

TASMANIAN FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC.

established 1904.

BULLETIN

<http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au>
Editor: Don Hird. (email dgh@dodo.com.au)
Bulletin No. 316 (quarterly) October 2004

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 or Don Hird; 62 289 702). Unforeseen changes sometimes occur.

Thurs. 7 November 7.45p.m.: Peter Thompson will speak on the topic of the ecology of marine phytoplankton, the microbes that undertake most of the globe's photosynthesis and primary production.

Saturday 6 Nov. excursion 9.00a.m. Depart from the Museum for Tasman Peninsula and an easyish walk from Fortescue Bay to Canoe Bay. Snorkelling may not be out of the question?

Thurs. 2 December 7.45p.m.: Members' Night. You are welcome to provide a brief presentation on a Natural History (generously defined) topic. Also, please bring a plate of Christmas supper.

Sat. 4 December excursion 9.00a.m. We were planning a boat trip to the French Garden / LaBillardiere site near Recherche Bay area. This may now be Partridge Island. Keep in touch for details.

Thurs. 3 February 7.45p.m.: Lou Brooker from NE Tas. Field Naturalists will talk on Travels of a Naturalist in South America.

Tas. Marine Field Nats Program

Wednesday 10th NOVEMBER Saturday 13th Saturday 27 General meeting: Andrew Irvine, DPIWE, to talk about the whale rescue program. and organise one if enough interested people. Please let Jane know if you are interested in doing a 1-day course on whale rescue. Public beach walk for parents and children: 3 pm explore Blackmans Bay beach and rock

platform. Low tide 16.22, 0.62m. Contact Jane.6229 8264. Club field trip: Seven Mile Beach walk 3 pm (low tide 16.40, 0.71m). Contact Helen 6229 3936

DECEMBER Sunday 12th Field trip/Christmas party: Clifton beach / Goats Bluff 4 pm (Low tide 16.06, 0.46m). Bring a picnic to celebrate Christmas and a summer of low tides. Contact Jane.6229 8264.

From the Treasurer: A reminder that subs are due at the beginning of January. Please note that following a change of State Government policy our website will now be tasfieldnats.org.au . 2005 is not far away. Please consider joining our committee, to be elected at the March 2005 AGM.

Request for information: *Observations of bumblebees in native vegetation*

A feral population of the Eurasian bumblebee *Bombus terrestris* was discovered in Hobart in 1992 (Semmens et al. 1993). The effectiveness of this bee as a pollinator of greenhouse tomatoes has prompted repeated calls for its importation to the Australian mainland, where it does not yet occur. However, enormous harm has already resulted in Australia from deliberate introduction of animals that were believed to be harmless or beneficial, and this may also be the case if bumblebees are introduced to the Australian mainland (Low 1999). The most important factor influencing the severity of an imported pollinator's ecological impact is its capacity to become established beyond the agricultural areas where the target crop is grown (Cunningham et al. 2002). A survey of the distribution of bumblebees in Tasmania up to autumn 2001 found evidence of them breeding in all of Tasmania's major types of native vegetation, including within six National Parks and the most remote parts of the World Heritage Area (Hingston et al. 2002). The conclusion drawn by Hingston et al. (2002), that bumblebees were breeding across a large part of southern and western Tasmania, was subsequently questioned by Goulson et al. (2002) because Hingston et al. had accepted sightings of only two bees in one day as evidence of colony establishment. Goulson et al. (2002) argued that these may have been sightings of the same bee. However, more than 10 bumblebees were seen (by one person) in one day at 23 of the 51 locations where Hingston et al. found evidence of breeding in native vegetation, including within the most remote areas from human settlement (Hingston et al. 2002).

Because of the ongoing debate over the capacity for bumblebees to invade native vegetation, and the time that has passed since their distribution was last surveyed, I would like to survey the distribution of bumblebees in Tasmania during the coming spring, summer and autumn. I would appreciate it greatly if people could let me know of any places where they see more than 10 bumblebees in one day in native vegetation between spring 2004 and autumn 2005.

References

- Cunningham SA, FitzGibbon F, and Heard TA (2002) The future of pollinators for Australian agriculture. *Australian Journal of Agricultural Research* 53, 893-900.
- Goulson D, Stout JC, and Kells AR (2002) Do exotic bumblebees and honeybees compete with native flower-visiting insects in Tasmania? *Journal of Insect Conservation* 6, 179-189.
- Hingston AB, Marsden-Smedley J, Driscoll DA, et al. (2002) Extent of invasion of Tasmanian native vegetation by the exotic bumblebee *Bombus terrestris* (Apoidea: Apidae). *Austral Ecology* 27, 162-172.
- Low T (1999) 'Feral Future: the untold story of Australia's exotic invaders.' (Viking Penguin Books Australia Ltd: Victoria.)
- Semmens TD, Turner E, and Buttermore R (1993) *Bombus terrestris* (L.) (Hymenoptera: Apidae) now established in Tasmania. *Journal of the Australian Entomological Society* 32, 346.
- Dr Andrew Hingston, Geography & Environmental Studies, University of Tasmania, Private Bag 78, Hobart, Tas. 7001
email: hingston@utas.edu.au ph. 6223 1223 (h)

Excursion Reports

Orchids of Knocklofty Reserve, October 9, 2004

Nineteen Club members gathered shortly after 9:20am at the Forest Road/Knocklofty car park on a cool, overcast but fine Saturday morning. After the obligatory greetings and small talk, Kevin addressed the masses from The Mount in the car park, giving us an introduction to the area and a rundown of what we could expect to see in the way of orchids.

