



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 more information, visit website <http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/>; email info@tasfieldnats.org.au; write to GPO Box 68, Hobart, 7001; or phone our secretary on mobile 0418 942 781.

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Program

General Meetings start at **7.15pm** for 7.30pm on the first Thursday of the month, in the Life Science Building at the University of Tasmania.

Excursions are usually held the following Saturday or Sunday, meeting at 9.00am 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 as late changes are sometimes made.

Thu, 4 Feb	<p>Meeting 7.15pm in Life Sciences building, University of Tasmania. Guest speaker Elizabeth Daley will present '<i>Pest or Guest: Learning from Nature.</i>'</p> <p>Dr Daley is a Research Associate with the School of Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Tasmania, and best known to field nats as the author of the excellent Tasmanian insect book '<i>Wings</i>'.</p>
Sat 6 or Sun 7, Feb	<p>Excursion to Elizabeth Daley's farm at Buckland, southern Tasmania. We will spend a couple of hours searching for insects within the 50 acres of bush on the farm (wetland, grassy forest, grassland, heath and riparian).</p> <p>Because hunting insects is weather dependent, we will decide at the Thursday meeting whether it is to be Saturday or Sunday, based on the weather forecast. The decision will be shown on our website's homepage.</p> <p>We will meet at 9.00am outside the Museum in Macquarie St, Hobart and car-pool to Buckland, about an hour away.</p>
Thu, 4 Mar	<p>Meeting and AGM at 7.15pm in Life Sciences building, University of Tas.</p> <p>Before the AGM (with election of office bearers) it is customary to have a President's address; this year Michael Driessen will present '<i>Fauna of Tasmania's Wilderness World Heritage Area</i>'.</p>
Sat 6 and Sun 7 Mar	<p>Fieldwork at Peter Murrell Reserve.</p> <p>Please see article on page 2 outlining this interesting club project.</p>

Mon, 8 Mar	Pelagic bird observing boat-trip from Eaglehawk Neck. Privately organised by Bill Wakefield — see p4 for more.
Thu, 1 Apr	Meeting 7.15pm in Life Sciences building, University of Tas. Our guest speaker will be Lisa Cawthen , who will present ‘ <i>The secret world of Tassie’s bats</i> ’. Lisa is a PhD student at the university studying Tasmanian bats: developing a bat sound identification key, and assessing the effectiveness of forestry remnant-retention measures on bats.
2~5 Apr (Fri~Mon)	Easter camp at <i>Blandfordia</i> , near Dove Lake in the Cradle Mountain national park. Blandfordia hut can accommodate about 30 people, and there are tent sites. There is a 6-burner stove with oven and kitchen & dining utensils, but no fridge. People should bring their own food, though some communal soup etc will probably be organised. Note that cars cannot get right to the hut; you need to carry everything the last 200m. Rates per night are: Adult \$15, Family \$25, Student \$10. More details of activities and arrangements will be posted on our website, and you can phone Nellie Hilliard on 6225 4446.

Biodiversity Monitoring in Peter Murrell Reserve

Fieldwork project for 6~7 Mar 2010

Michael Driessen

For the March excursion, the committee is inviting all club members to become involved in a biodiversity survey in the Peter Murrell Reserve near Howden. The overall objective is:

- To use the diverse skills of members of the TFNC to provide information that will assist in understanding and managing the natural values of the Peter Murrell Conservation Area.

The specific objectives are:

- To provide natural history training and educational opportunities for members of the TFNC, particularly in the use of biodiversity survey techniques.
- To establish a repeatable monitoring program that will help inform the land managers (PWS, Friends of Peter Murrell Reserve) of the success or otherwise of their management activities, and potentially the impacts of external influences on the reserve.
- To improve knowledge of the fauna in the reserve and to gather information on the biology of selected species
- To add knowledge to the existing natural history of Tasmanian plants and animals.

Why the Peter Murrell Reserve? It is a reserve that the Parks and Wildlife Service actively manages (e.g. fuel reduction and ecological burns). It has multiple uses such as dog walking and horse riding. The reserve is becoming increasingly isolated from surrounding bushland by urban development. It is known to contain threatened plants and animals as well as populations of animals at risk from the introduction of foxes (potoroos and bandicoots). And is close to Hobart and easy to access.

