



# Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc.

## BULLETIN

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Quarterly Bulletin

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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 further information, visit our website <http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au>; write to GPO Box 68, Hobart, 7001; or phone our president, Janet Fenton, on (03) 6239 6443.

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### Program

General Meetings start at 7:45pm 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 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, please check details. Phone Janet Fenton (03) 6239 6443 as unforeseen changes sometimes occur.

<b>Thu, 7 Feb</b>	<b>Meeting</b> 7.45pm in Life Sciences building. Neil Klaer will talk about <i>Julian Tenison Woods</i> , a fascinating 19th Century priest, naturalist and scientist who lived for a period in Tasmania.
<b>Sat, 9 Feb</b>	<b>Excursion</b> - looking at Cowries at Eaglehawk Neck, led by Kevin Bonham. Note that this excursion will be in the afternoon to fit in best with the tide. We will meet outside the Tasmanian Museum in Macquarie St, Hobart at <u>1.00pm</u> , prior to driving down to Eaglehawk Neck, Tasman Peninsular.
<b>Thu, 6 Mar</b>	<b>Annual General Meeting</b> 7.45pm in Life Sciences building, University of Tas. President Janet Fenton's talk will be <i>Tasmania to Antarctica— Charles T Harrison</i> . Harrison (1866~1914) was a TFNC member with a very interesting but abruptly terminated career. The AGM will include election of committee members for 2008. Then there will be a short monthly meeting, followed by supper as usual
<b>14~16 Mar</b>	<b>Federation weekend</b> at Liawenee, Central Highlands. TFNC is hosting this get-together of <i>Federation of Field Naturalist Clubs of Tasmania</i> to which all field naturalists are invited. Accommodation will be in comfortable NPWS cabins. This is a very interesting alpine plateau area and we plan excursions to <i>Lake Ada</i> and to <i>Pine Lake</i> . More details are given later in this Bulletin, and will also be posted on our website.
<b>Thu, 3 Apr</b>	<b>Meeting</b> 7.45pm in Life Sciences building, University of Tas. Krystyna Saunders will speak on <i>Diatoms</i> .
<b>Sat 5 or Sun 6 Apr</b>	<b>Excursion</b> , details yet to be announced.
<b>Thu, 1 May</b>	<b>Meeting</b> 7.45pm in Life Sciences building, University of Tas. Bill Wakefield and Else Meerding, who are writing a book on Tasmanian birds, will speak to us.

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## ***Thismia* search— New Road, Franklin, 3 Nov 2007**

### **An excursion to search for Fairy Lanterns, *Thismia rodwayi* — report by Don Hird**

Many club members had enjoyed Mark Wapstra's enthusiastic presentation about this obscure "rediscovered" species at our November meeting. Despite the cryptic nature of this virtually subterranean plant lacking chlorophyll, Mark's assurance that it can usually be found with search effort in appropriate known habitat led to around 20 members in attendance at New Road, Franklin.

After passing through forest coupes we stopped adjacent to a patch of young but tall stringybark (*Eucalyptus obliqua*), with an understorey of myrtle (*Nothofagus cunninghamii*) dogwood (*Pomaderris apetala*), heartberry (*Aristotelia pedunculata*), celery top pine (*Phyllocladus aspleniifolius*), handsome cheeseberry (*Cyathodes glauca*.) and Christmas bush (*Prosteranthera lasianthos*). Other plants evident were Musk (*Olearia argophylla*), *O. stellulata*; *Pimelea drupacea*, *Billardiera longiflora*; *Drymophila cyanocarpa*, *Dianella tasmanica* and *Dicksonia antarctica*.

After some 20 minutes the first excited exclamation of discovery was made and we gathered to examine the indeed cryptic but distinctive crimson bud of *Thismia*. A further 3 examples were subsequently found by lightly scraping aside leaf litter, with some in flower, although the flowers are minute. We also observed the vegetative structures, which consist of white threads through the soil. Given that there were quite a few searchers over more than an hour and few discoveries it is not surprising that this plant went apparently unnoticed for nigh on 100 years after Rodway's discovery in the 1890s.

[Photo by Abbey Throssell]



After our search we lunched at a nearby site of an abandoned sawmill, complete with a large intact firebox and boiler, and set amongst regenerating rainforest species. As well as some of the invertebrates listed below, we found presumed eggs of an oviparous skink, although if the Three-lined skink (*Acritoscincus duperreyi*) it is a very southern occurrence for this species.

