



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 (03)62278638.

We welcome articles and interesting photos for the Bulletin. If you would like to contribute to the next edition, please email the editor with your article or photos by 15 December.

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Program

General Meetings start at **7.15 pm** for 7.30 pm on the first Thursday of the month and feature a guest speaker on natural history (no meetings or excursions in January). Meetings are held in the Life Science Building at the University of Tasmania.

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

Thurs 4 Oct	Guest Speaker: Mick Statham, <i>European Wasps – history and life cycle.</i>
Sun 7 Oct	Excursion: Bangor on the Forestier Peninsula. As usual, meet at 9 am outside the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery on Macquarie Street, Hobart for car-sharing etc.
12-14 Oct	Federation weekend. Reserved heathland at Cape Portland (the Musselroe wind farm). Accommodation: Scottsdale High School Mt. Cameron Field Study Centre. Two bunk rooms 14 & 16 + space for tents. \$25 per person/ per night. Bus will provide transport from accommodation to Cape Portland. Federation weekends are a great opportunity for members to visit parts of the state not normally accessible to us. It is important to contact Lou Brooker (ph 63 560 381) by 4 Oct if planning to attend, so that Lou can book an appropriately sized bus.
13-21 Oct	ANN2012. The <i>Australian Naturalists' Network</i> is a group of field naturalists from all states which meets every two years for a get-together, this time in Canberra.
Thurs 1 Nov	Guest Speaker: Peter McQuillan, <i>New insights into moths.</i>
Sat 3 Nov	Evening excursion to <i>Mount Nelson</i> - light-trapping for moths. If the weather forecast is unsuitable we will instead go to TMAG's Rosny Collections and Research Facility at 10.30 am, to view the moth collection.
2-4 Nov	King Island Field Naturalists celebrate their 50th year this year. More info http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/ . RSVP Carmen Holloway Ph 64611248 by 1st October.
Thurs 6 Dec	Members Night
8 or 9 Dec	Christmas BBQ, TBA

For details of talks and excursions beyond this date, please check the website at <http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/>

Excursion to Mount Brown June 2012

Amanda Thomson

Eighteen Field Naturalists met at the Remarkable Cave car park on a fairly ominous, cool and cloudy day. Some of us took the opportunity to visit the cave prior to embarking on the Mt Brown track.

Initially, the terrain consisted of undulating, sandy dunes dominated by heath, epacris, *Banksia marginata*, and *Correa*. We found a small dung beetle in the sand.



Banksia marginata. Photo: Natalie Tapson



Onthophagus sp. - Horned Dung Beetle. Photo: Natalie Tapson

It was not long before we arrived at the unfenced Blowhole – a cavernous slit in the dolerite with foaming, pounding waves hundreds of feet below. The general area is a bare rocky platform with grasses and a few stunted bushes.



Maingon Blowhole. Photo: Amanda Thomson

The heathland continued across the 'Mansfield Plain' to the rock platform crossing a marsupial lawn of rock covered with mossy vegetation, yellow lichens, pigface and plantains.



Pigface (*carpobrotus rossii*). Photo: Amanda Thomson

We were trying to identify birds flying over the shore when we realized they were excited by a large seal toying with its prey, tossing it back and forth out of the water.

Plates of rock, stunted vegetation, lichens, banksia, hakeas and casuarinas traverse the rocky hillside of Mt Brown. Views extend across Crescent Bay with its scalloped shoreline and tall, descending dunes.

Erika Shankley thought the *Allocasuarina* was probably *crassa* (Cape Pillar sheoak) a particular species of the area, also found on Tasman Island.



Cladia retipora (Coral Lichen). Photo: Margaret Warren



Crescent Bay and rocky plates of Mt Brown.

Photo: Amanda Thomson

Erika further added the following information on the name of Mount Brown.

The book Tasplaces says that it was named by Bass & Flinders in 1798 to honour Robert Brown (1773-1858), a botanist who previously sailed with Flinders in the Investigator & returned to England in 1805 with over 3000 species of plants. He later became Joseph Banks secretary.

Mt Brown's top is marked by a fine, cairned Trig point, with magnificent views to Cape Raoul (400 m) and Bruny behind, Tasman Is and the Blade to the South.