Surveys are planned for mammals, birds, vegetation and invertebrates using standard and repeatable techniques. Monitoring will be centred on three locations, a recently burnt area, an area proposed to be burnt and a comparable unburnt area. Should the overall activity prove successful, then we would aim to repeat the survey in 12 months time. We aim to report the results of our survey to the Parks and Wildlife Service and publish them in *The Tasmanian Naturalist*.

Members are encouraged to attend on the **Saturday or Sunday or both**. Given the nature of some of the surveys there will be some early starts (e.g. mammal trapping) but members can join in at any time during the morning. There will also be a short activity setting pitfall traps for invertebrates on the Sunday before the excursion— members may join this activity as well and it would be particularly suitable for younger members.

We are seeking volunteers from within the club who have experience in surveying or identifying plants or animals and who would be happy to lead small groups in an activity. Guidance will be provided in terms of the overall sampling design. We are also seeking volunteers to provide logistic support on the day. If you are able to help or are unsure of what is involved, or would like to offer suggestions for activities, please **contact Michael Driessen** on 62296382 or email president@tasfieldnats.org.au.

More details about the survey will be posted on the club website and at the March meeting before the excursion.

Snug Tiers — 4 Oct 2009

Excursion Report by Qug McKendrick

Sunday was fine and cloudy as seventeen field-nats set out to Snug Tiers. Once we got onto the edge of the plateau (650m altitude) we parked our cars and assembled. Janet (ex president.) and Harry (current pres's son) were seen comparing the sizes of their butterfly nets.

Walking along the track we were treated to displays of flowering *Spyridium ulicinum*, one of the most interesting plants for the day. There was also much *Hakea* and *Leptospermum* in flower. Mark Wapstra pointed out *Eucalyptus cordata*, the 'western form' with a distinctive square-section stem. Further along the four-wheel drive track, Kevin unearthed a peripatus, pleasing our velvet-worm fan club. A cluster of birds nest fungi also drew clicking cameras.



Occasionally we had to stand to the side of the track as convoys of four-wheel-drive vehicles lumbered through the large muddy puddles—each interest group incredulous at the other's obsession!

We walked through an old sawmill site, and lunched by Peverata Creek where we watched young Harry engineering an improved stepping stone crossing. Then we navigated our way through the maze of four-wheel-drive tracks further south, past some good looking dragon heath, *Richea dracophylla*, to a flat buttongrass plain in an enclosed valley at 550m altitude, where the group spontaneously fanned out to investigate their own fancies in the sedgeland. On our return along a different loop of tracks to our vehicles, the *Eucaflip* was flipped out repeatedly to attempt to identify the many eucalypt species.

A species list will be put on the website in due course.

Snail report [Kevin Bonham]

<i>Caryodes dufresnii</i>	<i>Pernagera kingstonensis</i>	<i>Roblinella gadensis</i>
<i>Tasmaphena sinclairi</i>	" <i>Allocharopa legrandi</i> " (new record for Snug Tiers but not surprising; was already recorded from Snug Falls)	<i>Mulathena fordei</i>
<i>Prolesophanta dyeri</i>		<i>Stenacapha hamiltoni</i>
<i>Cystopelta bicolour</i>		
<i>Paralaoma mucoides</i>	<i>Elsothera ricei</i>	
<i>Trocholaoma parvissima</i>		

18 species are now recorded from Snug Tiers, but all of these also occur on Mt Wellington, in contrast to nearby Peverata Falls, which has two local endemics.

Bambra Reef — 7 Nov 2009

Excursion report by Don Hird

In our globalised cultural world that can often seem like a carousel of sporting events, natural and other disasters, and petty scandals, one can easily become jaded.

As a long-term naturalist I often find solace in thinking back to discoveries in the natural world that stand out in memory like inspirations from drudgery. They encourage me to either find more or to revisit remembered treasures.

Even in local and familiar environments like seashores, findings of such things as sea-dragons, peanut worms, and shore-eels over the years have been unanticipated highlights.

So, heading to Bambra Reef on Roches Beach on a warm November afternoon, possibilities without certainty were part of the lure. Most visitors to this environment would likely regard the reef as an interruption to the long sweep of sandy beach. Never high above the waterline, the visible reef is only around a hectare of dolerite bedrock with some boulders and more channels than rockpools. As usual though, the fascination proves to be in the detail.

