

# Bulletin

<https://tasfieldnats.org.au>

Quarterly Bulletin No. 374 April 2019

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## What's coming up?

Thursday 2nd May - Meeting. Guest speaker Stefan Eberhard will present:  
*35 years Under the Earth - Subterranean Ecology and Cave Diving*

Sunday 5th May - Excursion - Rocky Whelan's Cave, kunanyi/Mt Wellington.

Thursday 6th June - Meeting-Guest speaker Simon Grove will present:  
*Exploring Tasmania's deep-sea coral reefs.*

Saturday 8th June - Excursion - Possibly a beach walk on Marion Bay.

*Field Nats at Gypsy Bay in April. What are they looking at?  
See back page  
Photo: Amanda Thomson*

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**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.

# The Big Punchbowl

Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th  
February 2019

## First, some background:

The Tasmanian Land Conservancy (TLC) acquired this land on Freycinet Peninsula in 2015, important for its diversity of habitats in close proximity. The reserve comprises 240 hectares to the eastern side of the vast and shallow Moulting Lagoon, a designated RAMSAR Site. A further 75 hectares was added to the reserve last year, including Long Point on the western side of the outlet channel from Moulting Lagoon.

The area has high conservation value as the TLC explains in its background report:

“The area contains a diverse range of predominantly ephemeral freshwater wetlands that vary in size, depth, the relative extent and duration of inundation and in floristic composition. The combination of marine, estuarine, littoral and freshwater environments in the vicinity provides a huge diversity of habitat for terrestrial fauna especially waterbirds, and coastal and littoral invertebrates.”

As TFNC donated towards the Big Punchbowl project, we looked forward to a two-day field trip there in February.



Field Nats assembled at the entrance to The Big Punchbowl  
Photograph: Sandra O'Neill

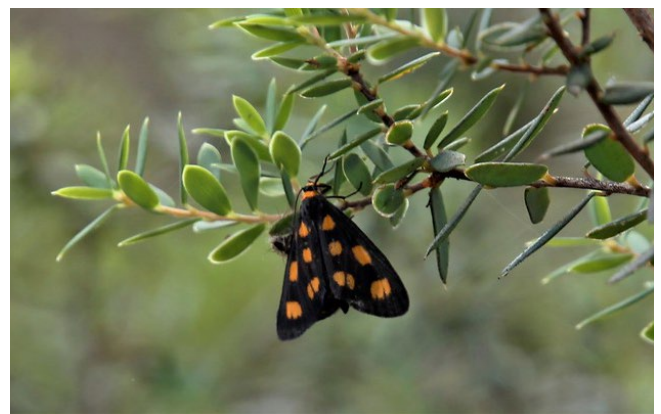
## The TFNC excursion:

On Saturday 16th, 22 Field Nats and friends assembled at the reserve's car-park for a boot-scrubbing and disinfecting ceremony to prevent the introduction of the root-rot pathogen *Phytophthora cinnamomi* which devastates many heathland species including the slow-growing grass-trees (*Xanthorrhoea*). The obligatory group photo was interrupted by a charming wolf spider which

attracted the cameras, but we eventually headed off down the track towards the Big Punchbowl. The woodland was dominated by *Eucalyptus amygdalina*, *Allocasuarina*, *Banksia* and *Kunzea ambigua* and occasional *E. viminalis*. Butcher birds were calling, butterflies and dragonflies flitted about and a cacophony of cicada and cricket song was ever present. Many discarded cicada shells festooned shrubs. Underfoot the ground was springing with grasshoppers including the pygmy grasshopper. A spectacular spiky black and white Spiny Spider *Austracantha minax* clinging in its a web caused some excitement, as did gorgeous iridescent green Christmas beetles.