Emboldened by Kevin's challenge to find a specimen he had not located on an earlier reconnaissance, we strode 50 metres across the car park to find ourselves amongst a dense patch of delicate white musky *Caladenias* (now *Petalochilus gracilis*) punctuated by a solitary specimen of the common waxlip (*Glossodia major*). After much 'ooh'-ing and 'ahh'-ing, we set off en masse towards our ultimate goal, the summit of Knocklofty.

Following the gentle undulations of the meandering fire trails, the group quickly migrated into three major social divisions – botanistas, mycologists and 'others' (comprising sluglodites, beetlemaniacs, copepodiodians, birdites and walkwegians) – although much interdenominational interaction was noted.

On the approaches to a small pond, we encountered a spread of nodding greenhoods (*Pterostylis nutans*) or 'golfclub orchids'. I'm not sure if this is an accepted common name or a Kevin-ism but nonetheless, a descriptive soubriquet which certainly describes their similarity in shape to an inverted 1 or 2 wood. Among these were dotted several magnificent sun orchids (*Thelymitra* spp.).

On the banks of the pond, a Spotted Pardalote (*Pardalotus punctatus*) (deceased) was discovered. Even in death one marvelled in its exquisite beauty and majesty which belied its small stature. Another finding of note near the pond was a large sparkling iridescent Scarab beetle (not deceased), which posed well for the photographers among us until it became teed off (totally unrelated to the 'golfclub orchids').

Spurred on by Kevin's exhortations, we struck out for the summit and the promise of lunch (oh, and a spectacular orchidaceous experience). On the way, we took a slight detour to investigate some amazing bird orchids (*Chiloglottis triceratops*) perched on a most inconvenient slope.

Once at the summit, we were given the choice of lunch first or observing the spider orchids. Being the devoted naturalists that we are, the orchids of course took precedence over lunch. So, after a quick cross-country dash, we stumbled (literally) across the most stunning spider orchids (*Caladenia* sp.), which, according to Kevin, have recently been reclassified as *Arachnorchis echidnachila*. This new binomial epithet will certainly make the mental connection between common name and botanical name for this orchid much easier. Also evident around the lunch site in great numbers were golden moths (*Diuris chryseopsis*) and maroonhoods (*Pterostylis pedunculata*) which also put in cameos throughout the ascent along with specimens of the black-stripe greenhood (*Pterostylis melagramma*).

Following lunch, we completed the round trip by proceeding down the opposite side of Knocklofty to the car park, receiving a history and art lesson on the origin of the name of Salvator Rosa Glen along the way.

I am sure all those who participated in this most memorable Jolly will join me in expressing many thanks to Kevin for his preparation and execution. I also acknowledge and am grateful for Kevin's assistance in filling in the gaps (okay, gaping ravines) with orchid names, both common and botanical. **Warwick Gill**

Plant Key on CD

In August we were fortunate to be invited to UTAS' Plant Science Dept. to try out a computer-based key to Tasmanian dicotyledons. Specimens in flower were provided or

brought to test the Key Greg Jordan's key, which relies on vegetative as well as floral characteristics. Some specimens were very familiar with others like a heathland *Zieria* sp. more challenging. Most species are also illustrated in colour on the CD. It was an enjoyable evening rewarded with a copy of the CD on conclusion. Don Hird
Presidential Musings on TFNC at the APS Flower Show 2005

APS Flower Show

I guess I was feeling a bit dubious about what sort of impact the TFNC would have at the APS Flower Show this year. Usually it is THE event of every two years to such a degree that in the past a special flower show committee has been formed. This year it was overshadowed by the publication and launch of the History book, which flattened most of us. I knew we would miss Gilbert's wonderful landscaping skills and we didn't have the time or energy to produce a stunning mural as Janet did for the Gondwanan theme of three years ago but we had two dissecting microscopes, lots of pond water to look at some very large tadpoles, as well as our other "gallimaufry" (this gorgeous word I learnt from Janet) of natural history. The fact that we managed to turn a dark, out of the way, corner of the City Hall into an area of stimulation and excitement was apparent on the first day as there was a group of curious children three deep at our table for most of Friday. Admittedly, it was school children's day, but on the two subsequent days there was more often than not a row of little and big faces oohing and aahing at the magnification of the Christmas beetle or peering with fascination at the snake and quoll. The tadpoles put on a brave front and defied death as they were moved with much enthusiasm from the aquarium to the viewing dishes countless times over the three days ever under the watchful eye of young Jake from the Braehill Native Plant nursery. Jake also proved very adept at catching Qug's pet leopard slug which regularly crawled out of its container, destination unknown, but probably unbeneficial. Nothing squeamish about Jake! He manfully showed the girls how to pick Slug up with two sticks and return it to the safety of its' confines.