The highlight for me for this excursion came fairly early. One of the sharp-eyed children captured a spectacular bright green invertebrate in a plastic cup. With its seven pairs of walking legs, crustacea came to mind and reference to a text identified it as a "sea centipede" or, more accurately, an isopod of the family Idoteidae. With around a dozen of us searching eventually around half a dozen were captured, admired and released. They were from 3 to 8 cm long, and shades of green verging on the iridescent. Possibly



Paridotea peronii, these isopods are unusual in their herbivory, living among and feeding on decaying seaweed. *Ulva lactuca*, sea lettuce, was a likely host plant.

Brittle stars were spectacular. Less spectacular but rather special, the endemic viviparous (bearing live young) seastar *Patiriella vivipara* was found. Large *Turbo* (periwinkle) shells are often found, but at Bambra many live ones were found close to the edge of the exposed reef on its northern side.

Otherwise, an array of algae, anemones, molluscs, tubeworms and tunicates were found.

Pictures of many of the specimens can be found at Beth Heap's site

<http://picasaweb.google.com.au/BethandGreg1/BambraReef?feat=email#5401967838717599778>

and at James Wood's site

http://www.flickr.com/photos/nyuysia_pix/sets/72157622774476604/detail/.

More TFNC excursion photos will also be posted at

<http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/ExcnPhotos/ExcnPhotos.htm>.

Pelagic bird trip — reminder

Bill Wakefield's pelagic bird observing boat-trip from Eaglehawk Neck will be on holiday Monday, 8 March.

This is a marvellous opportunity to get within a few metres of many species of albatross and petrel and other pelagic birds, in their own environment. With Bill's expertise to hand, it's a trip all field-nats should do at least once.

For more info on what you might see, the cost, and arrangements: see our website program and follow the link; or phone Bill on (03) 6228 0990.

Mt Cameron Field Study Centre

Federation Weekend — 13~15 Nov 2009

Report by Michael Driessen

Nineteen members from the TFNC made the long journey to Mt Cameron in northeast Tasmania for Federation Weekend. Most of us arrived around 7pm but those traveling in the Fenton van had a long delay in Launceston due to an overheated engine and did not arrive until quite late. We stayed in the field study centre run by the Education Department. It was an excellent building for housing a large number of field naturalists, with a large open activity/dining room with many old photographs depicting the history of the area, mining and past school camps. There was a broad veranda out the front overlooking the woodland surrounding us. Out the back were bunkrooms and the kitchen. A number of naturalists choose to camp. Bob Rutherford brought the 'Taj Mahal' of tents that accommodated 10 happy field-nats. In the adjacent woodland was an impressive obstacle course that was an immediate drawcard for the children as well as a few adults who should have known better.

Our hosts were the North East field naturalists and in particular Craig and Debbie Searle. Craig is the manager of the study centre and is incredibly knowledgeable about the area. Craig provided us with a talk about the mining and farming history of the area, and entertaining pictures of rock formations that resembled various animals and others that had intriguing shapes.

On Saturday morning we went on a short walk while waiting for others to arrive from Launceston. The feature was a large rock formation with rock orchids. For the rest of the day, Craig Searle led most of the naturalists on a superb walk through the granite landscape on a quite warm day, while Debbie Searle led the rest on a short gentle walk.

The forest was *E. amygdalina* & *obliqua* woodland that was burnt three years previously in 2006. It was quite rocky and open underneath with sparse shrubs and lots of bracken. *Kunzea* bushes were in flower and smelling beautifully. At a lookout on the walk we had superb views of the surrounding countryside and we could see Mt Munroe on Cape Barren Island in the distance-although it was a little hazy. In the northeast we could see forest and scrub interspersed with green pasture that had benefited from good rains this year. Much of the area was originally marshes that were drained as part of the soldier resettlement scheme after the war. There were also clear signs of previous mine workings. The turnaround point of the walk was the 'maze', a granite rock outcrop with many narrow crevices between the rocks that provided a challenge to squeeze through for many of us that did not keep our new years' resolutions.