The Big Punchbowl itself is the largest of a number of circular basins (known as deflation hollows) on the reserve, thought to be wind-erosion hollows formed during the Cainozoic. The depressions are very shallow and apparently only hold water following heavy rain. Ducks evidently enjoy visiting then, but happily, the old duck-shooting hides have fallen into disuse. About half a kilometre across, the centre of the Big Punchbowl is a mass of grey and dry freshwater sedges and rushes surrounded by a barren margin of cracked mud (due to the wet/dry cycle), with *Kunzea* scrub around the perimeter. The dominant grey was enlivened by flashes of colour as yellow-winged grasshoppers leapt from the rushes. There was much evidence of Bennetts Wallaby; wombats had been digging for roots of rushes, and in the apparently barren zone, *Banksia* and *Kunzea* seedlings were springing up.

As Keith Corbett noted in his report to TLC on the geomorphology, “progressive ingress of vegetation around the margins...suggests the wetted area has been shrinking”. This ephemeral pond would look delightful after rain in spring when the rushes are green and flowers are in blossom. The presence of Aboriginal stone artefacts is testimony to the past productivity of the site.



Spotted Lichen Moth - Erebidae *Asura cervicalis*  
Photograph: Amanda Thomson

In the afternoon we walked to the foreshore of Moulting Lagoon and watched Caspian Terns diving (rather successfully) for small fish. Moulting Lagoon is fringed by a dense succulent saline herbaceous plant community, mainly *Sarcocornia*, its bright green eye-catching after the grey tracks in the dry woodland.



Feather horned beetle  
Photograph: Amanda Thomson

A few people saw the hoped-for White-bellied Sea-eagle, and also on our return we spotted a pair of Black-faced Cuckoo Shrikes.

With 9 starters on Sunday, we followed tracks through more heathy country with sandy soil to the south of Barney Ward's Bay, returning via Barney Ward's Lagoon, a small intermittent lagoon almost connected to the coast of Moulting Lagoon and characterised by succulent saline herbland vegetation.

We were amazed at the number of Feather horned beetles *Rhipicera femorata* zooming over our heads along the track. At last one stopped long enough for a photo!

Another less cooperative subject for the camera was a Mountain Dragon, its patterned grey body almost perfectly camouflaged amongst the grey leaf litter. A large jewel beetle (28mm long) *Themognatha mitchelli* was found on the track, probably dead, or "playing dead" very effectively. Amanda followed wolf spiders all day with her camera, and was surprised by their abundance in the dried up basin of Barney Ward's Lagoon.

Another visit to this reserve, in springtime after rain, would be worthwhile.

Reference and further reading, see the TLC website: <https://tasland.org.au/reserves/the-big-punchbowl/>

**Janet Fenton**

## Observations from Amanda Thomson

### Invertebrates

- Christmas Beetle *Lucanidae Lamprima aurata*
- Darkling Beetle - *Lepispilus sulicollis* (both days)
- Feather/Fan Horned Beetle – *Rhipiceridae Rhipicera sp.* (both days)
- Weevil – *Curculionidae ? Pelororhinus cf. margaritosa*
- Jewel Beetle *Themognatha mitchelli*
- Bird-of-Paradise Flies – *Callipappidae Callipappis sp.*
- Black Cicada *Diemeniana tillyardi*
- Spotted Lichen moth *Erebidae Asura cervicalis Abiantiades hyalinatus* - Wing only
- Abiantiades cf. labyrinthicus* male
- Dragonfly – unknown, in flight
- Damselfly *Lestidae, Austrolestes leda* –
- Wandering Ringtail
- Green Mantid/Garden Mantid – *Orthodera ministralis*
- Eastern Plague Locust – *Oedaleus australis*
- Various grasshoppers
- Spider Wasp- Tribe *Ageniellini pending ID*
- Wingless female flower wasp found in the dunes of Sandpiper Beach, Swanwick
- Spider - *Portacosa cinerea* found both days in the carpark, also at Moulting Lagoon
- Lycosa sp ?* found on Moulting Lagoon foreshore in seagrass
- Green Araneidae ? in sac retreat
- Russian Tent Spider – *Cyrtophora hirta*
- Jewel Spider - *Gasteracantha minax*
- Araneus* variant of *lodricula ?*
- Jumping spider - Tiny one found in *Sarcocornia*