Mt Brown trig point. Photo: Erika Shankley



Lunch on the summit. Photo: Amanda Thomson

We lunched on the summit in an out-of-the-wind spot. Immediately Simon (Grove) spotted whales! We saw 2 possibly 4, fairly close to us but heading out towards Tasman Is, spouting (single) and breaking the surface. No fins were spotted. I reported the sightings that night - they suspected the whales we had seen were Southern Rights due to them being close to shore (Humpbacks are normally seen further away) and the lack of fins.

On our return journey we were serenaded by a chorus of Tasmanian froglets calling in the pond area of Mansfield Plain – a fitting end to an enjoyable day.



Tasman Island. Photo: Amanda Thomson

Fungi list from Nell Hilliard

Mycena clarkeana

Amanita cinereoannulosa

Stereum ostrea (a fungimap target)

Trametes hirsuta

Entoloma moongum

These are not mycologist verified identifications.

Also Banksia root hard pustules, another *Mycena* sp, Brown pileus with white gills and brown Truffle.

Mount Direction Excursion July 2012

Michael Driessen

I thoroughly enjoyed the TFNC excursion to Mount Direction, especially sharing it with a group of good-humoured field nats who can find interest and delight in bones, birds, bugs under rocks and logs, fungi, trees, orchids and mammal poo; just to name a few. All this when the temperature never rose above 10°C and considerably colder when wind chill is taken into account (I should know, I foolishly wore shorts). Seventeen field nats met at the car park at Risdon Brook Dam at 9.30 and set off clockwise round the reserve and across the dam.



The group ready for the climb. Photo: Michael Driessen

Native hens scurried across the road and a sulphur crested cockatoo screeched high up in a gum tree. On the grassed areas around the car park was an abundance of pademelon and rabbit scats. Robin gates spotted a little grebe on the reservoir.

After about 500m we turned off the reservoir track and headed up the Mt Direction track. Bandicoot diggings were abundant. We walked through a lovely grassy eucalypt woodland (*E. viminalis* and *E. pulchella*), the columns of silver trunks gleamed in the weak winter sunlight.



Trunk of Eucalyptus pulchella. Photo: Simon Grove

Several Bennett's wallaby were disturbed from their morning slumber and were duly recorded digitally on numerous cameras.



Bennett's Wallabies. Photo: James Wood

I was most pleased that Kevin Bonham found for me a comb-legged harvestman, *Triaenobunus pectinatus*, under a log covered with a yellow fungi. Harvestmen are my new passion, alas it was to be the only one for the day. Scarlet robin, green rosella and forest raven were recorded.

As the track became steeper we could hear many small birds in the tree tops. They were black-headed honeyeaters that were distressed by the presence of a kookaburra. James Wood pointed out an *Ozothamnus scutellifolius* – a bush with green dots for leaves; under close inspection the dots are shield-shaped hence the specific name '*scutellifolius*' (latin scutellum (shield)).



Ozothamnus scutellifolius. Photo: James Wood

There were a large number of dead eucalypt trees which Geoff Fenton suggested were killed by the drought a few years ago when he last did the walk.

Harry Driessen found two snails for Kevin to identify (*Caryodes dufresnii* and a *Helicarion*). *Helicarion* means 'snail-slug' which is appropriate as it looked like a slug with a small shell attached.



Helicarion cuvieri. Photo: James Wood

We were all delighted to see several devil and wombat scats on the track. Around 11.15 most of the group stopped for morning tea halfway up a steep section of track and took in the view of the reservoir, Risdon prison and surrounding hillsides. We arrived at the summit just after noon where a large two metre tall rocky cairn marked the turning point of our walk. The views to the south and Hobart were obscured by tall eucalypt trees. To the north were the Derwent River, Mt Falkner, and Bridgewater Bridge. Gunners Quoin was in shadow and the view of it was not as impressive as it was on the way up.



