

TASMANIAN FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC.

established 1904.

BULLETIN

<http://www.tased.edu.au/tasonline/tasfield.html>

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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 write to GPO Box 68, Hobart, 7001.

Programme

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; 62 289 702). Unforeseen changes sometimes occur.

Thurs. 6 Feb. 7.45p.m.: John Gooderham will speak on the Freshwater Ecology of Hazlewood Lagoon. The excursion for this talk will be held later in the year.

Sat. 8 Feb or Sun 9 Feb 9.00a.m. departure from the Museum to **Ninepin Point Marine Reserve**
This is a seasonal excursion following some previous presentations such as Keith Martin-Smith's talk last August on *Seahorses & Pipefish*. Saturday will be the target day but weather considerations may change this. Weather forecasts should allow the day to be predicted by the Thursday meeting but if in doubt please phone Don Hird (62 289 702) first.

Snorkelling will be a primary mode of investigation for those interested but all are encouraged to attend

Thurs. 6 March A.G.M. Genevieve Gates will deliver her Presidential Address on her diverse experiences while attending a Fungi Conference in China.

March 9.00a.m. departure from the Museum to *The Pagoda* area of the Florentine Valley. There are many attractions related to wet forest and caves in this area.

Thurs. 3 April 7.45p.m.: Mark Hovenden, an ecophysiologicalist, will speak on Climate Change. Both local and more global evidence will be provided on this topic of concern.

April Excurs. 9.00 a.m.: This excursion will look at local examples of Climate Change, with study areas near Pontville, or Mt. Field, as probable venues.

Federation Meeting March 2003: See details overleaf

Do you have an email address?

Because it would be much easier to advise members of change of meeting times or excursions, or remind members about events by email, please email Anna at robmce@netspace.net.au of your address.

2002 Subs Now Due

If you haven't already paid your subs please see our treasurer, Anna McEldowney.

Federation Meeting March 14-16 2003

Bridport will be the venue for this meeting of naturalists from around Tasmania, hosted by the NE FNC.

The Bayview Centre offers cabin accommodation for \$16 pp. and camping from \$11, with an evening meal on the Saturday at \$14.

A range of interesting excursions will be offered over the weekend.

Excursion Reports

Sisters Beach Visit: January 2003.

We stayed for the first time away from the beach at the Birdland Holiday Cottages and enjoyed the bush setting filled with birds and frog calls, day and night (banjo frogs and the boobook owl). Early on we bumped into Mary Waite who previously ran the Birdland Nature Park with her husband Trevor, a well-known bird photographer. She took us down through the old park, now rundown, showing us orchids (her special interest) the epiphytic Gunn's Tree Orchid (*Sarcochilus australis*) hyacinth orchids (*Dipodium roseum*) and listened to the satin flycatchers.

During our week we had memorable walks to Anniversary Bay, the Postman's Track and Doone Falls, in the eastern and western sections of Rocky Cape National Park which surround Sisters Beach. Last year's fire at the eastern end (Postman's Track) has resulted in prolific *Xanthorrhoea australis* (Australian Grass Tree) flowering, and burnt many of the *Banksia serrata* endemic to this area. We found for the first time small duck orchids (*Celeana minor*) here and at the western end of Rocky Cape, and *Celeana major* (large duck orchid). In the forested Boat Harbour end of the Postman's Track was a single colorful *Blandfordia punicea* (Tas Christmas Bell) and lots of butterflies (common browns).

Walking out to Doone Falls and Anniversary Point the hillsides are covered in *Leptospermum* sp., epacris, melaleuca, fairies aprons, buttongrass and many others -also the result of recent fires. After zigzagging down to the quite small falls we explored the creek to find patches of the carnivorous *Drosera binata*, and sedge plants. While I was trying to photograph these, Isabella turned to find a juvenile tasmanian devil standing about 12 feet away! It looked as stunned as we were! We returned via Anniversary Point passing a large decomposing fur seal on the beach. On reaching the ridge overlooking Sisters Beach we saw something black in the water, a few seconds later a very much alive fur seal 'motored' into the shore leaving a wake behind it like a motor boat, coming half out of the water, then diving and cavorting out to the point off Lee Archer's Cave.

We saw lots of birds during our stay - 3 baby woodswallows being fed at Banksia Grove, a number of sea and wedge tailed eagles, pallid cuckoo, wrens, honeyeaters, Richards pipit, terns, plovers, flame robin and the many local Black cockatoos and Little Wattlebirds.

Our first night we were privileged to see a platypus in the creek from the bridge at Sisters Beach, something I'd hoped to see for years. Rocky Cape has so much - wonderful rock -

snorkeling, Aboriginal caves, huge variety of sponges, insects, beetles, lizards, long-legged flies, plant and animal life.

On our last day Trevor Waite gave us a slide show of his Tasmanian birds - (his photos are on the cover of the new Australian Bird Calls Tasmania by David Stewart), my Christmas present!

The report on the December excursion to Lime Bay will be carried over to the next Bulletin.

New Concerns on Atrazine

Atrazine is the world's most widely used herbicide. It has widely been regarded as harmless or benign because of its short environmental half-life; it breaks down in a few days in normal environments. One indication of its widespread use is that it has been detected falling in rainwater in the US.!

An article in the very reliable journal *Natural History*, published by the American Museum of Natural History (Dusheck, J. 2002. Another Silent Spring. *Natural History* **111:10/02** 56) casts severe doubts on the safety of atrazine.

Atrazine now appears to have side-effects as an extremely potent reproductive hormone disrupter, particularly in vertebrates with an aquatic larval phase such as amphibians. Strong correlations between atrazine levels and gross reproductive abnormalities were found in both laboratory and field situations. As such, atrazine is now a prime suspect in the widespread demise of many frog populations.

In Tasmania atrazine is widely used. Given Tasmania's history of denial of full effects of such poisons as 1080, and the wide distortion of facts in debates on such issues, this biological "weapon of mass destruction" may inflict more damage before its harm is abated.

Don Hird