### Lizards/skinks

- Agamidae, Mountain Dragon – Rankinia diemensis*

### Fungi

- Phellinus robustus*

### Birds (Els Wakefield)

- Australian Pelican
- Black-faced Cormorant
- Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike
- Brown Thornbill
- Butcherbird
- Caspian Tern
- Dusky Woodswallow
- Eastern Spinebill
- Forest Raven

Golden Whistler  
 Great Cormorant  
 Green Rosella  
 Grey Butcherbird  
 Grey Fantail  
 Little Pied Cormorant  
 Magpie  
 Noisy Miner  
 Pied Oystercatcher  
 Scarlet Robin  
 Silver Gull  
 Superb Fairy Wren  
 Tasmanian Thornbill  
 White-bellied Sea Eagle  
 White-faced Heron  
 Yellow-throated Honeyeater

### Snails (Kevin Bonham)

I had only found one land snail in a few hours on the Big Punchbowl trip until we came to a small dogwood slope above a creek mouth between Barneys Bluff and Breakfast Point. This spot had excellent leaf litter and five species were found:

*Caryodes dufresnii*  
*Paralaoma hobarti*  
*Laomavix collisi*  
*Scelidoropa officeri*  
*Scelidoropa* sp “Hop Pole”.

*Scelidoropa* sp “Hop Pole” was an exciting find, previously known only from an area 25 km NNW of Big Punchbowl, where Bob Mesibov discovered it a few years ago. It belongs to the *Scelidoropa tamarensis* group, which includes several localised forms that may or may not be distinct species. It was interesting to find it living together with *S. officeri* in the litter.



Barney Wards Lagoon  
 Photograph: Amanda Thomson

## Lonnavale Post-Bushfire Excursion

Sunday March 10<sup>th</sup>. 2019

Around ten members met near Judbury en route to our Lonnavale destination. We were joined by several locals with an interest in nature in general and mycology in particular.

The theme of the day was post-bushfire observation at the somewhat remote homesite of our host, whose main residence was destroyed in the fires of a few weeks earlier. We rearranged transport for the final few kilometres along a roughish track parallel to the Huon River.



Bushfire aftermath at Lonnavale  
 Photograph: Genevieve Gates

On reaching the forested areas, a mix of plantation and natural forests, it was quite evident that the effects of the wildfires had been quite patchy in that area. Whether that was due to multiple fires each started by lightning or perhaps the intervention of water-bombing was unclear. At the time of the fires I was pedalling in Asia, in smoky conditions that build up towards the end of their dry season but attributable more to many small deliberate fires than to the wildfires. Thus I did not experience the regional fire conditions that occurred around the time of the local bushfires but many people remarked on the prevalence of unusually high levels of ‘dry lightning’ by Tasmanian standards.

We were welcomed by Dale Fullyard, aka ‘Hairy Man’, our host for the excursion, with a cup of tea outside sheds which survived the fire and house some of his artwork and music equipment. The site overlooks the site of his destroyed residence beyond which is the Huon River. He remarked that he had

almost expected to be burnt out at some stage, with a particular foreboding for the summer just finished.

The immediate area was of *Eucalyptus obliqua* forest with a shrubby understorey on sandstone-based soils. Again fire effects were somewhat patchy, with some large trees utterly destroyed while others appeared to be recovering. At the ground level most vegetation had been destroyed but already signs of recovery like small croziers of ferns were apparent. Some soils had clearly been intensely affected with a brick-like colour after the baking they had received.



Only weeks after the fire, cotyledons of *E.obliqua*, appear  
Photograph: Fiona Walsh

Fungi were found that had responded quickly to the post fire conditions. The bare soil revealed tracks of foraging marsupials and their diggings including where hypogean fungi had been excavated as food. The leftovers were small walnut-sized shells of the 'truffles' they had eaten. When an intact one was found it was bisected to reveal an extremely pungent smell. Opinions varied as to what the smell resembled, to me it was a bit like a bitter almond smell. Potoroos and bettongs are renowned for their specialised diets based on these, it is no wonder that they are able to use their olfactory systems to find them.