An interesting sidelight was some investigation into the sole North American representative of the genus. *Thismia americana* was only discovered in 1912 in swampy habitats close to Chicago. It resembles *T. rodwayi* in structure but is a pearly colour. More recent attempts to find it have been unsuccessful, partly because much of the original habitat is now an airport. Searchers tried randomly dispersing beads of a similar size and colour to the *T. americana* flowers, and challenging searchers to find them. Searchers did find many plants not previously known to the area, but neither *Thismia* nor, until given more details, any of the beads. Despite very intensive subsequent searches none has been found and *T. americana* is officially extinct.

### **Invertebrates [Lyn Forster]**

A beetle highlight of the day was Kevin's fortuitous collapse into a rotting log that revealed *Prostomis atkinsoni* whose enormous jaws are designed to devour logs. Continuing their starring role in beetle discovery, Kevin and Abby then managed to lunch next to a throng of the brilliantly blue, jumping Chrysomelid, *Altica pagana*, on closely cropped buzzy, *Acaena novae-zelandiae* (Rosaceae).

Following Abby's discovery of the elongated Chrysomelid beetle, *Eurispa vitatta* on *Gahnia grandis*. I decided to focus on what else inhabits this plant species. Suffering several cuts from the sharp spicules of silica (glass!) in the grass-like leaves of this plant, I observed numerous species as listed below.

Other invertebrate highlights included a glow worm in rotting wood with a latin name meaning 'spider grub', (*Arachnocampa tasmaniensis*). It is the larvae of the fungus gnat (Diptera). I also observed a pair of female spiders of the red and blue-black species *Litodamus olga* (Nicodaemidae) that were guarding eggs communally in leaf litter under *Olearia argophylla*.

The list for the day (3½ hours foraging):

#### Beetles in rotting logs

*Lissotes curvicornis* 15 mm (Lucanidae) total=5  
*Prostomis atkinsoni* (Prostomidae) total=20+, one log

#### Beetles under rotting logs

*Adelium abbreviatum?* 10 mm (Tenebrionidae) total=5  
*Brycopia nr hexagona* 7 mm (Tenebrionidae) total=1  
*Coripera deplanata* (Tenebrionidae) total=3  
*Notonomus politulus* (Carabidae) total=1  
*Percosoma carenoides* 25 mm (Carabidae) total=7  
*Promecoderus longus* (Carabidae) total=2  
*Sloaneana tasmaniae* (Carabidae) presumably (by size and shape— very fast).total=3

#### Under rocks on the track

*Litodamus olga* (Nicodaemidae) (spider) total=9  
*Coripera deplanata* (Tenebrionidae) 1 (beetle) total=12

#### In rotting wood in ground leaf litter ground

*Arachnocampa* sp., probably *A. tasmaniensis* 'glow worm' total=1  
(Mycetophilidae: Diptera)  
*Paropsis aegrota* (Chrysomelidae) looked like an over-wintered adult total=1

#### In patch of moss

An unusual wolf spider with green legs and the shiny green remains of a 2mm beetle, *Pedilophorus griffithi* (Byrrhidae).

#### Spiders in rolls of bark of *Eucalyptus delegatensis* on the ground

*Litodamus olga* (Nicodaemidae) total=4  
*Diplocephalus cristatus* 2 mm (Linyphiidae) total=2 introduced, ubiquitous. The male has a distinctive bilobed head.

#### On *Gahnia grandis* leaves

*Eurispia vittata* 11mm (Hispinidae: Chrysomelidae) total=12  
Larva of *Eurispia vittata* 7.5mm total=2  
*Archemorus cf. simsoni* black 2 mm (Araneidae) (spider) total=8

*Theridiidae* sp. 1.5 mm spider total=1

Salticid spider

Long legged mite 2mm with leg span 6mm

Native wasp 2mm yellow spot on back

*Zonitis aspericeps*(?) total=1

Crane Fly (extremely long legs) (Tipulidae: Diptera) total=1

#### On *Acaena novae-zelandiae*

*Altica pagana* total=30+ (1 patch) (Galerucinae: Chrysomelidae)  
*Lycosidae* sp. Wolf spider, total=1

#### Snails [Kevin Bonham]

The main aim of my searches for snails at New Road was to collect a *Prolesophanta* that I had found there in 2002, but the specimens I'd kept had been too damaged and/or juvenile to be sure which species I had. It turns out that the species present at New Road is the far southern endemic *Prolesophanta* sp. "Francistown", a shiny very flat 3 mm wide snail with red colour rays on yellow. This is its northernmost record yet, a range extension of 17 km and a very useful dot on the map for comparing its distribution with that of the widespread *P. nelsonensis* (these two plus two other *Prolesophanta* appear to form a "mosaic" pattern covering most of the State.)

