

TASMANIAN FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC.

established 1904.

BULLETIN

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

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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 68A, 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). Unforeseen changes sometimes occur.

Thurs. 4 August	<u>7.45p.m.</u> : Rosanna Cameron will speak on <i>90 days on Maatsuyker Island</i> .
Saturday 7 August excursion	<u>8.30a.m.</u> On our island theme, we will depart for a walk on Bruny Island. Likely venues are Cape Queen Elizabeth (with whale scanning/watching) or Lutragela Marshes if weather is less favourable; come prepared for all weather conditions.
Thurs. 1 September	<u>7.45p.m.</u> : Andrew Irvine will speak on <i>Identification of Marine Mammals..</i>
Saturday 3 September excursion	<u>9.00a.m.</u> Depart from the Museum for the environs of South Arm. We will aim to visit a range of shore environments probably including Calvert's Lagoon, Goat Bluff and an exposed beach.
Thurs. 6 October	<u>7.45p.m.</u> : Simon Grove will speak about the <i>Warra Long Term Environmental Research Site</i> which compares a range of forestry practises for their environmental impacts.
Sunday 9 October excursion	<u>9.00a.m.</u> <i>Warra Long Term Environmental Research Site</i> is in the Southern Forests; we will be looking at invertebrates, fungi, birds and everything in between.
Thurs. 3 November	<u>7.45p.m.</u> : Simon Grove will speak about the <u>Warra Long Term Environmental Research Site</u> which compares a range of forestry practises for their environmental impacts.
Weekend November 4-6 excursion	<i>Federation Meeting at Koonya, Tasman Peninsula.</i> See Program on page 2 and book your accommodation.

Australian *Acacia* species to remain as such.

The international nomenclatural community was recently asked to reconsider the generic status of *Acacia* with implications that would have reassigned the Australian members of this genus to *Racosperma*, leaving *Acacia* as an African genus also split into *Senegalia*. This proposal was rejected due to the disruption involved in Australian botanical and cultural circles. Thanks to SeungAh Yi for this information.

Articles are required for *The Tasmanian Naturalist*. Our journal appears annually in October and includes a range of articles around the theme of natural history.

The *Naturalist* editor is Simon Grove phone 6233 8141 (W) or 6227 8509; (H); Simon.Grove@forestrytas.com.au

We are hosting this gathering of naturalists from around Tasmania and maybe beyond again this year. Friday evening spotlighting will be followed by the renowned Lime Bay orchids on Saturday morning, alternatively Clark's Cliffs fungi and waterbugs in the creek there! In the afternoon more waterbugs will be sought in the dam to be examined microscopically, followed by the formal meeting from 5p.m. to 6.30. The evening meal will be an on site BBQ costing \$14 and including meat, vegetarian patties, salads, dessert and drinks. The evening speaker at 8.00 will be John Gooderham, co-author of *The Waterbug Book*. Sunday will feature the rugged and colourful coastal heathlands of the Mt Brown to Crescent Bay walk.

Cast will be \$16/night/person of \$5/tent. Bring food (except Sat. night), bedding, towels. Well equipped kitchen, showers.

Excursion Reports

FAGUS WALK TO LAKE NICHOLLS, MOUNT FIELD, Saturday 7th MAY 2005.

Judy Sprent

Fourteen members departed the Museum in rather grey, unpromising conditions but the weather slowly improved as the day progressed – by late morning we were in sunshine but it was pretty “fresh” air by the time we reached alpine regions.

We headed first for Lake Fenton to view the fagus which was still much in evidence though winds had made their mark on the display. After our brief ramble through the berry-studded vegetation to the lakeside and back, our two “fungi fiends” headed back downhill towards the damper, darker tracks with richer pickings for their interests. The rest of us found a place to park on the narrow roadside near the bridge and headed along an old little used track to ~~intersect successfully with the regular Lake Nicholls track where we met with a group of “Friends” of the reserve.~~ They were having a working bee cleaning up huts, which accounted for the heavy demand on the usual parking space.

