

Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Quarterly Bulletin No. 273

January 1994.

The Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club (TasNats) is devoted to the study of all forms of Natural History, and is comprised of both experts and beginners. We cover a wide variety of topics, and encourage conservation. Meetings are held on the first Thursday of every month, except January, in the Life Science Building at the University of Tasmania from 7.45 p.m. Outings are usually held the following weekend, meeting outside the main entrance to the Museum, Macquarie Street. We share transport to fill cars wherever possible.

The Club's address is GPO Box 68A, Hobart, 7001 and the club contact is Don Hird (34 4293).

Program

- Thurs. 3 February 7.45p.m.: Bob Paterson, a TasNats member and keen bird observer will speak on Tasmanian Woodland Birds
- Sat. 5 February 10 a.m.: The excursion will be to the Tinderbox area, meet at the Museum entrance, or at Kingston by arrangement.
- Thurs. 3 March 7.45p.m.: AGM; Financial and other annual reports will be presented, together with a presidential address.
- Sat. 5 March 9.00 a.m.: Cape Hauy Walk / Fortescue Bay. Cape Hauy, a medium standard 4 hour return walk is the main event here. It traverses a variety of coastal heath and scrubland habitats and offers fine coastal views. We will proceed at a modest pace allowing time for browsing and breaks. The walk leaves from Fortescue Bay, where an optional alternative visit with less walking may be possible.
- Thurs. 7 April 7.45p.m.: Paul Humphries will speak on the Aquatic Fauna of the MacQuarie River.
- Sat. 9 April 9.00 a.m.: Outing to the midlands looking at study sites and examples of different habitats on the MacQuarie River.

New Members Welcome to our new members Els, Grant, Erik and Tim Hayward.

Committee Deliberations.

Our new publication, the long, long-awaited *Butterflies of Tasmania* has been delayed at the printers due to a problem with colour plates. As these are a feature of the book, the committee decided to delay issue rather than compromise on quality. Limited numbers of *Butterflies of Tasmania* will be available to members at a modest discount to the retail price.

Organising club events and activities is a significant task. In March elections will be held if needed for the 1994 committee; please consider. Our secretary of recent years, Margaret Mollison, and treasurer Gilbert van Munster are retiring. The load is reasonable when spread across 10 active members although some circulation of committee members is beneficial to all concerned.

Membership fees fall due at the end of each calendar year; ie if you haven't paid for 1994 you're overdue.

Reminder, we are publishing the *Tasmanian Naturalist* on an annual rather than quarterly basis from this year. The volume of material will be at least maintained and the annual issue will be delivered with the October bulletin. This will make the Editor's task and some distribution easier, the Bulletin will continue to be sent to members quarterly.

President's Report.

Unfortunately publication of our butterfly book has been delayed at a late stage of production. Our next publishing venture will be re-issuing *Tasmanian Birds* in a new edition. A subcommittee will oversee changes and the publishing process, see a committee member if you'd like to contribute in any way.

Ventures of this sort need active cooperation as well as skills of members and other contributors. Rather than being necessarily profitable (although breaking-even financially overall is a requirement), our publications should be educational and reflect the aims of the club in promoting appropriate conservation.

The Natural History of Mt Wellington is the subject of an Adult Education course offered by TasNats. It is aimed at both increasing appreciation of The Mountain and generating income to the club.

Survey Program

Another trip to Schouten Island (at the tip of the Freycinet Peninsula) is tentatively planned for October. Botanical records are worthy of follow-up, particularly for spring flowering species from last year's highly successful visit. The western end of the island is also worthy of further exploration.

Mammal survey activities have been in abeyance following the loss of access to small mammal traps. We are hoping to remedy the situation this year.

Bulletin

of the Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc.

April 1994 No. 274

Editor Phil Collier

The Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc. encourages the study of natural history and supports conservation. People with a range of backgrounds and knowledge are welcome as members.

Contact Don Hird (ph 34 4293) for more information, or write to GPO Box 68A, Hobart, 7001.

Programme

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 on the following Saturday meeting at 10am outside the main entrance to the Museum in Macquarie Street.*

- 5 May** Dr Neil Davidson, the Education Officer at the CRC for Hardwood Forestry will talk on 'The Eucalypts of Snug Tiers'. Snug Tiers has 17 species of gum tree out of the total of 29 species in Tasmania. Neil will discuss ecological factors which influence this remarkable diversity in such a small area.
- 7 May** *Neil will lead a circular walk on the top of the Tiers of about 6-7km. (It may be possible to shorten this by returning direct to the cars.) We will visit a frost hollow and inspect the different species that find homes in different ecological niches.*
- 2 June** Dr Brian Stait, former lecturer at the Universities of Newfoundland and New England, will speak on 'The palaeobiogeography of Australia and South-east Asia'. In particular Brian will present evidence from the distribution of fossil nautiloids and trilobites as support for the theory that Australia and South-east Asia were joined.
- 4 June** *Dr Kathy Stait, lecturer in palaeontology at the University of Tasmania, and wife of Brian, will lead an excursion to Permian and Triassic sites near Hobart to view fossils.*
- 7 July** Dr Jo Jacka, Principle Research Scientist with the Antarctic Division's Glaciology Programme and husband of our treasurer Starola, will present a talk on 'Antarctic and Southern Ocean Climate Change, with some implications'. (A fuller description of this talk is included in the Bulletin.)
- 9 July** *Jo will take us to the University to view some ice cores from Antarctica in the cold room at the Institute of Antarctic and Southern Ocean Studies.*
- 4 August** Mike Comfort, from Parks Wildlife and Heritage, will present a talk on Taspaws, a system used to record observations of various wildlife in Tasmania. Full details in the next *Bulletin*.

Special note — membership fees 1994

We have included a membership renewal form for those members who apparently have not paid their 1994 subscription. If you have already paid please phone treasurer Starola Jacka (ph 31 4230).

President's Report

The Natural History of Mt Wellington Adult Education course developed some years ago by TasNats was attended by 13 keen students over the last month or so. Many of the students were originally from interstate and expressed interest in our club as well as the course. The committee agreed to apply the tutor's fee to TasNats Fauna Survey Group equipment.

Interest has been expressed in developing natural history projects. These would complement our usual activities and work towards a specific outcome, usually some sort of publication. Possibilities would include guides identifying and providing distribution maps for, say, invertebrate groups like spiders (a difficult subject) or ants. Some interstate FieldNats have day-groups meeting mid-week which might tie in with this idea. A somewhat related idea that has occurred to me is a series of *Natural History Guides to Tasmanian Walks*. These might include walks like Truganninni, Organ Pipes, Cape Hauy, and Lake Judd Tracks and a beach walk or two like Marion Bay. Each would point out physical and botanical features and possible fauna to be encountered. They would refer to a published set of track notes for the walk and field guides like Plant Identikits and *Tasmanian Birds* and *Butterflies*. They could start from modest beginnings and develop into a publishable form such as a collection for SE Tasmanian or a with a theme, say coastal-walk guides. Adopt a track and start looking for fungi there now, the committee would like to be deluged with such offers!

Work is now proceeding actively on the Butterfly Book again. This was held up by a problem with the quality of the original colour separations and the need to consult with Julie Virtue who was away for several months. We are seeking to have the colour separations re-done on a different machine. We have also made a few alterations to the text which require final checking. We are negotiating with our printer concerning the problems. The result of the negotiations will determine the publication date.