The remaining snails were nothing special, although I did get four new records for New Road, taking its total to 14 spp. *Caryodes dufresnii* was abundant (at least fifty were seen by various field-nats) but no other species reached double figures.

#### Species list: [\* =new record for site]

<i>Tasmaphena sinclairi</i>	"Allocharopa legrandi"*	<i>Cystopelta bicolor</i> (slug)
<i>Prolesophanta</i> sp. "Francistown"	<i>Allocharopa</i> sp. "Wellington"	<i>Arion intermedius</i> (exotic slug— a single specimen seen at mill site)
<i>Caryodes dufresnii</i>	<i>Pernagera kingstonensis</i> *	
<i>Paralaoma halli</i> *	<i>Thryasona diemenensis</i>	
<i>Trocholaoma parvissima</i> *	<i>Mulathena fordei</i>	

## Fungi

The following were identified from photos by Genevieve Gates and David Ratkowsky, with some help from Steve Stephenson in America, a specialist on slime moulds.

*Chlorociboria aeruginascens*

*Cortinarius abnormis*

*Morchella elata*

*Trichia* sp. (maybe *verrucosa*) —a yellow slime mould

*Tubifera ferruginosa* (probably) —a spectacular red and purple slime mould developing on moss-covered wood)

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## Federation outing to Bicheno, 16~18 Nov 2007

### [Janet Fenton]

The *Launceston Field Naturalists Club* hosted a very interesting weekend based at Bicheno.

On Saturday we made birdwatching trips to various points around *Moulting Lagoon*, where we were briefly drenched in a thunderstorm, watched red-necked stints, white-fronted chats and musk duck, among other interesting water birds, with the aid of telescopes and the expertise of Sarah Lloyd. We saw more black swan and cygnets at once than most of us had ever seen before, and a long row of terns sparked the quote of the day - "a good turn out"! We then adjourned to the windswept *Friendly Beaches* for lunch, followed by a spot of orchid hunting in the recently burnt bush nearby.

Tim McManus spoke to us on Saturday night of the bushfire which had devastated the *Winifred Curtis Reserve* near Scamander a year before. The following day we were eager to see what had emerged from the ashes when Tim showed us around the reserve. We were pleasantly surprised by the number of species beginning to re-colonise, and it is a site we are all very eager to revisit.

Sarah Lloyd (CNFN) has subsequently compiled a nicely presented species list from our combined observations.

Anna gave an interesting presentation at our members' night in December, outlining the reserve's history and our observations on the outing.

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## Barbeque at 'Aberdale', Sat 8 December

Many thanks Anna for hosting the club's end-of-year BBQ and outing at the McEldowney's property at Longley.

Eighteen people enjoyed a walk through unusually dry bushland to the southern end of the property where club mosses were a highlight, and into the stony bed of North West Bay River.

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## From the president

We enjoyed an interesting variety of speakers during the 2007 covering topics from grasslands and grasshoppers to burrowing crayfish, foxes and owls.

On five of our excursions during 2007 we were privileged to visit private properties, including a raptor sanctuary at Lucaston, 'Braeside' at Lachlan, Attila Vrana's tracks at Summeleas, Arthur Clarke's rainforest valley at Francistown, and 'Aberdale' at Longley. Many thanks to those who welcomed a motley crew of naturalists onto their properties.

Other highlights were hunting for the elusive *Thismia rodwayi* at Franklin, the Easter camp at Southport, and, in spring, a bonanza of small plants and invertebrates in the Waverley Flora Park, so close to

Hobart. Another highlight of 2007 was the Federation weekend at Bicheno, hosted by the *Launceston Field Naturalists Club*.

A gallery of photos from these outings is worth a look: go to our website [www.tasfieldnats.org.au](http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au) and click [excursion photo gallery](#).

A very big thankyou to all those who spoke at meetings, shared observations and worked on the committee. Mark Wapstra put considerable energy into the latest issue of *The Tasmanian Naturalist*, and in initiating the club's current project - that of compiling a comprehensive index of all articles the journal. The first issues appeared in 1907, and *The Tasmanian Naturalist* has been published ever since, save for a few gaps for inconvenient things like world wars and economic depressions (see *A Century Afield*).

Many thanks to Adrian Brettingham-Moore, Robin Cribbes, Anne Thwaites, Jane Catchpole, Janette Smith, Michael Driessen, Anna McEldowney, Don Hird and Neil Klaer, who put pen to paper (or is it finger to keyboard?) and wrote interesting excursion reports, with input and other contributions from Kevin Bonham, Lynne Forster, Mary King, Bert Shepherd and Genevieve Gates.