Two hours or so walking brought us up the ridge and across the moraine to the glacial Lake Nicholls, complete with glacial breeze, where we had lunch by the water. Whilst we shivered by the lake some brave souls went dabbling in the water and found *Anaspides tasmaniae*. A stonefly adult (Gripopterygidae) stopped by. A rather large and overfriendly bumble bee also joined us and demonstrated that they really do love the color blue. Then we scrambled back up over the moraine, down the rocky track to the winding, undulating detour back to the cars.

As we wended our way through a particular patch of open forest amongst boulders on both the inwards and outwards journeys we were closely supervised by a large cacophonous crowd, perhaps 100 or so, of currawongs - predominantly black but I heard clinking calls also. Birdlife was otherwise fairly subdued and kept a low profile but yellow throated honeyeaters, green rosellas and Tasmanian thornbills and forest ravens were also about.

Plants aplenty were seen and of course berries in just about every color imaginable were much in evidence, both around Lake Fenton and along the tracks. Some plant species were easily identified but others were quite puzzling. I made a list of what I thought we saw of note and did some research through the literature to try to identify them. Then I ran it past Alex Buchanan at the Herbarium and he helped me to decide what we most likely had seen. A couple of little mysteries remain mysteries. Genevieve Gates has a list of the fungi she and David found.

Plant List

<i>Nothofagus cunninghamii</i>	<i>Nothofagus gunnii</i>	<i>Eucalyptus subcrenulata</i>
<i>Eucalyptus coccifera</i>	<i>Exocarpus humifusus</i>	<i>Bauera rubioides</i>
<i>Hakea lissosperma</i>	<i>Banksia marginata</i>	<i>Telopea truncata</i>
<i>Persoonia gunnii</i>	<i>Orites diversifolia</i>	<i>Orites revoluta</i>
<i>Olearia phlogopappa</i> var. <i>subrepanda</i>	<i>Ozothamnus antenarifolius</i> ??	<i>Cyathodes juniperina</i>
<i>Cyathodes straminea</i>	<i>Cyathodes petiolaris</i>	<i>Cyathodes parvifolia</i>
<i>Tasmannia lanceolata</i>	<i>Gaultheria hispida</i>	<i>Billardiera longifolia</i>
<i>Coprosma nitida</i>	<i>Aristotelia peduncularis</i>	<i>Viola hederacea</i>
<i>Rubus gunnianus</i>	<i>Trochocarpa gunnii</i>	<i>Trochocarpa thymifolia</i>
<i>Prionotes cerinthoides</i>	<i>Sprengelia incarnata</i>	<i>Richea pandanifolia</i>
<i>Archeria serpyllifolia</i> ??		

Dora Falls Snail Report 5 June

Kevin Bonham

I expected good things from this area as it is only a few kilometres from areas on Judds Creek Road where Bob Mesibov and I collected a record 18 species in one day in November 2003. Finding snails was a little harder than expected but I still found nine species: *Caryodes dufresnii*, *Dentherona dispar*, *Roblinella curacoae*, *R. gadensis*, *Allocharopa* sp. "Wellington", *Paralaoma halli*, *Trocholaoma parvissima*, *Prolesophanta dyeri*, *Pedicamista* sp. "Chisholm". The last two were not included in the Judds Creek Road haul. *Roblinella curacoae*, normally a fairly uncommon species, was the commonest snail on this trip. I have noticed before (eg Collinsvale) that this species likes cold gully conditions.

Historic Hut Sites of Mt Wellington, July 9, 2005

A gathering of fifteen club members rendezvoused at the museum on a freezing July morning for a tour of some historic hut sites on the lower slopes of Mt Wellington. After driving to Inglewood Road, we set off along the erroneously named Middle Island fire trail. After a short distance, our guides, John and Maria Grist, struck up a small creek to Ellis & Sansoms' hut of 1906 vintage. The remains of this sawmillers' (?) hut included a couple of levelled terraces, a chimney base and a mound of stones.