Mammal traps appeal

The committee discussed the use the monies raised from the adult education course (about \$300) as seed money for the purchase of mammal traps. A total of about \$1 000 is needed for 50 traps, which is the minimum required for a reasonable night's trapping. The committee has agreed to appeal to members for donations towards further mammal traps. Elliot traps can be sponsored with a donation of \$25 to the Club. Each donation will be recognised in some appropriate way, perhaps with an engraving of your name on a trap. You can then follow with interest what animals are caught in your trap in the future. Please support this initiative to facilitate the worthwhile Club activity of mammal survey.

New Members

A special welcome to our new members Mr and Mrs GR Ellis and John Reid. Members may like to know that past-president David Ratkowsky has returned to Tasmania, and is living in York Street again. (How many times have you left 'permanently', David?)

Global warming

Members will have an opportunity to hear the latest information on global warming at the July meeting. Dr Jo Jacka has provided the following synopsis of his talk.

Studies of long term climate change from ice cores extracted from the Antarctic Ice Sheet and of shorter term climatic change from monitoring studies from occupied stations in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean indicate that, since the Industrial Revolution, there has been a small but significant warming. Associated with the warming, there has been a small decrease in the extent of sea ice in the Southern Ocean. There has also been an increase in the concentration of atmospheric greenhouse gasses (illustrated also by the ice core data). These changes in climate and greenhouse gasses are very similar in size to those predicted by the climate models for a climate warming as a result of the increased greenhouse gas concentrations.

The talk will present the data illustrating this climate warming. In addition, some implications of the warming will be discussed, particularly with respect to the possibility of an altered vegetation regime on Southern Ocean Islands, eg Macquarie Island.

Adult Education

Don Hird has organised the adult education course *Natural History of Mt Wellington* again. It has run over four evenings in March and April. Don and Peter McQuillan presented the geology and climate of the Mountain on the first evening. Phil Collier presented the plant communities illustrated by plant specimens on the second evening. Peter presented invertebrate fauna, and Don presented the vertebrate fauna to complete the course. An outing to the Mountain was held on 10 April.

The Bulletin of the Club

This year you have me (Phil Collier) back as Bulletin Editor after my spell on the mainland. We can no longer describe the Bulletin a supplement to *The Tasmanian Naturalist*, as that will now appear annually. For this reason the Bulletin takes on a slightly more significant role. We are fortunate to be able to print the Bulletin for minimal cost, so there is no excuse for keeping it small if we can find suitable material for inclusion.

I believe that the Bulletin should include news of Club events and personalities. It could also include other material of interest, the poem by Bruce Roberts is an example. Please let me know if you have any ideas about what should be included, or what shouldn't be included. Better still why not write something for the Bulletin yourself? Phone Phil Collier on 29 6597 (H) with your ideas or contributions.

Recognition of service to the Club

The committee has recently considered the issue of life membership of the Club. With the relatively small size of the Club and the potential drain on finances that could arise from additional life members, the committee feels unwilling to offer further life memberships at this time. However it does feel that there is a need to have a method for recognising outstanding service to the Club. One possibility is to create a medallion, possibly named the Michael Sharland Memorial Medallion. No more than one award would be made each year. The committee felt that it would be appropriate to canvas the advice of existing life members (and future medallion holders) as to who, if anyone, would be suitable to receive the medallion. On presentation of their medallion, a member would be invited to deliver a lecture to a meeting of the Club.

The committee invites all members to consider this proposal. Comments may be made to Don Hird (ph 34 4293) or to other members of the committee.

Tee Shirts

At the Federation meeting Bill Flowers from Deloraine displayed some tee shirts printed with his high-quality designs of various Tasmanian animals. One design of a platypus is very similar to the Club's current logo. This was displayed at the April general meeting on a green tee shirt. It is highly appropriate as a Club 'uniform' and several members have ordered a shirt for themselves. We do not plan to apply the Club's name to the shirts, the design itself is sufficiently distinctive. The designs are printed on reasonably thick shirts that are made in Australia. Each shirt is reasonably priced at \$20 in the sizes S, M, L and XL. We plan to put an order in after the May general meeting. For further information and orders phone Sue Collier on 29 6597 (H).

Platypus Study

"In Tasmania, little is known of platypus populations, and no studies have been carried out in the State." (From *The Tasmanian Conservationist*, January 1994.) In particular a fungal disease which causes skin ulcers, and in severe cases death, needs further investigation. An investigation is now to be coordinated by Joanne Connolly and David Obendorf, Dept of Primary Industries and Fisheries, Animal Health Laboratory, ph 003 365221, after hours ph 003 432598. Information requested is:

- Reports of sightings of live healthy platypus.
- Reports of sightings of platypus with skin ulcers, other injuries or illness.
- Collections of platypus found dead. These should be put into a plastic bag and frozen as soon as possible. Please keep a note of where the platypus was found.

Outing report — Federation meeting hosted by the Deloraine Field Naturalists Group Inc. 25–27 March

Five members of the TasNats attended this meeting held at Weegeena near Deloraine. As usual the host club had organised a high-quality program for the weekend.

On Friday evening Jim Nelson showed slides of the projects organised by the Deloraine Group. They have been very successful in studying Tasmania's giant crayfish, *Astacopsis gouldi*, and have much data about its distribution and growth particularly in the Gog Range. The Club is disappointed that its efforts to secure a forestry reserve in this area are falling on deaf ears. Recently they have started a program of learning more about the Tasmanian (or Burrows) tree frog, *Litoria burrowsae*. Some pictures of outings to Birches Inlet illustrated a major study site.

Saturday morning saw the Hobart contingent travel to Kelcey Tier just south of Devonport. Here we were met by Peter Sims, spokesperson for the Friends of Kelsey Tier. We were shown some highlights of the Tier, including a track which had been officially opened only a week earlier. We saw many stone aboriginal artefacts and an aboriginal stone carving. These were of high quality in my experience in Tasmania. The main issue that Peter focussed on was a battle between the Friends group on one side and the Devonport Council and Port Sorell Landcare Group on the other side. This dispute started quite innocently after the failure of a works project to remove weeds

from the Tier, and continued through much bitterness and eventually media attention to a blockade of the reserve by the Friends. The whole story was a salutary lesson to conservation minded people who wish to preserve natural values. Finally some sort of compromise was achieved after considerable financial and personal commitment by Peter and the Friends.

After lunch the Hobart contingent travelled to the Elizabeth Town Nursery where we were hosted by John Dudley. He has a collection of Tasmanian reptiles, specialising in the skinks and dragons of Tasmania. It was very interesting to compare them all in one room and at close quarters.

Back at Weegeena, the Deloraine Group then served up a barbecue of home-made burgers followed by a wonderful selection of sweets.