On top of Mt Direction. Photo: Michael Driessen

Among the short grassy tussocks were wallaby scats and lots of digging which might have been made by bandicoots. Under a few rocks were red mites, an Asilidae fly larva and a spider guarding her web. Simon Grove heard an eastern spinebill. We had our lunch huddled among the rocks and tussocks to shelter from the chill breeze. On the return journey we found greenhood orchids that were yet to flower as well as metallic and ocellated skinks sheltering under logs. Near the reservoir where we had earlier observed many bandicoot diggings we found the skeleton of a brown bandicoot and a Bennett's wallaby. Janet Fenton found an egg case which Robyn Gates identified as belonging to a praying mantis. We arrived back at the cars around 3.30. Several yellow-tailed black cockatoos were putting on a show in the trees above the cars. Other birds observed in the vicinity of the reservoir were grey fantails, grey butcher birds, grey currawongs, eastern rosellas and brown thornbills. Thank you to Qug for suggesting the walk but whom unfortunately could not make it.

Excursion to Coal Mines August 2012

Jane Catchpole

Sixteen of us gathered at the old Coal Mine penal settlement on a cool sunny morning. Our mission was to search for the elusive forty spotted pardalote in the surrounding white gums (*Eucalyptus viminalis*). We had learnt from Dr Sally Bryant who provided a talk to the club the previous Thursday, that these birds have suffered a dramatic decline in population in the last decade or so.

Unfortunately we did not spot any forty spots, but we did have a very enjoyable day pottering amongst the ruins and reserve, following in the footsteps of the 1949 Easter Camp. Then, 60 field nats camped at Plunkett Point having travelled to the site by a six ton lorry, a modern bus hired from the Transport Commission and three private cars. They were also very resourceful in providing evening entertainment for the trip. Around the campfire, the night air was filled with the sound of

tuneful favorites and an animal/bird themed fancy dress parade was held on the final night. Apparently audience was treated to a parade of creatures of the most extraordinary shapes and names!

We found a lovely lunch spot, sitting in the sunshine on the sandstone cliffs of Plunkett Point, overlooking the clear blue waters of Norfolk Bay. We observed a sea eagle being harassed by a couple of terns. We also saw two hoary headed grebes on the water. Earlier Anna McEldowney spotted several dolphins. We then strolled up the hill, following the old inclined tramway to the mineshaft at the top of the hill. This tramway was used to transport the coal to the jetty, when the coalmines were operational in the 1830's and 1840's. From the summit we looked across the water to the misty ranges in the distance. As we descended to the car park, the

mist closed in, becoming a heavy rain shower. What good timing!



Cyrstostylis reniformis (small gnat-orchid) flowering at Plunkett Point. Photo: James Wood

Some of the birds that we did see and hear locally were: a large flock of cattle egrets in a nearby field, yellow throated honey eaters, superb blue wrens, scarlet robins, crescent honeyeater and kookaburra.



Corybas diemenicus (stately helmet-orchid) flowering at the Coal Mines Historic Site. Photo: James Wood

Rabbit and Bennett's wallaby scats were common among the ruins. We also saw wombat scats and echidna diggings (definite pointy impressions within the larger diggings). We found a very small brown tree frog under a rock. A male Tasmanian grasshopper (*Tasmaniacris tasmaniensis*) was found by James Wood. Kevin found several species of snail including a species not previously recorded on the Tasman Peninsula.

Excursion to find the Tasmanian Chaostola Skipper September 2012

Peter Jarman and Margaret Brock

On a morning of showers, rainbows and strong wind (i.e. a Tasmanian spring morning), about thirty Field Nats gathered in the Peter Murrell Reserves, Blackmans Bay, where we were introduced to Dr Phil Bell, Manager of the Threatened Species Section of DPIPWE.



Field Nats gathered at Peter Murrell Reserves

Photo: Michael Driessen

The previous day, National Threatened Species Day (7th September, the anniversary of the death in captivity of the last known thylacine), Phil had launched the Tasmanian Government's Threatened Species Link (see www.threatenedspecieslink.tas.gov.au), giving web access to what is known of Tasmania's 600+ threatened species. Phil is an expert on Tasmania's endangered and rare butterflies and was leading this excursion to show us what he could of the Tasmanian Chaostola Skipper

Antipodia chaostola leucophaea, one of three butterfly species listed as endangered in Tasmania. He emphasised that the species is known from only a couple of sites on the east coast (Freycinet and Little Swanport) and a few sites between Kingston and Coningham. He discovered the Chaostola Skipper population in the Peter Murrell Reserves only seven years ago, yet this now appears to be where the species can most reliably be found. Hence it is an extremely important site for the species' conservation.