Continuing along the fire-trail, we met Jill & Bane Fitzgerald, who joined us as we went up another fire-trail and turned off onto an over-grown log haulage (the mountain was heavily logged until 1855). Along the way we noted an old saw-pit, and at length we arrived at our second stop, Clematis hut. This elaborate and ornate hut was built in the 1890's, and some of the extensive grounds and buildings are evident today. After a look around, we had a bite of morning tea beside the chimney, amongst remains of pots, camp-ovens and other artefacts. Our energy reserves having been replenished, we ambled down to a large flat area by the creek, perhaps a summer picnic area for the hut members. Here some curious deep narrow holes in the rocky ground were noted, being the site of a tree-fern which has long since burned or rotted out. Photographic evidence suggests that large tree-ferns were once more common, and the environs wetter than today.

Crossing the creek and climbing up the other side brought us to the substantial wall base of Falls hut, which was built in 1897 and subsequently added on to. An ornate high-level bridge was built here in 1901, the location of which has not been found. After inspecting this hut, we sped down Middle Island track (so called because of its being on a narrow ridge between two adjacent creeks). John and Maria, surprised at our enthusiasm, offered to take us to Forrest Hut. So we climbed up a steep fire trail, until we reached a crest. Just beside the track were pathways of an elaborate garden and a fine example mound of stones which would have been heaped around a tree-fern base, this being quite the fashion amongst hut members. We settled on the mossy edge of the fire trail here for lunch, after which we went down to the nearby creek to inspect some channels carved into the rock, perhaps facilitating water collection for the members of Forrest Hut. On the way down we found a number of pieces of broken crockery, including a piece of brown and cream Bouton & Burslem cup commemorating (we think) an anniversary of the Coronation of Queen Victoria in 1837, or her reign.

We then headed back to our cars along a different route, and Amanda's car had to get pushed out of a ditch after an abortive attempt to back down the road. Still eager for more, we rendezvoused once again a short distance up Strickland Avenue, and were led down into the gully to inspect the remains of the 1890 built Grasstree hut, which the author, fatigued by the morning's exertions, was regrettably unable to attend.

Natural history was not entirely neglected in spite of the excitement of the cultural history focus of the outing. A number of *Pterostylis* orchids were noted, and were not quite in flower. Kevin identified one in flower as *Pterostylis ex Longifolia* (complex milligramma). Fossils were also seen in sandstone and lerps on the trunk of *Pomaderris* trees

With fifteen starters and seventeen finishers, we regained the losses of the previous outing!

To see the Grists' website, go to www.jandmgrist.com and click on the "Mountain Huts" link.

Mt Wellington huts outing Snail Report, 9 July

Mt Wellington is usually a good place to get a decent snail list quickly without looking hard and this trip was no exception. Around Middle Island Track and the Middle Island firetrail we found ten common species: *Caryodes dufresnii*, *Tasmaphena sinclairi*, *Helicarion cuvieri*, *Thryasona diemenensis*, *Stenacapha hamiltoni*, *Pernagera tasmaniae*, *Prolesophanta nelsonensis*, *Allocharopa* sp. "Wellington", *Paralaoma halli*, *P. mucoides*. *Helicarion cuvieri* was the most numerous species but most specimens were freshly dead - the species is prone to sudden local dieoffs and we even found one specimen that had perished mid-firetrail, perhaps of cold on the exposed track the previous night. At Grass Tree Hut below Strickland Falls a very brief search produced *Paralaoma halli* and a wonderful surprise - *Discocharopa mimosa*, my first record of this snail from the eastern face of Mt Wellington in over 90 hours of collecting! (Nearest records were at Collinsvale and Truganini Reserve).

The Sting on the Nettles

Stinging nettles are known as tenacious weeds, able to live in the toughest of conditions, notoriously known for inflicting unforgettable pain. Their hanging pinkish flower clusters impart agonising stings into unsuspecting walkers or gardeners who dare exposure their bare legs, arms or hands to its armoury. Close examination of these stinging heads reveal a myriad of tiny hollow hairs with swollen bases and needle-like tips. All are filled with formic acid, which when touched, act like syringes. This weed (*Urtica dioica*) along with its Tassie native cousin (*U. incisa*), have an unexpected set of attributes which deserve recognition.