Next followed the highlight of the weekend for me. The group Nyet were introduced to us to play an hour of poetry, music, sounds of nature and didjeridu. Composer Ron Nagorcka records birds and animals on digital tape and then massages the recordings with a computer into many amazing sounds. To this he has added other instruments including didjeridu and the poetry of Bruce Roberts to make a thoroughly contemporary but certainly interesting musical experience. I was immediately a fan of the music, others wanted to hear it again to be sure, Gilbert felt that outdoors would have been better. Everyone agreed that we had

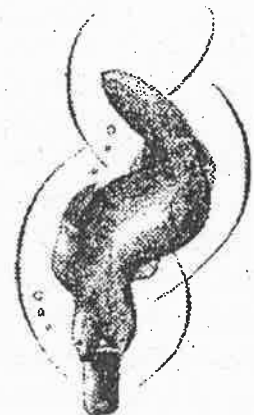
experienced some genuine Tasmanian talent at work. (Other members of the group were Megan Cavanagh-Russell and Teresa Jordan with Kim Clark as sound engineer.)

Saturday evening concluded with 'frog man' Paul Swiatkowski from the Deloraine group talking to slides of their Tasmanian tree frog project. We barely needed to be reminded, but here again was evidence of the tremendous energy of the Group, and the valuable scientific results that can still be produced by dedicated amateur naturalists.

Sunday morning was devoted to the business meeting of the Federation, and was notable for being the handover of the office bearers to the Deloraine Group. The new president is Paul Swiatkowski, secretary-treasurer is Nick Cummings. I am still a vice president.

The weather for the weekend was perfect and the company of the other field naturalists from around the state was stimulating. A wonderful experience.

Phil Collier



Climbing the Currawong's Call

by Bruce Roberts

The poem in the side bar is by Bruce Roberts and was presented as part of a musical composition during the performance by Nyet at the March Federation meeting. (See the item in this Bulletin for a full report.) When performed with the music it is an attempt to express the feeling of a very special place.

Bruce Roberts (born Flowerdale, Tasmania 1952) began writing poetry and prose in the late 70's and early 80's, a period in which he attended the cultural classrooms of Europe, the Middle East and Asia. He has a poetic determination to reflect our own society as it rushes into the tariff free mechanics of cultural manufacturing. In the mid 80's Bruce began writing poetry, mindful of performance. His work led to several community writing residences including work at the Food Preservers Union leading to publication of his poetry book *Captive to the Process*, but more important for Nyet, the project Writer in the Wilderness at Cradle Mountain where he met and collaborated with Ron Nagorcka.

He was awarded an Arts Tasmania Writing Fellowship in 1992 and as a past winner of the Warana Short Story Award, Banjo Paterson Festival Writing Award, Circular Head Festival Award, Henry Savery Short Story Award.

He lives and works on a dairy farm, his writing imbued by his great respect for the earth and her cycles; her fragility, her exuberance, her kindness and her harsh rebuke.

Currawongs converse through valley mists
singing the shroud from lake to snowline
from heath-clothed plateaus and mountain fists
wings fly mystery without horizon.

Bells jingle in black throats, cold still
in the gargle and pump, wingtip to wingtip
catapulting currawong cries off the Cradle face
calling time to the climber's tread.

Drifts spin bluely down each foothole
air catching colour in its breath,
white wraps red gaiters coolly squawking
snow chills chasms about black rocks.

Diamond clasps freeze decoration
conifer phyllodes finger greenly.
Sun runs water down deciduous bark
windows view, prisms magnify.

In the hard snow footsteps kick their conquest
icing stairways across the smooth face,
cool distance calms and beautifies
steel chipping crystals toe first to achievement

Ice icons slip anchor from rock spires
in blue cathedrals, white oceans separate
ephemeral landscapes from dubbed heels
stamping worship to the summit step.

Fear strikes love adrenalin pushes desire
for command of natural countenance;
mountains, rivers, lakes, maps identify
and cairns memorialize the ultimate descents

to forest margins where hungry bellies lead
wallaby tails skiing the white carpet,
ridge to ridge on a buttongrass browse
to warmer climates beside the tourist cars.

From Cradle Valley, currawongs wing the walls
through curiosity and scavenge,
drifting snowfall to green ballrooms
loose lichens, pink berries and cold insects.

Carloads mimic this black bird of the wilderness
and snatch back edibles from strong beaks.
Climbers envy the quick ascent and plunge
from snowstorms, recalling the currawongs carillon.

© Bruce Roberts, printed here with permission

Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Committee's Annual Report 1993/4

At the March 1993 AGM the following office bearers were elected: **President Don Hird, Vice President Kevin Bonham, Secretary Margaret Mollison, Treasurer Gilbert van Munster, Naturalist Editor Rob Taylor, Walks and Talks Genevieve Gates, Librarian Starola Jacka, General Committee Members Patti Virtue and Eliza Watkins**

During the past year monthly meetings have attracted an average attendance of 28 people. The speakers and outings are shown in the following table.

Month	Speaker/Topic	Outing/Leader
April	Debbie Bramich / Pilot Whale Strandings	Debbie Bramich / Waterfall Bay
May	Will Fletcher / Propagation of Tasmanian Native Plants	Will Fletcher / Plants of Tasmania Nursery, Ridgeway
June	Pat Barwick / Remnant Roadside Vegetation	Pat Barwick / Hobart Domain and Cambridge
July	Sue Anderson / Phytophthora infestation in Tasmania	Patti Virtue / CSIRO Double Helix Club
August	Peter Brown / Tasmanian Frog Atlas Project & Patti Virtue / Krill Biology	Patti Virtue / Antarctic Division to view krill studies
September	Mike Driessen / Barred Bandicoots	Mike Driessen / South Lea
October	Fred Duncan / Swamp Forests of NW Tasmania	Fred Duncan / Meehan Range
November	Greg Blake / Invertebrates of Tasmanian Midlands	Greg Blake / Wentworth Park
December	Members Night	Don Hird / Mt Wellington & Dru Point
February	Bob Patterson / Tasmanian Woodland Birds	Bob Patterson / Tinderbox

Six committee meetings were held with an average attendance of 7 people. Decisions included

- revision of subscriptions and fees with modest increases implemented for 1994
- *The Tasmanian Naturalist* to be issued annually in October rather than quarterly, while maintaining quality of articles and total number of pages
- revision rather than reprinting of *Tasmanian Birds*
- lobbying Government on issues such as the Rare & Endangered program, Mt Wellington management issues and opposition to the Cable Car proposal.

TasNats provided the President and Secretary/Treasurer to the Federation of Field Naturalists Clubs of Tasmania, and organised the Federation meeting at Bronte Park in March (attended by around 40 people). The other meeting at King Island in September (hosted by King Island Field Nats) was also a successful and enjoyable weekend.

The Mammal Survey group was largely in abeyance due to a lack of equipment. We have put in several applications for grants for equipment, but these have been unsuccessful.

After an intensive effort the Butterfly Book manuscript and illustrations was sent to the printers in late 1993. Progress is currently impeded by problems with the quality of printed illustrations in the page proofs. Negotiations are continuing to overcome this problem.

The Club had an extended outing to Schouten Island in October. This resulted in an extensive report submitted to the Parks and Wildlife Service.

The committee accepted with regret the retirement of Margaret Mollison and Gilbert van Munster. We thank them for their many years of valuable service to the Club.

Bulletin

of the Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc.

July 1994 Number 275

Editor Phil Collier

The Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc. encourages the study of natural history and supports conservation. People with a range of backgrounds and knowledge are welcome as members.