**Don Hird**

## Gypsy Bay

6th April 2019

On Thursday 4th April Dr David Ratkowsky gave a talk on a paper that he and Els Wakefield have recently presented to the Australian Field Ornithology Journal. The paper is titled "Are Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicanus* replacing Pacific Gulls *Larus*

*pacificus* in Tasmania?"

The paper deals with Dr Bill Wakefield's many years of research on these species. The excursion the following Saturday was planned for Gypsy Bay near Primrose Sands, a bay with multiple boat sheds and a jetty where both Kelp and Pacific Gulls of various ages and plumages often roost during the non breeding season.

There was a good turnout with fourteen members meeting up at 9:50am at Gypsy Bay. Greeting us was an adult Pacific Gull standing on a nearby post, the morning sun giving good views of its bright yellow legs, large deep bill with the red tips top and bottom and the light shining through its round nostrils.



Banded adult Pacific Gull  
Photograph: Els Wakefield

We walked to a headland overlooking Frederick Henry Bay and looked across at a few of the many islands where the gulls breed in that area. Two juvenile Kelp Gulls flew overhead showing their dark plumage and dark brown bill. Four Gannets flew over the water looking for fish. There were Australian Magpies calling from the trees and a few Noisy Miners and Superb Fairy Wrens among the shrubbery. A juvenile Sea Eagle was sighted flying south.



Gypsy Bay  
Photograph: Els Wakefield

The weather was blustery but Gypsy Bay itself was sheltered and the sun reflected off the water giving us a warm micro-climate that we as well as the birds obviously enjoyed there. 28 Silver Gulls perched on a nearby jetty including 2 youngsters demanding but not receiving food from a parent. At the end of the jetty Two Crested Tern preened showing their long, yellow bills and mottled black crests, typical after the breeding season. Two adult Kelp Gulls were either on the water, perched on the jetty, flying overhead or standing on a nearby tall pole allowing good views of their green-grey legs, narrow, pale yellow bill with the single red tip on the lower mandible, the all-white tail and other distinctive features. A second adult Pacific Gull was perched on a sawn-off tree stump. On later examining my photos, I noticed that the bird had been banded with a metal band on the right leg, without a doubt by Bill Wakefield! Unfortunately, the number was not readable from my photos.

A group of 5 Welcome Swallows were hunting for food among the boulders of the breakwater and a single Hoary-headed Grebe was feeding in the sea nearby. A lone Black-faced Cormorant sat on a buoy below a yacht anchored in the bay. About 20 Galahs and 2 Kookaburras were in the tree tops and 3 Little Wattlebirds and some Noisy Miners were feeding in the Banksias along the shore. A single Turtle Dove flew in from the sea. A group of magpies chased off two White-faced Herons that flew into the bay.

Below the jetty we watched small fish including some baby and adult Leatherjackets and a single spotted pipefish (*Stigmatopora argus*) swimming in the clear water.



Carrion beetle  
Photograph: Geiff Carle

Along the pebbly shore there were two dead leatherjackets and a smelly dead black-faced Cormorant that was being eaten by a carrion beetle.

Amanda and Geoff photographed a few spiders; *Sidmella longipes* (Thomisidae)- one of the Crab Spiders in the *Juncus* on the bank along the bank, a possible juv. *Clubonia* sp and *Araneus albotriangulus*. As we were leaving there was a leaf-curling spider *Phonognatha graeffei* out of its retreat, having caught some prey and there were some Meadow Argus butterflies on the Gazanias.

Kevin rescued a small wasp from the sea, possibly a Figitid or Braconid Wasp but as it was rather wet and bedraggled, it was hard to identify. Kevin, Abbey and Bruno found five snail species.

