver Gull
- 2 Little Black Cormorant
- 1 Black-faced Cormorant
- 1 Little Wattlebird
- 1 Green Rosella
- 2 Pied Oystercatcher
- Kelp Gulls
- 1 Hoary-headed Grebe
- 1 Pelican
- 1 Great-crested Grebe
- 2 Starling
- Musk Lorikeets
- 5 Swan (1 adult and 4 young)
- 2 Musk Duck (one male calling)

We then drove on through suburban Midway Point to Greenshank Point where it is possible to walk down through a row of vacant building blocks to the lagoon edge. A pair of Eastern Rosellas and Musk Lorikeets were seen in the eucalypts. Four magpies were sighted, and their distinctive mellifluous song joined the quick high pitched whistles of the Musk Lorikeets. We were

delighted to see a pair of Greenshanks on the shore, and were able to count seven in all when they flew off.

#### Birds observed at Greenshank Point

- c. 4 Magpie
- 15 Silver Gull
- 6 Raven
- 6 Common Greenshank
- 1 Little Egret
- 1 Noisy Miner
- 2 Eastern Rosella
- Musk Lorikeets
- 1 Caspian Tern
- 24 Masked Lapwing
- Musk Duck
- 6 Pied Oystercatchers
- 3 Wood Duck
- Native Hens
- Little Wattle Bird
- Cormorant, Great
- Cormorant, Little black
- Cormorant, Black-faced
- Kelp gulls
- 78 Teal (mixed Chestnut and Grey Teal)



*Greenshanks. Photo: Mick Brown*

We drove on along a track and parked on a grassy space overlooking Pittwater Golf Course to the saltmarsh.

This site provides a good overview of the lagoon, however it is not possible to approach the shore owing to the presence of the golf course and dangers posed by flying balls (not to mention the 'members only' warning sign). Indeed, a man in a party of golfers stopped to assure himself that we would not wander further.

## Golf Course lookout

Masked Lapwing	Starlings
Welcome Swallows	Native Hen
Noisy Miners	Silver Gulls

Our next stop was on Shark Point Road at the northern end of Orielton Lagoon. At the stile and Pittwater Nature Reserve sign a walking track leads to the saltmarsh. Right at this entry point there is a small population of the rare and threatened *Calocephalus citreus*, or Lemon Beauty Heads, a small herb which is now in prolific flower. We did not walk further, but Els said this is a good place to see Chats, Pipits, Skylarks, Pacific Golden Plovers and Red-capped Plovers.



*Calocephalus citreus*. Photo: Beth Heap

Our final stop on Orielton was at Cemetery Point in Sorell township. A grassy track leads to the lagoon shore, and access to the actual beach is prohibited as this is a bird breeding site. The grassed area is degraded and judging by the litter, is well-used.

Warnings to watch our steps were provided, by Els who has seen discarded syringes, and Mick Brown who saw a large tiger snake here a few days earlier.

We viewed a pair of Great Crested Grebes fishing in the middle of the lagoon, a pair of Pacific Golden Plovers on the shore, and a resting Caspian Tern. On Susie Islet our binoculars and telescopes showed pelicans, Great Cormorants and the inevitable Silver and Kelp Gulls. The highlight was observing a group of nine Pacific Golden Plovers on the shore and in the samphire.

## Cemetery Point

- 2 Little Pied Cormorant
- 3 Silver Gull
- 5 Masked Lapwing
- 1 Native Hen
- Hoary-headed Grebe
- 9 Pacific Golden Plover
- Great-crested Grebe
- 1 Caspian Tern
- 2 Red-necked Stint
- Musk Duck

## Suzie Islet (not counted)

- Pelican
- Silver Gull
- Kelp Gull
- Great Cormorant
- Little Black Cormorant

We ate lunch in the gazebo at the park opposite the Police Station in Sorell. A praying mantis was also occupying the gazebo, and afforded some distraction for Kevin, Beth and Amanda who took photographs of it.