Contact Don Hird (ph 34 4293) for more information, or write to GPO Box 68A, Hobart, 7001.

Programme

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 on the following Saturday meeting at 10am outside the main entrance to the Museum in Macquarie Street.*

- 4 Aug** Mike Comfort, from Parks and Wildlife, will present a talk and demonstration of Taspaws, a computer system used to record observations of various wildlife in Tasmania. Ray Brereton will follow this by showing how the Taspaws system has been of practical use in his project on the Swift Parrot.
- 6 Aug** *Phil and Sue Collier will lead an outing to Bedlam Walls, East Risdon Nature Reserve. There are several features of interest including a cave formerly occupied by aboriginals and some interesting eucalypts including some obvious hybrids.*
- 1 Sept** Phil and Sue Collier will present a talk called *Sunrises and Sunsets of SE Australia*. It will include scenes from national parks and wildlife, mostly wildflowers and orchids, that can be found there. All pretty pictures and no graphs!
- 3 Sept** *9am start. Bob Patterson will lead a trip to the Triabunna, Orford, Spring Beach area. As usual Bob will be aware of the latest sightings, rumours etc. concerning the local birds. As usual, we will look at animals and plants as well as birds.*
- 6 Oct** Dr Gustaaf Hallegraeff from the Department of Plant Science, University of Tasmania will present a talk on blue-green algae.
- 8 Oct** *9am start. Don Hird will lead an outing to Marchwiell, a property on Marion Bay. This is a property that we have visited before and includes some magnificent coastal scenery such as Hellfire Bluff. We will look around for birds, animals and plants.*
- 21 Oct – 23 Oct** *Federation of Field Naturalists of Tasmania meeting hosted by the Burnie Field Naturalists Club. Our own Peter McQuillan will be speaking and leading a butterfly outing. This should coincide with publication of the Butterfly Book with luck. Phil Collier (29 6597) will coordinate transport.*
- 29 Oct – 2 Nov** *Don Hird has organised a return visit (weekend or extended) to Schouten Island with transport provided by Parks and Wildlife. We will continue with our earlier survey work. This visit, being later in the season than the last, should reveal new orchids species, and many other goodies. Phone Don Hird (34 4293) for details.*
- 3 Nov** Elizabeth Turner will speak on spiders. More details in the October Bulletin.

President's Report

Firstly, and most regrettably, I must report that Judy Lovibond died in June after a battle with cancer. Judy was an active member of our club, and a willing helper, and will be missed by all who knew her.

Schouten Island beckons loudly again this year! October 29 to November 2 are the dates of our planned visit and should be ideal for spring wildflowers. Please note the dates in your diary.

Conservation topics never seem far from the news. We have had exceptional difficulty obtaining any response to our queries about the proposed watered-down state Endangered Species Legislation. State Government seems to display a defensive attitude on the one hand and defiant on the other, especially vis-a-vis the Commonwealth.

Lake Pedder is again in the news headlines. I have to say that I am somewhat disappointed but not really surprised about the mode of the re-emergence of this issue. I believe that there are still far too many unknowns, especially on the economic side, to champion it as a world's best conservation initiative. There seems to be no biodiversity benefit. I doubt whether any worthwhile progress could be achieved by the year 2000. It is valuable to know of the feasibility, it would be nice to also know for how much longer this feasibility is likely to remain. I also dislike the promotion of Pedder 2000 as the work of the "Tasmanian Conservation Movement". Such an inclusive term for a particular lobby group does not reflect the consultation involved in floating the idea; it was launched onto the world stage before many of us heard of it. The same people who boycotted the World Heritage Advisory Group a couple of years ago are now monopolising this one. I strongly feel that conservation should be encouraged across all political and social streams in our society, not as the preserve of one or a few. There are many conservation priorities of importance, we need to think and act carefully. What do you think?

We are cooperating in a working party on Coastal Bird Management, ask Priscilla Park or myself if interested. I have suggested that some further control of four-wheel driving on beaches and amateur gill-netting would contribute to this cause; any further suggestions are welcome.

A month or two ago an exhibition of Mt Wellington artwork appeared at Salamanca Gallery. Because I had been curious, I showed the curator a copy of Gould's Mammals of Australia. I had noticed that the illustration of the Tasmanian pademelon included a clear outline of our mountain. I said that we might try to work out the location from the which the watercolour illustration was made. It also includes sandstone outcrops and grasstrees, so possibly could be eastern shore (Grasstree Hill?), but it may also be rather stylised. It is known that Gould spent a year or more in Hobart staying with the Franklins at Government House. It would make an interesting short note for *The Tasmanian Naturalist*.

New Members

A special welcome to our new members Leanne Barden, Judy Eijdenberg, the Frusher/Palmer family and Jill Hickey. Members may like to know that I had a reply from our past-president David Ratkowsky to the question in the last Bulletin. He has advised that he has left the State 'permanently' twice before, and does not intend to make the mistake again! He hopes to attend meetings again soon when the fungi on the Mountain disappear. He and Anne are busy with a fungus survey.

New committee

The 1994/5 committee members are now comfortably(?) settled into their jobs. If you want to growl or congratulate here are the responsible people:

President: Don Hird, 344 293

Vice president: Kevin Bonham

Secretary: Katrina Wickham

Treasurer: Starola Jacka, 314 230

Programme: Genevieve Gates

Naturalist Editor: Rob Taylor

Bulletin Editor: Phil Collier

Member: Julia Scott

Member: Patti Virtue

Member: Eliza Watkins

Bird Book

The committee have authorised a start to work on the revised version of our Bird Book. Bob Patterson will write the text, Rob Taylor will be editor and Gilbert van Munster will join these two in a bird book committee. One task for the committee is to search for appropriate photographs for the revised book.

Hooded Plover *Charadrius rubricollis*

The hooded plover (affectionately known as 'hoodie'), is a medium-sized stocky bird with a black hood, red-tipped black bill and short orange legs.

Hooded plovers inhabit ocean beaches and adjacent sand dune areas, bays, rock-shelves and reefs. They are particularly fond of sandy beaches, especially those which are broad and flat, with a wide wave-wash zone for feeding.

Hooded plovers are known to feed on small molluscs, crustaceans, amphipods (sand hoppers and sand fleas), insects and seeds. They forage for these especially in wave-wash areas, lagoon edges and salt pans. For nesting they make a small depression or scrape in the sand, which can be unlined, or lined with pebbles, seaweed and shell pieces.

Tasmania is an important habitat for hooded plovers. They also occur on the coast of the South and South-east mainland and in South-west Western Australia.

Hooded plovers are currently classified as 'rare'. This means that they have a small population but are not considered endangered. However they are considered threatened.

1992 Survey

An extensive survey of hooded plovers was carried out in October 1992. This survey was conducted by staff from the Department of Parks and Wildlife and members of the Bird Observers Association of Tasmania. They were assisted by other interested enthusiasts. Observers were required to walk or drive along beaches

and record their observations on prepared sheets. They were asked to record all wading birds, their activity, nests and any signs of predation or human impact.

Approximately 500 kilometres of beaches were surveyed. A total of 865 birds were recorded at an average density of 1.73 birds per kilometre. A previous survey was conducted in 1982. A comparison between the two surveys shows that there is no significant difference in numbers recorded.