Many of the stinging nettle's attributes are common to their 500 member Nettle family, (*Urticaceae*) which is made up of native and exotic trees, shrubs and herbs. Prominent members include the feared, tropical Giant Stinging Trees, (*Dendrocnide excelsa*), the indigenous Smooth Nettle or Shade Pellitory (*Parietaria debilis*), the attractive indoor plant and/or tropical groundcover Aluminium or Friendship Plant (*Pilea sp.*) and the toughest and silkiest of all natural fibre producers, China Grass (*Boehmeria nivea*).

Nettle tonics are nutritious

Both the native and exotic stinging nettle is very nutritious, provided their stings are neutralised by cooking or drying. A delicious vivid green, cream-of-nettle soup can be made using their tender, young shoots spiced with a touch of lemon. A superb nettle tea, wine or beer can be brewed from infused extracts of the young leaves. Due to their high Vitamin A, C and iron content, quenching nettle drinks act as a health tonic. Herbalists report that nettle tea can improve blood coagulation and haemoglobin formation. The roots of the nettles contain 'Phytosterols' which can be extracted to synthesis steroidal drugs. It is used for inhibiting the growth of tumours and regulating blood cholesterol.

Rich moist soils, preferably fertilised with chicken manure, allow gardeners to grow crops of lush nettles, whilst the best native nettles can be found thriving in damp, shady forests. In the native and vegetable gardens, they act as companion plants and provide nutritious supplements for the compost heap. A nitrogen-rich foliar feed can be brewed by soaking them in a bucket.

History reveals strange uses

Urtification is the process of deliberately stinging the skin with nettles. Roman soldiers, chilled by the cold, often rubbed their feet and hands with nettles to bring back their circulation, whilst convicts were punished by lashing large nettle bushes across the bare backs. **Urtification** has been used successfully for treating rheumatism and arthritis by tricking the nervous system into overlooking the deeper pain.

Nettles are the pretty Australian Admiral Butterfly larva's food plant. These larva carry a row of spiny hairs down their backs. They construct, prior to pupating, protective tents, from silk spun around leaves. Larva pupates into powerful, darting butterflies which are strongly attracted to colourful *Buddleia sp.* flowers. Being well camouflaged at rest, they happily bask on sunlit garden walls in the summer.

Nettle can yield excellent **silky fibre**, traditionally used to make fishing nets, rope, paper and cloth. The fibres were considered superior to cotton when making velvet and a more durable type of linen. Cloth was often coloured with the yellow dye that could be extracted from their roots.

Little known nettle relatives

Aside from the Stinging nettle, the native Small Shade Nettle (*Australina pusilla*), found in damp cool forests, are attractive, non-stinging nettles ideal for growing with ferns. Along with the native Shade Pellitory, both produce tasty spinach-like leaves.

The **Asthma Weed** (*Parietaria judacea*) is a weed nettle often found lurking in moist urban bushland sites. The hairs on this woody herb can induce skin rashes whilst its pollen causes asthma, conjunctivitis and hay fever. Ironically it is grown for its medicinal properties, which may be inadvertently helping it invade bushland sites.

Tree size nettle relatives



The Giant Stinging Tree is an important primary colonising tree (scab plant) which grows quickly within sub tropical East Coast rainforests, following a disturbance, like a landslip or a tree fall. They are also the home of the spectacular Splendid Ghost Moths, whose exquisite females display rich green forewings and pink hind wings whilst the males exhibit beautiful blue tones. Interestingly, the male moth produces a strong female attracting, pheromone scent from its glandular brush of hairs on its rear hind legs. This is opposite to most moths, in that the females disseminate the pheromone. Interestingly they have tunnelling larva, which bore into the young trees, after initially living amongst the forest floor litter.

Phil Watson