On Saturday night James Wood provided an update on the Millennium Seed Bank and the difficulties involved in getting seeds to germinate. This was followed by a talk from Sarah Lloyd (CNFNC) about her bird recording project. Sarah and Ron Ngorcka played recordings of bird calls that people had collected for them as part of the project. At one point we were asked to identify all the different bird calls we could identify in a particular recording.

A bat trap was set for two nights in a poor trapping location but somehow we fluked one into the trap. It turned out to be our only Tasmanian endemic species, the Tasmanian Long-eared Bat *Nyctophilus sherrini*. The bat had been raised to a full endemic species status in a paper published only a couple of months earlier.

On the last day, members of the northern clubs went for a walk to the Ringarooma River but the southerners decided that they did not have time to do this and get back to Hobart in a reasonable time. Those travelling in the Fenton van headed for a reserve near Bridport while the others explored a quaint waterfall near the study centre. Under a rock near the waterfall was a pair of White's skinks and wolf spider ventured out of its burrow to entertain us. The children amused themselves catching tadpoles in the creek.

Thanks to Lou for organising the weekend and ensuring it ran smoothly. And thanks also go the Craig and Debbie Searle for showing us around a special part of Tasmania.

TFNC attendees were: Kevin Bonham, Penny, Michael, Sam, Harry and Ben Driessen, Geoff and Janet Fenton, Gilbert van Munster, Bob, Lucy, George, Elizabeth and Henry Rutherford, Natalie Tapson, Ellen Schuln and Hans, Abbey Throssell, James Wood.

Alum Cliffs & Christmas barbeque

Excursion report by Anna McEldowney

On Sunday 6 December 2009 about 14 field-nats turned up for a walk on the Alum Cliffs from Taronga Road through to Kingston Beach followed by our Christmas barbeque.

The track had recently been upgraded and re-routed in places to take it further away from the cliffs and to avoid private property.

Before heading towards Kingston Beach we took the short walk to the lookout to admire the views. Here we observed a native wasp (black body with orange antenna) attacking a huntsmen spider. A huge (40cm) Blue-tongue lizard was spotted followed by a tiny Mountain Dragon and both were much photographed by us. A Golden Whistler was calling regularly and occasionally observed. Insects were plentiful and active along the track (e.g. Golden Stag beetle, Harlequin bugs, click beetles, Gumleaf grasshopper, Tasmanian grasshopper, and a black and white spider (*Supunna*)).



Wahlenbergia spp were still in flower along the track plus a darker flowered variant of *Tetralochea pilosa*. Towards the southern end of the track the seedheads of *Clematis aristata* and blue lovecreeper (*Comesperma volubile*) were still evident from a spectacular flowering a few weeks earlier. Much of the area is very dry, open *E. tenuiramis* woodland interspersed with damp gullies, which were still quite lush after the recent wet winter.

Unfortunately we did not allow enough time to fully investigate the plants and animals along the track and it was suggested we arrange another visit in the future.

More field-nats arrived for the barbeque at Browns River and it was good to see Julia there. Thanks to all the Driessen cooks for bringing the biscuits they had made!

Attendees: Mark Wapstra, Penny, Michael, Sam, Harry and Ben Driessen, Adrian and Betty Bettingham-Moore, Jane Catchpole, Lynne Forster, Qug McKendrick-King, Kevin Bonham, Abbey Throssell, Anna McEldowney, Julia Scott, Mary King, Don Hird, Geoff Fenton

Snail report [Kevin Bonham]

Species observed were *Paralaoma mucooides*, *P. halli*, *Helicarion cuvieri*, *Planilaoma luckmanii*, *Laomavix collisi*, *Caryodes dufresnii*. All are common and previously recorded at Alum Cliffs.

Subscriptions reminder

Anna McEldowney (Treasurer)

Have you paid your 2010 subs yet? A reminder that membership subs are due on 1 Jan each year.

Please send a cheque payable to Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc, addressed to the Treasurer TFNC, GPO Box 68, Hobart, 7001; or pay by EFT to BSB 067102 Account number 28000476 in the name of Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc. PLEASE put your surname AND initials in the transfer so I can identify the payments.

If you have joined since October last year your subs will carry over to 2010.

Membership rates are: Adult—\$30, Family—\$35, Concession—\$25.

Photo credits

Velvet-worm— *Geoff Fenton*

Isopod— *James Wood*

Blue-tongue lizard— *Abbey Throssell*