It has been suggested that the habitat of many hooded plovers has been adversely affected by human activity. This includes destruction of eggs and chicks, activities by off-road vehicles, and predation by domestic or feral animals. The results of the 1992 survey indicate that the species has not suffered any serious decline in the last 10 years. Further sampling is required before this observation can be confirmed.

It is hoped to increase knowledge of the distribution and habits of hooded plovers by conducting surveys every 2 years.

1994 Survey

A further survey is planned for October/November 1994. This time of year is chosen because adult birds have established their breeding territory and are less mobile. This year there is a special emphasis on counting the nests of hooded plovers. The birds can see you coming and rush off along the beach. Often the footprints of the birds can help lead you to the nest sites. All members of the Field

Nats are encouraged to assist in this year's survey. Hooded plover observation sheets are available for recording your sightings.

It is especially difficult to conduct surveys on some of the more remote beaches due to financial and time constraints. If members are visiting such areas during any time of the year, your observations will be welcome.

Phil and I mentioned to Priscilla that we are planning to walk around Cape Barren Island at Christmas. We have been asked to count hooded plovers and make collections of sand hoppers and sand fleas! These creatures are an important food source of hooded plovers.

Please contact Priscilla Park on 002 487007 for further information and observation sheets (evenings are best).

Sue Collier

Information for this article has been obtained from the following:

A population survey of the Hooded Plover in Tasmania, October 1982 (Mike Newman and Bob Patterson)

1992 Survey of the Hooded Plover in Tasmania (Mark Holdsworth and Priscilla Park)

Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds (H.A.N.Z.A.B.) Volume 2.

Summaries of recent news reports

Cane toad control

Bufo marinus, a native of South America, was shipped to Australia in 1935 to rid cane fields in northern Queensland of the greyback cane beetle. The cane toad has been disliked by many Australians since it made the mistake of ignoring the destructive cane beetle. Instead, it breeds with wild abandon. The toad has no natural predators in Australia and its venom kills cats, snakes, dogs and other animals which mistake the yellowish brown coat of the cane toad for that of a native amphibian.

Cane toads live for up to 16 years and females can lay as many as 35,000 eggs a year, compared to native Australian frogs which lay only about 4,000 eggs a year. Australia has tried various methods to curb the cane toad menace or at least make better use of the species, including an attempt to export them to China for use in medicines. That and other attempts have mostly failed.

The Queensland Museum in Brisbane has declared the toad a nuisance to humans and an ecological threat to the Australian environment. The toads are advancing from Queensland into the Northern Territory and south into New South Wales towards Sydney. Although the cane toad's northern migration is faster than its southern trek, Sydney residents talk of an eventual cane toad invasion.

The latest attempt to stop the spread of the cane toad are family toad-hunting nights. Wildlife groups are supporting the pastime of cane toad catching as a humane way to reduce

cane toad numbers, while spending quality time with the family.

Gone are the days of whacking toads with cricket bats or golf clubs. And no more dipping the toads in an acidic poison or using *Bufo marinus* as target practice for guns. Today, cane toads are collected in plastic bags, counted and then frozen. The freezing, scientists say, is painless. The toad simply falls asleep and never wakes.

Albatross Numbers Decline

A survey of albatross numbers indicates thousands are being snared accidentally on fishing lines from tuna boats. Scientists who have been monitoring the species since 1971, said the albatross population off the east coast of Australia has plummeted during the last four years. They estimate that as many as 54 000 birds a year are being inadvertently caught in the Tasman Sea between Australia and New Zealand.

Tuna boats drag fishing lines of up to 100km long. Each is barbed with hundreds of baited hooks which stay close to the surface of the water as they are hauled along. Albatrosses swoop on the bait and drown when they are hooked.

Thousands of albatrosses used to feast on cuttlefish south of Sydney between July and September. However, this year one observer counted only 12.

The problem had also struck other albatross habitats off islands near the Antarctic. Some scientists estimate 140 000 birds a year are being snared on fishing lines worldwide.

New tree kangaroo

Scientists claim to have discovered a new species of marsupial, a primitive panda-like tree kangaroo. It is boldly patterned in black and white and has a superficial resemblance to China's panda. The animals have a blunt face with white stripes, a black muzzle, a white spot on the forehead and long soft dense fur.

The tree kangaroos had previously eluded discovery because of their rugged habitat in remote terrain among the highest mountains of Irian Jaya, which shares the great island of New Guinea with Papua New Guinea. The species is confined to a 200km stretch of the Maokop mountain range.

Local people, who regard the animal as their ancestor and do not hunt it, call it a "bondegezou," translating to "man of the alpine forest".

The newly-discovered species is very primitive in its behavior, spending most of its time on the ground in stunted mossy forest. The animals are not agile climbers and descend trees tail-first, in a human-like way. Large adult males of the species weigh about 15kg and are about 1200mm from their nose to the tip of their short tail. The kangaroo is virtually unafraid of hunters, and often greets people by whistling and holding up its arms to flash its white belly fur.

This discovery brings to 10 the number of known tree-kangaroo species, eight in Papua New Guinea and Irian Jaya and two in Australia.

Bulletin

of the Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc.

October 1994 Number 276

Editor Phil Collier

The Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc. encourages the study of natural history and supports conservation. People with a range of backgrounds and knowledge are welcome as members.

Contact Don Hird (ph 34 4293) for more information, or write to GPO Box 68A, Hobart, 7001.

Butterflies of Tasmania

Butterflies of Tasmania is finally printed and available. There is a limited offer to members to buy the book for \$15 prior to the official launch. If you cannot get to the next meeting, phone Gilbert van Munster (29 6602) to secure your copy. This is a substantial discount on the shop price of \$19.95.

The launch of the butterfly book is to be held at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery on Tuesday 29 November at 6pm. Original paintings of the butterflies will also be exhibited at the launch. Members are asked to bring a plate of supper to share with Club members and our

guests. The book will be launched by Robyn Williams, the ABC science broadcaster. This should be a memorable event in the Club's history and all members are cordially invited and encouraged to attend.

There is also to be a launch of *Butterflies of Tasmania* in Sydney on 2 November. The butterfly paintings will be exhibited at the Charles Hewitt Gallery, Woollahra for three weeks from 4 November.

Please remember that the book will be on sale to everyone at the launch at the full price of \$19.95. Our pre-publication special price will expire the day before the launch in Hobart.

Programme

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 on the following Saturday meeting at 10am outside the main entrance to the Museum in Macquarie Street.*

- 3 Nov Elizabeth Turner, from the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, will speak on spiders.
- 5 Nov *An outing to the Waterworks with Elizabeth Turner showing us spiders. We will also keep a look out for the numerous orchids found at the Waterworks at this time of year.*
- 4 Nov — SGAP Wildflower Spectacular at the Hobart City Hall, 'featuring hundreds of our fantastic native plants'. Australian plants and crafts will be for sale. Open daily from 10am to 8pm.
- 6 Nov *The FieldNats will have a display, phone Don Hird if you can offer any assistance.*
- 29 Nov *6pm Launch of Butterflies of Tasmania. See above for details.*
- 1 Dec Alistair Richardson from the Zoology Department at the University will talk about amphipods. Amphipods are marine or freshwater crustaceans, such as sand hoppers, commonly seen around sea weed, and a food source for hooded plovers.
- 3 Dec *An outing to Snug Tiers or Mt Wellington. A chance to see the early wildflowers at the higher levels.*
- 2 Feb Peter Last will talk about sharks and rays. More details in the January Bulletin.