Annabel commented there were rather too many introduced plants for her to make a list but there were some large *Eucalyptus globulus* near the car park and *Lobelia anceps*, or Angled Lobelia (Campanulaceae) a common plant of coastal areas growing along the beach.

## Els Wakefield

### Birds (Els Wakefield)

Pacific Gull  
Australian Magpie  
Noisy Miner  
Superb Fairy Wren  
Silver Gull  
Crested Tern  
Kelp Gull  
Australasian Gannet  
Welcome Swallow  
Hoary-headed Grebe  
Galah  
Laughing Kookaburra  
Turtle Dove  
Little Wattlebird  
Black-faced Cormorant  
White-bellied Sea Eagle  
White-faced Heron  
Little Wattlebird

### Snails (Kevin, Abbey and Bruno)

#### Native:

*Caryodes dufresnii* (very old dead shell only)  
*Gratilaoma* sp "Knocklofty"  
*Magilaoma* sp "Tasmania"  
*Dcelidoropa officeri*  
*Laomavix collisi*

## Exotic:

*Cornu aspersum*  
*Oxychilus cellarius*  
*Lehmanna nyctelia* (slug)  
*Arion intermedius* (slug)

## Invertebrates (Geoff and Annabel)

Hover fly sp.  
Meadow Argus butterfly  
Carrion Beetle *Ptomaphila lacrymosa*  
*Sidmella longipes* (Thomisidae)  
*Clubonia* sp.  
*Araneus albotiranulus*  
*Phonognatha graeffei*

## A Study of *Anaspides*

### Field Naturalists' observations of *Anaspides* requested

A German-Australian research team from the University of Rostock and the Australian Museum is studying the distribution of Tasmanian mountain shrimps *Anaspides*. TFNC members may have seen my posts on Facebook, reporting the efforts of Stefan Richter, Christoph Höpel and Markus Grams collecting *Anaspides* from caves down south. Their research is not only of scientific interest but also has conservation impact because the group is morphologically and genetically far more differentiated than expected.

The German and Australian researchers are asking for information on observations or photos of *Anaspides*. Reports and photos should include the name of the observation/ photographed site and/or nearest locality, but preferably include map or GPS co-ords with elevation. Particularly important are observations from the following areas: Wentworth Hills, Butlers Gorge, West Coast Range, Walls of Jerusalem, Mt. Cripps, West of Lake St. Clair (e.g. Mt. Rufus, Mt. Byron), Cradle Mountain, Vale of Belvoir, Black Bluff Range, Frenchmans Cap.

The researchers are asking for observations only. **Do not collect *Anaspides* as they are all protected species and cannot be collected without a permit from DPIWPE.**

Only a very few specimens will be collected by the researchers when they return next year.

The two principal researchers are: Stefan Richter in Germany (stefan.richter@uni-rostock.de) and Shane Ahyong at the Australian Museum, Sydney (Shane.Ahyong@austmus.gov.au).

Arthur Clarke

## Easter Camp 2019

Easter camp for 2019 was held at Molecreek in northern Tasmania. There will be a full report of the camp, including species lists for some of the sites visited, in the July Bulletin.

## Isa Hurburg Life Member

Isa Hurbustg, who was made one of the Tasmanian Field Naturalist Life members in 2008, celebrated her 100th. birthday recently. Congratulations Isa!



Isa Hurburg with her congratulatory message from the Queen

Photograph: Amanda Thomson



Spotted Pipefish at Gypsy Bay

Photograph: Els Wakefield

### About The Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club

We encourage the study of natural history and support conservation. People of any age and background are welcome as members. For more information, visit our website:

<https://tasfieldnats.org.au/>

or email: [secretary@tasfieldnats.org.au](mailto:secretary@tasfieldnats.org.au)

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This Bulletin is published quarterly and mailed or emailed to all members.

Editor: Deirdre Brown. Your articles and photos for the Bulletin are welcome. Please email to the editor at:

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