*Purple-winged Mantis (Tenodera australasiae)*

Photo: Beth Heap

Our final stop was at Lauderdale canal. We crossed the busy road to the beach fronting the mudflats. Sadly this beach is littered with rubbish- broken bottles, decaying plastic bags, old shoes and food wrappers.

The tide was well out so once again birds were distant, but the following were observed:

## Lauderdale

- 10+ Red-necked Stint
- Pied Oystercatcher
- Masked Lapwing
- Silver Gull
- 2 Chestnut Teal
- 2 White-faced Heron
- Yellow Wattlebird
- Greenfinch (juvenile)



*Great crested grebe fishing on Orielton Lagoon.*

Photo: Mick Brown

Bird lists in this article were supplied by Els Wakefield.

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## Jewel Beetle Excursion

Kevin Bonham

Last year the club was involved in the first ever finds of the Miena Jewel Beetle (*Castiarina insculpta*) in good numbers. This species, once presumed extinct, was rediscovered in 2004, but had been rarely seen until our trips in February 2013 (see the 2013 Tasmanian Naturalist for more). The weather a day short of the anniversary of last year's jewel beetle flurry was a scorcher on the Plateau so a small group of us organised at short notice to go and see how the beetle was getting on.

We quickly found that the species' host plant (*Ozothamnus hookeri*) was not fully in flower, and were unable to find the beetle at all at Liawenee, Lake Ada and a couple of points along the Lake Augusta road. It was a strange experience to search bushes that had swarmed with the species only a year ago and yet not see it. We did however find the poorly known *Castiarina rudis* (also seen on the outing two years back) – at least

two female specimens, with at least one probable male sighted, at Lake Ada. (A few days later Abbey and I also saw what was probably this species at Lake Dobson, Mt Field).

Other searches for *C. insculpta* by various hunters also had little success, with a general impression that the host plant flowered late and not so well as in other seasons. Karen Richards and Chris Spencer managed to find the only confirmed living specimen known to me for the season, while Simon Grove was involved in an unconfirmed sighting (specimen seen flying only). For whatever reason this was not a good season for the beetle, increasing the likelihood that what happened in 2013 occurs either unreliably or perhaps even very rarely.

Roll on the 2015 search!

Thanks to all who attended this one.

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## From the President

Kevin Bonham

Greetings Field Nats. Your new President for this year is also one of your old Presidents – I was last in this role from 1997-1999. When I finished the previous run, I did intend I could be up for another stint in the far-off future, say when I was forty-something .. and it's come around again so quickly.

This will be an exciting and busy year for the Club. We've already had the launch of Genevieve and David's milestone publication *Fungi of Tasmania* and will soon be embarking on our Easter Camp to the Fingal Valley, an area surprisingly little visited by many naturalists. Our biggest event comes in late October with the Australian Naturalists Network meeting at the Lea. This will be a great opportunity for us to showcase our state's flora, fauna and landforms and also the great body of knowledge within our club's ranks. Please consider helping with caretaking or acting as guide on the buses; the more people pitch in, the easier it is for a club the size of ours to run a successful event.

Alongside all that we will have our normal program of monthly talks and outings and I can't say enough of the great work done by Amanda in arranging this program, which is really the backbone of the club's activities.

My immediate predecessor Greg Heap was only President for the one year but in that time was an entertaining chairman who brought a great innovation to the way club meetings are presented, in the form of the Power Point and photo backdrops to meetings. I will be trying to continue this but please be aware I'm a

relative technical duffer who still uses Office 2000, and very busy outside FieldNats hours; I will need a lot of help from other committee members to gather photos and so on for use as illustrations. (If you've taken a good photo to use as backdrop, please email it to [president@tasfieldnats.org.au](mailto:president@tasfieldnats.org.au)).

I'm very pleased to welcome new committee members Kristi Ellingsen (Vice-President) and Deirdre Brown (Bulletin Editor). I thank Beth Heap (outgoing Bulletin Editor) and Simon Grove (formerly Naturalist Editor and more recently general committee member) for their great contributions to the committee. Also our thanks to Qug McKendrick-King who handed over the position of Librarian to Elizabeth Bicevskis after many years in the role. And to those committee members who have volunteered their time and signed up for another year.