BUMBLEBEEES WANTED

I am interested in studying the spread of Bumble bees in Tasmania, and would be pleased if anyone who sees a Bumblebee, or has some living at their place could let me know. I am also interested in knowing what plants you see Bumblebees collecting pollen from.



Please write to: Amy Forster, c/- Post Office, Cygnet, 7112

Ph. 951 456

Anaspides tasmaniae

The mountain shrimp, *Anaspides tasmaniae*, only lives in Tasmania. You can see them in the alpine tarns and lakes up on Mt Field and Mt Wellington. In the little pond above the Chalet on Mt Wellington, you can usually catch them, if you don't mind freezing your hand off. The *A. tasmaniae* is a living fossil from the Permian period, about 250 million years ago. They live up to four years and most spend the winter in pools covered by thick ice. The shrimps eat sea mosses, algae and small invertebrates.

I caught one in October and accidentally killed it. So I decided to analyse him with help from my Mum. At CSIRO we extracted the lipids (fats) from the shrimp. We used a method of chromatography (separating compounds) to see what kinds of lipids they have. We found that the *Anaspides* didn't have any triglycerides (storage fat).

This is quite unusual in animals including humans—as we all have some extra triglycerides. The shrimp must not have much to eat during the winter months because it uses up all its reserves.

Jacob Virtue

White necked heron

North of Huonville, at Voss Road, I saw a White necked heron, latin name *Ardea pacifica*. They are uncommon in Tasmania, and only come when there is a drought on the mainland.

Huw Wilkins, Cygnet, age 8

South West Tasmania

It is the feeling of being in the middle of no-where,
Which lures me back to the South West, if I dare,
Where button grass plains stretch with no shelter at all,
Yet endlessly their wilderness can call and call.

Memories of Aborigines sadly come to hand,
And I wonder how they survived this desolate land.
It's huge fringes of quartz white-sand beaches,
Face the rolling sea which to Antarctica reaches.

This wilderness is a refuge for species we may never know,
Where nesting rare Orange Bellied Parrots come and go.
Its a contrast to the bustle and fumes of many a town,
Untouched by pollution and land clearing—its part of Australia's crown.

I am an intruder, so I must face,
The test of the Ironbounds to depart this place.
It is sad to leave this land that's so unscarred by man,
But I shall return when ever I can.

Owen Wilkins

Book Review and Tour Review

Orchids of Tasmania — Plant Identikit

Society for Growing Australian Plants Tasmania Inc., 96pp, illus., \$9.95 (text by Phil Collier)

Reviewed by Kevin Bonham

This is the first book exclusively about Tasmanian orchids for fifteen years. It is an inexpensive pocket-sized guide, focusing on species which are either common or distinctive. About 100 species are illustrated, with a further 30 or so being mentioned in text only. Omitted are mostly obscure species of *Caladenia*, *Thelymitra* and *Prasophyllum*; certainly there are no glaring omissions.

The colour illustrations are by five different artists, thus there is some variation in style and quality, however they succeed well in capturing the basic features of each species. The picture of the whole plant and not just the flower is a major advantage, but a clearer indication of stem heights for some species (especially *Prasophyllum*) is desirable. The only illustration which looks atypical is the *Thelymitra pauciflora* (p 78) which is much darker than usual.

The text is bright, straightforward and informative throughout. Information on distributions and flowering periods draws on a wide range of up-to-date Tasmanian knowledge, and is thus far more useful than that found in mainland orchid books. A few sample localities are given for each species. Although some are not readily accessible, brief habitat notes included with the distribution should help those searching for specific species.

The taxonomy is as up-to-date as is possible in a difficult time of frequent changes. Several recent name changes to well-known species are included, and this makes the book useful to all but the most dedicated specialists. At the same time the writing style makes it quite suitable for a general audience, including older children.

Overall this Identikit represents very good value for money and is the best place to start for anyone wishing to learn about Tasmanian orchids without being "thrown in the deep end". However, intending growers should note that the book is a rather ironic inclusion in the series published by SGAP, as it expressly avoids the difficult subject of orchid cultivation.

Kirrama Wildlife Tours

Host Klaus Uhlenhut

Reviewed by Phil Collier

We have recently travelled with Klaus Uhlenhut on a bird watching tour to the Iron Range, Musgrave and Lakefield NP on Cape York Peninsula. The tour was very personal with only five guests including us. The maximum possible is six guests when travelling with Kirrama.

Klaus is an expert bird watcher and an expert on reptiles with good knowledge of tropical butterflies. He takes great care over his guests, particularly ensuring that everyone has good views of all birds found on the tour. He adds a touch of his own personal humour to ensure that the whole tour remains light-hearted, but still dedicated to its aims.

This is not a tour for those who like to lay in bed on holiday. We were up before dawn every day, except the first, when Klaus slept in to his personal shame thereafter! This is one of the few tours of its kind that is fully accommodated, not camping.

The tour's aim was to find all the endemic birds of the Cape York Peninsula that don't migrate northwards in winter. This we did successfully, including the eclectus parrot, magnificent riflebird, rufous owl, red-cheeked parrot, and golden-shouldered parrot. Klaus has a fine ear for the local bird calls and uncanny ability to locate a nearby bird, which in dense rainforest is quite remarkable. Some birds were called up with a tape recording of their call, although this is not always successful in winter. Although Klaus prefers quality to quantity of birds, we saw 154 species in 8 days.

An aspect of this tour that will remain with us is staying in the 'guest house' at Lockhart River — an aboriginal community near the Iron Range. The close view of aboriginal culture under the modern umbrella of assistance was interesting. It was made much more so by lunch and dinner provided by the local store-keeper (an ex-restaurateur in New Guinea). His stories and excellent food were a highlight.

I can recommend strongly Kirrama Wildlife Tours and Klaus as a guide. Phone Klaus on 070 65 5181 for a brochure.

Schouten Island Survey, September 1993

Seven members visited Schouten Island from 16 to 22 September 1993. We were encouraged and assisted by Freycinet ranger staff, who expressed interest in having further survey work conducted on Schouten Island and assisted us with transport.

The aim of the visit was to survey all aspects of the island's natural history. We had in the party expertise on mammal and bird survey, and on marine rocky shore habitats. Prior reference was made to the 1982 paper in the Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania by Harris and Kirkpatrick called *The vegetation of Schouten Island*.

Camp was made at the huts on Morey's Bay. We surveyed the coastal rocky shore habitats approximately one kilometre in each direction from the camp-site. Our intensive mammal survey was in the lower reaches of the Chinese Creek valley and nearby, where we also surveyed bats using audio recording equipment. Mammal tracks and signs were observed wherever possible. Where possible, we made observations of other things including plants, physiographic, historical and ethnographic features.