We have a busy year coming up. In autumn our club is hosting the Federation biannual outing at Liawenee (see article below). The weekend outing will replace an Easter camp for this year, but we are booking a favorite venue, Koonya, for Easter 2009.

The *Australian Plants Society Tasmania Inc.* is organising another spring *Wildflower Spectacular*. Once again we will have our traditional corner for our display. The theme this year is "Native plants for every garden style"— so put your thinking-caps on for 'field nats' related display ideas: ...insects and birds as pollinators? ...frogs, tadpoles and pond life? ...skinks and spiders in rockeries? Set aside 17~19 October as we need volunteers to man (or woman) our display on a roster basis. It is fun to be part of the show.

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## **Threatened Plant Action Group - Botanic Gardens Tour and Meeting**

### **Saturday 23 Feb, Royal Tasmania Botanic Gardens, Hobart**

Join *Royal Tasmania Botanic Gardens* (RTBG) staff and the *Threatened Plant Action Group* (TPAG) for a tour of the RTBG's *ex situ* **threatened flora collection**, followed by morning tea and the **Inaugural Threatened Plant Action Group Meeting**. Come along to discuss the future of threatened flora conservation in Tasmania and discover how you can get involved in conserving Tasmania's unique and precious threatened plants.

#### **10 am - Threatened Flora Tour**

Join RTBG nursery supervisor Michelle Lang for a tour of the RTBG's *ex situ* Threatened Flora collection and seed bank. Not usually open to the public. Meet at 10 am at the Subantarctic House.

#### **11am - "Tasmania's Threatened Flora" talk and presentation**

Join TPAG coordinator, Catriona Scott to learn more about Tasmania's threatened flora. Riverview Room, RTBG.

#### **11.30 - Threatened Plant Action Group Inaugural Meeting and Morning Tea**

Morning tea provided. Open to all, the meeting will focus on the future of the Threatened Plant Action Group, and the role TPAG might play in threatened flora conservation and recovery in Tasmania. Facilitated by Catriona Scott, TPAG coordinator. Riverview Room, RTBG.

**Please RSVP to this event** for catering purposes. RSVP by 15 Feb to Catriona Scott, 62336692 or [Catriona.Scott@dpiw.tas.gov.au](mailto:Catriona.Scott@dpiw.tas.gov.au)

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## **Next Federation weekend – Liawenee, 14~16 March 2008**

It is our club's turn to host the biannual outing for the Federation of Tasmanian Field Naturalists Clubs this autumn. Note that this weekend outing will replace our usual club outing and an Easter camp. It is a great opportunity to meet fellow field nats from around the state while participating in an outing a bit

further from home than usual. Liawenee is an interesting area, the flora and fauna being adapted to alpine extremes.

We plan an outing to *Lake Ada* on the Saturday, and to *Pine Lake* and beyond on Sunday, and interesting speakers are being arranged.

We have booked *Tiger Hut* and *House 2* for the weekend.

Cost is \$20 per person per night.

*Tiger Hut* accommodates 20, and has 4 showers. *House 2* has 8 beds, but floor space for more mattresses, and has 2 showers.

We plan to host a BBQ at *Tiger Hut* on the Saturday night. Please bring your own meat and drink, and TFNC will provide salads and bread. For all other meals, please bring your own— both dwellings have cooking facilities.

If you wish to attend, please give your name to Janet Fenton, 6239 6443, [fenton@southcom.com.au](mailto:fenton@southcom.com.au)  
Please pay our treasurer, Anna McEldowney, during the Federation weekend for the accommodation.

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## Reminders

### Subscriptions are now due!

Membership subscription rates are: •\$30 single, •\$35 family, •\$25 pensioner /concession.  
Please pay our treasurer, Anna McEldowney.

### Car-pooling on excursions:

We usually car-pool traveling to and from excursions. Passengers, please remember to reimburse some petrol money to your driver. Each passenger usually gives \$5 for a short trip (less than 100km return), and \$10 for a longer trip.

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## Tas Naturalist

Members and subscribers will have received their 2007 copy of **The Tasmanian Naturalist** .

If you need an extra copy of this, or any of our other publications, please mail an order-form (available from our website) or phone our treasurer, Anna McEldowney (03) 6239 6326.

<b>A Century Afield</b>	\$30 each
<b>Butterflies of Tasmania</b>	\$16 each
<b>Jewel Beetles of Tasmania</b>	\$12 each
<b>The Tasmanian Naturalist</b> (back copies, if available)	\$15 each
<b>post &amp; pack</b> (any number of books)	Australia \$5 O/seas \$15

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Excursion photos can be seen at <http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/ExcnPhotos/ExcnPhotos.htm>.