By way of brief bio for those who don't know me so well, I've been in the club since my mid-teens in the 1980s. I'm an expert on land snails, and have interests in many other areas of natural history (especially orchids, millipedes and beetles). I work as a casual invertebrate research contractor, increasingly also as an election analyst, and travel to strange parts of the world in my role as a national chess administrator. As befits a President, I'm far too good at talking, but I have rather poor and patchy hearing, especially around the range of the background whirr in our lecture theatre. So if you see me cupping my ears or acting vague while you are talking at a meeting, be not afraid, it isn't you; it's me!

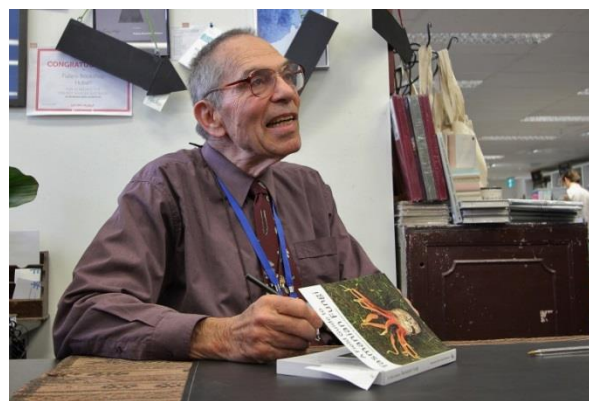
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## Launch of 'A Field Guide to Tasmanian Fungi' by Genevieve Gates & David Ratkowsky

Fullers Book shop was jam-packed at 5pm on 27 February for the launch, by Professor Jim Reid, of Genevieve and David's book. After the speeches a large queue of purchasers formed waiting to get their copies signed by the authors. The book topped the non-fiction best-seller list soon after.

A Field Guide to Tasmanian Fungi has descriptions of 600 native and introduced species from all of Southern Australia, superbly illustrated in full colour with contributions from a number of nature photographers, many of whom are TFN members.

If you haven't got your copy yet, you can buy it from Fullers Book Shop for \$39.95, or from a Tas. Field Nats meeting for the member's price of \$35.



Photographs of Genevieve and David at the launch by Amanda Thompson

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## Knocklofty Excursion, 9 March 2014

### Genevieve Gates

We took the 'summit loop' at Knocklofty with no fixed purpose other than to 'naturalise' in a leisurely fashion (is there any other way?) through the Reserve to the accompaniment of various birdsongs.



Field Nats walking through pulchella and obliqua forest.

Photo: Amanda Thomson

It was rather a cool day to start with but the cloudy skies cleared and the air temperature leapt to the predicted high 20s. The sandstone outcrops at the beginning of the walk were reminiscent of the 'hanging gardens of Babylon', being festooned with various native plants typical of a dry woodland. As it is now autumn, not many plants were in flower although the dolly bush (*Cassinia aculeata*) was still covered in prolific whitish blossom and the parrot food *Goodenia ovata* bore some ragged yellow flowers. The usually bright yellow scaly buttons (*Leptorhynchos squamatus* subsp. *squamatus*) of spring and summer were shriveled and browning off in the hot, dry conditions. We spent some time examining large holes of wolf spiders (*Lycosa tasmanica*) and trapdoors (probably *Migas nitens*), the latter with the beautifully formed round lids beside the holes but no one was at home. Soon after, a cry of delight from Amanda brought us all running (well, maybe walking at an increased gait, after all it was hot!) to examine the dead jewel beetle (*Castiarina* aff. *wilsoni*) still beautifully iridescent and

then with the radiant heat increasing, the metallic skinks (*Niveoscincus metallicus*) came out to bask on the rocks.

The summit track is 3.7 km long and popular with joggers, walkers, dog walkers and bike riders and we were overtaken many times as we followed the path through this beautiful dry forest on the foothills of Mt Wellington. I looked up and found we were in a *Banksia* and *Hakea* grove of many tall bushy shrubs, the former bearing 'brushes' in different stages of development.