On the first full day, we followed the coastline westward from Moreys Bay, past Sandspit Point to Sandstone Bluff. We then climbed up Milligans Hill through open forest with a tangled heathy understorey before returning to camp. Next day we climbed Bear Hill on the granite side of the island. On the third full day we followed Chinese Creek upstream to the

waterfall and onto the saddle where the dolerite and granite parts of the island meet. On the final day we explored the granite ridge above Passage Point as high as the 207 metre knoll.

Of the marine life, we saw many marine pill lice in rockpools at night and hermit crabs were common. Australian pilchard, a small silvery fish, were seen jumping at night under spotlight in the shallows. A rockpool fish with prominent vertical bands is unidentified as present.

In our night-time trapping in wet heath along the lower section of Chinese Creek gully we caught only brushtail possum. By spotlight we saw occasional pademelon and more brushtail possums. Water rats were on the beaches around dusk. We saw no signs of bandicoots, potoroids, echidnas, marsupicarnivores or macropods larger than pademelons. Three species of bat were revealed using call recording equipment, but identifications are tentative at this stage.

Notable bird sightings included a spotted quail-thrush in heathy open forest on the lower west bank of Chinese Creek and a pair of hooded plovers elsewhere.

A new skink record for the island was the ocellated skink at Bear Hill. Tasmanian froglets and Ewings tree frogs were calling from the Chinese Creek Lagoon.

We located abundant live specimens of the land snails *Caryodes dufresnii* and *Bothyembrium tasmanicus*. *Helicarion arvii* was

also collected. We also recorded several species of centipede. One notable specimen had a previously unrecorded colour pattern.

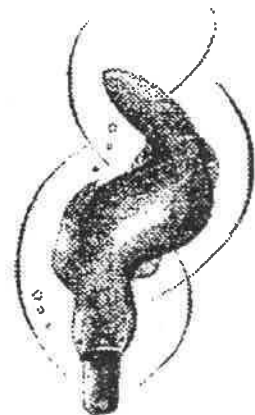
We noted several orchid species additional to those in the list of Harris and Kirkpatrick (1982): *Acianthus caudatus*, *A. reniformis*, *Diuris longifolia*, *Glossodia major*, *Pterostylus grandiflora* and a *Thelymitra* sp.

Reference is sometimes made to Schouten Island as an important national park representing typical eastern Tasmanian dry sclerophyll habitats. While this may be true for some aspects of its biota, we suggest that its apparent lack of, for example, a normal mammal faunal component means that it is significantly depauperate, as many islands are.

We plan to make a return visit to Schouten Island. Further spring botanical surveys and visits to the seabird colonies should be especially worthwhile.

We express our gratitude to Geoff Cole, Yvonne Hill and especially Ian Marmion at Freycinet NP for their assistance and encouragement.

Don Hird



Outing to East Risdon Nature Reserve, 6 August 1994

It was a cold and breezy morning in mid-winter Hobart. Four starters set out for Geilston Bay where we met up with two others. The weather conditions were much kinder on the Eastern Shore, with a few glimpses of sunshine. A little black cormorant was sitting on a post keeping watch over the Bay.

We set out along the Shag Bay Heritage trail accompanied by the calls of Yellow throated honeyeaters. Many stones were turned in the search for snails and other critters with Kevin telling us that this area was one of the worst he knew for snail hunting. We enjoyed visiting the Aboriginal caves and observed many different rock formations. Apparently the natives lived mainly on mussels and shellfish with very few mammals being taken in this area. We imagined what the scene would have looked like 6000 years ago without the man-made intrusions. It was thought that the woodland would have looked very similar with much open country, due to constant burning by the natives.

Morning tea was declared at a pleasant rock platform on Shag Bay. We were lucky enough to catch a glimpse of a sea eagle which are occasionally seen around this area. A strange call was heard which could have been the sea eagle....a few minutes later we realised our mistake when Patti, Jake and a friend appeared over the horizon to join us for a couple of hours.

After morning tea we headed steeply up the hill and had lunch looking out over the Derwent River, making the

most of a few sunny breaks. The views of snow-covered Mount Wellington were superb (especially if you imagined the zinc works were not there). We continued north along the ridge top into East Risdon Nature Reserve. This reserve was established in 1971 to protect the endemic *Eucalyptus morrisbyi*. It also provides protection for *Eucalyptus risdonii*. As we walked along the ridge tops we stopped to observe the different eucalypts and looked for the hybrids which grow in the area. We were able to find *E. risdonii*, *E. amygdalina* and *E. viminalis*. At one point our president climbed a tree to collect specimens for further identification.

Many rocks, logs and man-made items of rubbish were overturned. The best finds came from under a sheet of old iron. Here we found a sleepy specimen of *Olios diana* (shield spider) which has a striking shield pattern on its underside, presumably to scare predators. This spider has a poisonous bite. The same location was also home to several brightly coloured jewel bugs, cockroaches and an old snake skin.

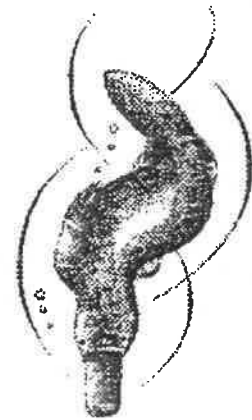
Other birds seen were a white faced heron, black headed honeyeaters and fairy wrens. The robins must have all been in hiding as we did not see one species.

Two species of snails were seen: *Caryodes dufresnii*, and the minute *Paralaoma caputspinulae*, both are common. Orchid leaves spotted included *Glossodia major*, *Thelymitra sp.*, and *Acianthus sp.* *Pterostylis longifolia* (now known as *P. aff. tunstallii*) was in flower.

Some of the group ended a pleasant outing by visiting the Antarctic Display at the Museum. Kevin even found us a mounted specimen of the shield spider we had seen earlier in the day.

See *The Tasmanian Naturalist* No. 58 (August 1979) for a comprehensive paper entitled 'The Plant Communities of The East Risdon Nature Reserve'. A copy of this can be borrowed from the Field Nats library.

Sue Collier



New Members

A special welcome to our new members Ingrid Albion and George Hodges. Welcome also to Ruth Moore, born to Dianne and Graham on 7 October.

President's Report

Butterflies of Tasmania is now more than just a flutter on the breeze! All members and friends are welcome at the launch, see elsewhere in this *Bulletin* for details.

Our conservation lobbying continues. We have contributed to a Commonwealth-instigated Tasmanian Conservation Priorities project, conducted thoroughly and energetically until recently by Sally Bryant. We are following up our initial contribution in an effort to get both a comprehensive document on this subject coupled with an ongoing monitoring process. We have also responded to an ALP policy paper on environment and biodiversity issues.

Our aim in lobbying is to maintain an independent and sophisticated approach. We have been emphasising the sparse survey effort for many animal and some plant groups, particularly in the context of ongoing industrial and domestic impact on many habitats. We have experienced two main problems in this area. First, we wonder if some consultation (eg on the State Government's Rare and Endangered Legislation) has been a "black hole". For example, we have requested reasons for dilution of the equivalent Commonwealth Legislation in some areas, and we have received an unsatisfactory response. Second, conservation lobbying is often publicly focussed on the most strident claims. For example, from another conservation network a claim that "unless every black swan in Tasmania is protected at every moment, then Wildlife Staff are negligent". Effective conservation needs to be both pragmatic and credible, thus our emphasis on identifying priorities.