However, the butterfly is not easy to find. Adults are rarely seen, and fly for only a few weeks early in summer. It is a little easier to find the shelters built by their larvae (caterpillars), and Phil set out to teach us the skill of recognising those, since that is the best way to survey the species' occurrence. The Chaostola Skipper's caterpillar feeds on leaves of the thatch saw-sedge *Gahnia radula*; and each caterpillar makes itself a shelter by weaving silken threads to pull together two or more saw-sedge leaves, forming a narrow tepee, open at the bottom, in which it can shelter, head-down. The trick to spotting the shelter is to look for a leaf that is bent inwards and bound to others; sometimes the ends of the leaves may show signs of being eaten off by the caterpillar.



Chaostola Skipper Larval shelter. Photo: Kristi Elligsen



Leucopogon collinus (White Beardheath).

Photo: James Wood

But there are problems. Phil warned us that the more common Donnysa skipper *Hesperilla donnysa* also makes shelters in thatch saw-sedge; but their shelters are open at the top, not the bottom. And dodderlaurel (*Cassytha* species) can also wrap around saw-sedge plants, producing a similar bundled appearance. The task began to sound like a needle-in-a-haystack quest.

Having primed us with pictures and tips, Phil led us into the black peppermint *Eucalyptus amygdalina* woodland with an understorey of heath plants, sedges and grasses. The area's vegetation, burned nine years ago, had regenerated to 30-50 cm tall. Amongst the flowering white and pink beard-heaths *Leucopogon collinus* and *L. ericoides*, slender rice-flower *Pimelea linifolia* and showy bossia *Bossiaea cinerea* were scattered plants and stands of thatch saw-sedge, and we began to search.



Searching for Chaostola Skipper caterpillar's shelters.

Photo: Michael Driessen

And to our surprise we did start to find them. Not many; about a dozen (including shelters with larvae and one with a pupa) in an hour's searching. But by *Chaostola Skipper* standards that is a very successful haul.



Bossiaea cinerea (Showy Bossia). Photo: James Wood

Phil soon found a *Chaostola Skipper* caterpillar's shelter (about 25mm long and 5mm wide) and we crowded in to admire it before spreading out to find them for ourselves.



Chaostola skipper pupa. Photo: Amanda Thomson

Phil had confirmed the species' persistence in the reserve, and we had learned a new field skill and gained admiration for the knowledge and work of the Endangered Species Section of DPIPW.

Now that we have the search image, bent bits of thatch saw-sedge will never look the same again!

Above Ground Basking in a Terrestrial Spider

Simon Fearn

Throughout winter on sunny days, particularly after a frost, a maximal sized female trapdoor spider *Lycosa simonsi* of around 30mm in body length has been exhibiting unusual behavior. She has been climbing up on top of a shrub (*Baekia virgata*) in my Riverside, Launceston garden and basking all day in the sun. She appears once the shrub is in full sun and disappears again once the shrub is in shade.



These large spiders normally spend their lives in a silk lined burrow with a very well camouflaged lid (see the Tas. Nat. Bull.347). Whether her burrow was at the base of the shrub, or for whatever reason she did not have one, it is nonetheless highly unusual to see these strictly ground dwelling spiders basking in the tops of shrubs.



Bruny Island Bird Festival

25-28 October 2012

The focus of this four day festival is a celebration of Bruny Island birdlife. Proceeds support bird habitat conservation works and community awareness projects.

The festival includes a range of guided birdwatching tours, boat trips along the amazing Bruny Coastline and flights to Melaleuca in the South West World Heritage Area to search for the Orange-bellied Parrot.

Lots of opportunities to socialise, view beautiful artworks and photography, listen to expert speakers and poets.

Full program details and the booking form are available on the website www.bien.org.au, by emailing bien.network@gmail.com or phone (03) 6293 2034.