One woman said to me as she tugged her reluctant husband away from the display, "We have had five children and now they are all grown up I want to do adult things!". Do only children have a true curiosity for the world around us? I don't think sonot judging by the age of those fishing for pond life with Jake.

One man had just sat his Palaeontology prac. exam for Geology 1 and was still in exam mode. He picked up my rocks with the fossils in them and remarked "Phylum Brachiopoda, I hope." The Kingborough Bush care man said he really enjoyed our birdcall CD (that was lucky seeing as he had to listen to it for three days straight). The bird's nests brought forth a lot of questions and yes, reminiscences from childhood. We really must try to identify the nests for next time.

A sweet silvery haired lady asked me "Do you as a club agree with it?" She was referring to the destroying of the eggs in the nests of blackbirds. Personally, I would rather crush some of our country's politicians and leave the eggs alone but as a club? I wonder what she wanted to do to rabbits, or other introduced species like US!

People shared their observations....snakes are about. We were expected to have a lot of knowledge... "It was a most extraordinary moth and I would really love to know the name of it" ... Yes, well ...you could try Dr Peter McQuillan at the University. And talk about fortuitous luck...just as we got this sticky question about Bettongs guess who walked past? None other than Dr Randy Rose! Difficult inquiries could be deftly parried.... you don't have to have the answer at your fingertips just so long as you can find it in a book or give a name of an expert the public could contact. We must remember that there are still many people out there who have never had the opportunity to look down a microscope. The three stages of the mealworm development challenged people and even simple things like the surfaces of leaves

and flowers were given a new perspective under the magnifying lens.

There is a great deal of altruistic pleasure in helping people gain an appreciation of our wonderful world and the organisms that inhabit its ecosystems. The expressions of delight, amazement and even repugnance showed it all.

Many thanks to members who gave up their time to help set up and clear away the display, minded the display and contributed exhibits.

Genevieve Gates

The Book Launch

“*A Century Afield*” was very successfully launched at the TMAG on 17 September 2004 by the Lord Mayor, Robert Valentine. The occasion provided a wonderful opportunity for past and present members of the club to reminisce and renew acquaintances and we have received several letters from people saying how much they enjoyed the evening. Janet, Mary, Anna and myself had been at the gallery since 10am and were flat out all day until 5.45pm when I looked up from the salami slicing and realized that people were arriving. “Oh, hell Anna, it can’t be time already” but yes it was, so we flung the food on the platters (hope it didn’t look like that!), whisked off our aprons and composed ourselves in time for the official proceedings which went very well. Nobody fell off the podium, although we had to help Marjorie up to give her speech and if I had known she was going to do this I might have asked her to do a hula, just to show she is still the Tahitian maiden of all those years ago. The rude remarks about the identity of the platypus cake, i.e. “was it really a platypus?” bounced off the cook as she had already been subjected to similar remarks from her 3 sons (it looks like a slug, Mum). Most of the food and drink was disposed of as we seduced people into buying a copy or 2 or even 3 of our book. Anything that was left over was finished up the next day at our jolly BBQ at the Waterworks as we slowly came down to earth and relaxed after the event.

Many thanks to Mary for decorating the gallery with native plants and to Sally Fenton and her partner and Qug for looking after the bar. Also, we would like to thank Peter West and other museum staff for their assistance.

Genevieve Gates.

Recherche Peninsula / Southport Lagoon; Disgrace Under Construction.

In late August I visited this area with a primary interest in the site of the LaBillardiere expedition garden. A new logging road heads towards the heritage site and its sparse tree covering. It’s hard to believe that such a small stand of timber could justify the road, let alone the additional impingement on the Heritage area. When the scrubby understorey made going both wet and difficult we diverted to Southport Lagoon Conservation Area.

Another flavour of devastation materialised; this time a swathe of vehicle tracks often like a six lane highway. Buttongrass has been killed and subsequent erosion worsened by vehicles having diverted time and again from the original track. A sign near the start of this track indicated its winter closure, but recent vehicle tracks and the missing (winched off) gate belied this.

The Natural Heritage Trust has apparently granted 4WD clubs many thousands of dollars to remediate damage in this area; this appears to have vanished without trace and could only ever be a drop in the ocean. Ironically enough the track finishes on the beach itself.

The area has long been a bone of contention and has been the subject of intensive lobbying for recreational motor vehicles to retain access. Currently it is a monument to the ludicrous stand-offs that we so often have in Tasmania over basic conservation issues.

Don Hird