Another disappointment lately arose from the Parks and Wildlife public-issue brochures on the barred bandicoot and eastern bettong. Tasmania is now the only stronghold for these two mammals. A fundamental criterion of modern conservation biology is identification of "reservation status" or an equivalent indicator of security of habitat. Despite this, neither brochure covers this topic. Whether or not this is a reflection of the current Tasmanian "No New Reserves" policy is a matter of conjecture, but when security of a range of habitats for each species appears tenuous one has to wonder.

Field Survey Group Report

We are working on a survey of Mt Nelson vertebrate fauna for the Hobart City Council. The survey is centred on the Lambert Gully system including part of the Skyline Reserve. The gully is a deeply incised valley which is a humid refuge surrounded by much drier northerly slopes. Although a smallish, narrow reserve, the bushland appears to have retained substantial integrity. The usual weeds such as boneseed, erica, cotoneaster and introduced black rats are evident but are not yet pervasive. Small and larger mammals are sparse but an interesting suite of reptiles and medium-sized mammals are still evident. A full report will be available after its delivery to Council.

The income from our Mt Nelson project has enabled us to acquire our own set of small mammal traps which will expedite our future survey efforts on a wider scale. For example, an overnight mammal survey on Snug Tiers may be undertaken in conjunction with the December excursion. We will need to work out a future program for mammal survey; for example, continuing work on Mt Wellington.

Don Hird

Tasman Peninsula Surprises

In mid-October Sue and I visited the Tasman Peninsula. On our walk to Cape Raoul we found a new population of the very rare eyebright *Euphrasia amphisysepala*. This species, previously only known from Cape Hauy, favours shady spots on steep dolerite cliffs.

At White Beach, on Sunday morning, I saw a single rainbow lorikeet feeding on black gum, *Eucalyptus ovata*. Perhaps this was an aviary escapee, but it knew its way around the blossom, just like mainland birds. (The next weekend we saw a budgerigar at Sisters Beach—that did look like an escapee.)

On Sunday afternoon we found four species of spider orchid. Three of these were at Lime Bay on a SGAP excursion: *Caladenia clavigera*, *C. aff. patersonii*, *C. filamentosa*. The fourth was near the airport: *C. venusta*. That's a very good haul of 'spiders' in one day.

Phil Collier

A Tale of Two Creeks

In the last year I have been lucky enough to visit two of the nicest creek valleys to be found anywhere. Part of their charm is their seclusion — away from the chainsaws, cable-machines and four-wheel-drive tracks.

Chinese Creek drains the central northern portion of Schouten Island. Its tidal lagoon is behind one of the normal landing beaches and is regularly patrolled at close quarters by a sea eagle. The lagoon sponsors a chorus of froglets and tree frogs from its many emergent aquatic plants. The lagoon shore is forbidding, cutting grass and other prickles hide tiger snakes visiting the frogs.

Eastern Schouten Island is granite like Freycinet while the west is dolerite and sandstone. Chinese Creek is just on the granite. Looking up the creek from the beach, a band of cliffs is seen to cross a kilometre or two up the valley where there is a waterfall. The creek itself runs over and between granite outcrops in its lower reaches, through open dogwood forest which soon begins to give way to graceful Oyster Bay pine groves. Orchids, reptiles and a host of other details decorate the leaf litter and rocky slopes. Galaxia fish patrol the deeper pools of the stream.

The valley begins to steepen as we climb and the creek (named for last century's tin-mining community hereabouts) begins to shout and tumble through boulders. The pines grow even larger and more stately although many of their corpses strew the valley itself. This makes for a difficult scramble.

It is often necessary to retrace steps from blind alleys that only a creek can follow. The falls themselves aren't spectacular, except for the exquisite setting and the views to Freycinet through the pines.

After we scramble up and around the falls the valley is so open as to be almost a plateau. Another surprise is the scour holes of water-polished red granite, as smooth as on any commercial bank's edifice. Some of these are cylindrical, a metre or so across and deep. We find the claw of an unrecorded freshwater crayfish species.

At this point we left the valley which continues away towards Schouten Island's highest peak, having spent a very pleasant morning.

The other valley I have in mind is closer at hand. Towards the western end of the Wellington Range is Mt Marion, somewhat like Mt Wellington itself with its summit guarded by a line of dolerite cliffs. Illa Brook rises under these cliffs and finds its way down to the Derwent via the Lachlan River. Near the headwaters the brook traverses a flattish cutting-grass plain, the Midsky Swamp. (I kid you not, check your map!) This should be a good location for skipper butterflies which eat and subsist on cutting-grass.

I recently visited the valley at about 400 metres elevation. The Ringwood Track allows walking access to this end of the Wellington Reserve (or area in "trust" or whatever it is today). After a kilometre or two of climbing you look across a

creek valley to an imposing wall of sandstone cliffs. The valley contains Illa Brook and the cliffs lead to a feature cryptically named Frying Pan Hill. The cliffs are stained with characteristic white raptor guano, probably peregrine nests. We had walked this track a couple of times on exploratory walks around the Mt Marion-Collins Bonnet area.

Although really only a short reconnaissance, this is another beautiful creek bed. You start from a sandstone plateau which is the best wombat area that I know of near to Hobart. The scramble down the valley side goes from steep to precipitous scree. Surprisingly, it also changes from sandstone to dolerite, unpredicted by the geological map. It appears to me that the valley's southern wall of cliffs has been undercut by the creek being pushed away from the tougher dolerite on the northern side.

Much slipping sliding and avoiding dislodged scree allows access to the "almost-there" creek. When finally reached the active creek tumbles through large boulders of bright yellow sandstone. Although I haven't visited the Hawksbury sandstone country beloved of Sydney bushwalkers, this is the nearest thing in southern Tasmania to which I can compare it.

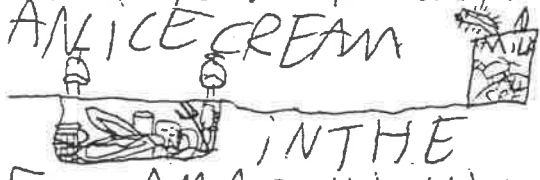
So steep was the valley and so short the winter daylight that exploration of the cliffs will just have to await another day, and another episode.

Don Hird

VERVE THE EMPEROR GUM MOTH CATERPILLAR



ONE DAY WE WOKE UP AND WE SAW A BIG GREEN CATERPILLAR CRAWLING OUT OF A MILK CARTON. MUM SAID IT WAS ON SOMEONES GUM TREE, IT WAS THE ONLY GREEN THING ON THE TREE, (BECAUSE IT HAD EATEN ALL THE LEAVES). IT WAS IN MILK CARTON FIRST BUT WE PUT IT IN AN ICE CREAM CONTAINER.



WE CUT A HOLE IN THE TOP AND STICK TAPED A MAGNIFYING GLASS TO THE HOLE SO WE COULD SEE HIM. THEN ONE DAY AFTER WE HAD GONE FOR A WALK TO GET FRESH GUM LEAVES WE FOUND HIM SPINNING A COCOON SO WE LEFT HIM ALONE AND 2 DAYS LATER IT WAS FINISHED. IT WAS THIS BIG - TRUE SIZE AND HE WILL COME OUT IN SUMMER