Robyn was excited to find a dead Pindi moth (*Abantiades latipennis*), which is a species of moth in the Hepialidae family with the common names of swift moth or ghost moth. It is endemic to Australia and is most likely to be seen in temperate rainforest where eucalypts are present, as the larvae feed primarily on the roots of these trees. The females lay eggs during flight in a scattering fashion and the larvae live for over eighteen months underground, while adult moths survive for approximately one week, as they have no mouthparts with which to feed. The moths are preyed upon by a number of predators, including bats and owls. The males are generally smaller in size and while both sexes are brown overall the males are paler with more prominent identifying silver bars with darker margins on the wings than those of the female.

When we stopped to look at the Pindi, Sabine noticed a live *Epicoma melanosticta*, a moth with a spectacular orangy top knot. This track is so full of surprises and the next one came when we entered a patch of *Allocasuarina* before reaching the more open flat summit where we had lunch before taking the downward part of the loop back to the car park.

On the return downhill part of the loop many of the rocks on the fire trail had fossils of shells, clues to a previous marine habitat millions of years ago and back at the carpark Annie and I were treated to an aerial display by two dragonflies. The others joined us with another naturalist sighting of a Yellow-winged Locust (*Gastrimargus musicus*) depositing eggs in the dirt.



*Yellow-winged locust depositing eggs*  
Photo: Amanda Thomson

I don't suppose the locust was aware it was the centre of such attention. Amanda must have had her jewel beetle spotting glasses on because she found another beauty, *Melobasis purpurascens*, in shimmering emerald green and pink.

Although the bush was bone dry and the only fungi to be seen were some dehydrated polypores, the different patches of vegetation will be very interesting for fungi surveying and I will certainly be going back when we get some rain.



*Nest of Dusky woodswallows* Photo: Amanda Thomson

#### Birds:

- Green Rosella
- Spotted Pardalote
- Striated Pardalote
- Yellow-throated Honeyeater
- Yellow Wattlebird
- Grey Shrike-thrush
- Dusty Woodswallow
- Black Currawong
- Grey Fantail
- Welcome Swallow
- Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
- Flame Robin (female)



*Burrow entrance of trap-door spider *Migas nitens*(?), with its trap-door* Photo: Amanda Thomson

### Jewel beetles

*Castiarina wilsoni*

*Melobasis purpurascens*

### Chrysomelid beetles

*Chaetocnema wilsoni erichsoni*

*Monolepta* sp.

### Spider holes

*Lycosa tasmanica* — with the silk cover

*Migas nitens* — with the cap

### Moths

*Epicoma melanosticta*

Oecophorid moth (it feeds on decaying animals and fungi! See p. 186 of 'Wings').

### Dehydrated fungi

*Phellinus robusta*

*Perenniporia ochroleuca*

*Fomitopsis lilacinogilva*

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## Utricularia australis

### Mick and Deirdre Brown

This interesting plant does not produce roots and is insectivorous, having bladders at the base of its leaflets to trap insects. A recent sighting was made of the species flowering in a stagnant pond filled with algae and Myriophyllum at the First Basin in Launceston. The sighting was published in the Examiner newspaper and reported to us at the last meeting by Mark Wapstra.

It is listed as rare on the Tasmanian Threatened species list, but the authorities consider that its status probably needs re-evaluation. It is known from several places and may be locally abundant, but overlooked because of its resemblance to Myriophyllum species when not flowering.

At the first Basin Utricularia was growing with purple loosestrife, *Lythrum salicaria*, which is a tri-stylous species. Each of the different forms are self incompatible with, for example, only the long-stamen plants being able to pollinate the long-style plants. This mechanism was first described by Darwin in the 1892.



*Utricularia australis* Photo Mick Brown

We went in search of the *Utricularia* at the First Basin and were able easily to locate it thanks to Mark's excellent location description!

*U. australis* was first described by Robert Brown in 1810.



Purple loosestrife, *Lythrum salicaria*, the long style form.  
Photo: Mick Brown