

**BULLETIN OF THE
TASMANIAN FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC.
<http://www.tased.edu.au/tasonline/tasfield/tasfield.htm>**

Feb 1998
Editor Andrew Walsh

Number 289

The Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc. encourages the study of natural history and supports conservation. We issue our journal *The Tasmanian Naturalist* annually in October. People with a range of backgrounds and knowledge are welcome as members.

Contact Genevieve Gates (03 6227 8638) for further information, or write to GPO Box 68A Hobart 7001. Bulletin or website articles to Andrew Walsh (146 Misty Hill Rd. Mountain River 7109, 03 62664543).

PROGRAM

General meetings start at 7:45pm on the first Thursday of the month in the Life Sciences Building at the University of Tasmania. Outings are usually held the following weekend, meeting at 10am outside the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery entrance, Macquarie St. *If you are planning to attend an outing but not the meeting prior, check as to the timing of the excursion as sometimes unforeseen changes occur.*

5th Feb Sue Baker. Macquarie Is. and Giant Petrels.

7th Feb (Sat) Shearwaters at Cape Deslacs. With a guide from Parks and Wildlife, we'll venture down to Cape Deslacs at Clifton Beach (along Bicheno Rd) and from an observation platform watch the mutton birds return to their burrows in the dusk twilight. **Note the starting time.**

4th Mar AGM & President's Address

6th-7th Mar Orford Weekend. Details to be announced at the AGM 4th March.

2nd Apl Karyl Micheals. Carabid beetles.

5th Apl (Sun) Carabid beetles at Warra. A visit led by Rob Taylor to the long term ecological monitoring site at Warra, down near the Tahune Forest Reserve.

TASMANIAN FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC.-COMMITTEE NOMINATION FORM

I hereby propose _____ for the position of _____

Proposer _____ Signer _____
Signature Signature

I agree to stand for the above position _____
Signature Date

Positions on the committee: President, Vice-president, Treasurer, Secretary, Bulletin Editor, Naturalist Editor, Programme Officer, Librarian, Submissions Officer, and two General Committee members.

Other Activities

The following guided walks are conducted by the Hobart City Council for their Summer Bushcare Activities. Bookings are essential, phone Kerry Heatley at H.C.C on 6238 2884

1st Feb (Sun) 10am-1pm Myrtle Gully Walk. A medium graded walk through a tree fern flanked rainforest gully.

13th Feb (Fri) 8:30pm-10pm Bizarre Bats. Lenah Valley Wellington Park. A night looking for bats flying out from tree hollows. An expert from Parks & Wildlife will be present to identify these unusual creatures.

27th Feb (Fri) 8pm-9:30pm Possum Prowl. Waterworks Reserve. Learn about local fauna by joining in a spotlight at Waterworks Reserve.

T.F.N.C. Online

by Andrew Walsh

After several months of mouse clicking, cut 'n' pasting and promises of "Yeah I'm working on it", it was with great pride and joy that I watched as the Tasonline computer guru type in a few commands into the mainframe and turn to me and say "Your site is now live!". Now anyone in the world, with access to the Internet, can visit the T.F.N.C website, including YOU!

The site address is below the bulletin heading if you didn't notice it (I'm sorry about it's length). If you want to see the web site and don't have a computer linked up to the internet, then visit your local library and they have computers there that you can use. If you have never used the internet (or a computer for that matter) then simply tell one of the library staff you want to visit our web site and give them the web address, they should be able to help you.

Please visit our web site and send me suggestions, ideas and even contributions that you might have to increase it's value as an educational tool.

Publications from 1997

Bumble Bees

R. E. Buttermore from the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery published a paper about observations of successful bumble bee (*Bombus terrestris*) colonies in Tasmania. After being introduced sometime before 1992, the species is slowly spreading throughout southern Tasmania at an average rate of 12km/year. However, external influences such as predatory habits of birds, availability of food, competition from other insects and deliberate introduction by people into new areas make the rate of spread unpredictable. Andrew Hingston, who is studying bumble bees at the University of Tasmania, gave our club a talk in November about the bumble bee in Tasmania. He has observed that they successfully compete with native bees as well as the introduced European honey bee, and that very few bird species appear to predate them. This is probably due to their colouration (black and yellow) as well as their furry texture.

Buttermore, R. E. Observations of successful Bombus terrestris (L.) (Hymenoptera: Apidae) colonies in southern Tasmania. Aust Journ of Ento (NO. 36, p251-254)

A New Beetle

Peter McQuillan and Karyl Micheals, from University of Tasmania, reported the first record of a scarab beetle species from the genus *Pseudoheteronyx* in Tasmania (ie. *P. littoralis*). This genus of cockchafer beetles are unusual for being flightless. Normally found in eastern

Australia from northern Queensland to Mt. Hotham in Victoria, the larvae of some species achieve pest status in central and southern Queensland in peanut and sunflower crops. The specimen they discovered was found in sand dunes at South Croppies Head on the Bass Strait, where it is active in late winter and early spring. As well as extending the known geographical range more than 300km, their discovery also documents an ecological extension into coastal sand dunes, as the genus is usually found in dryland, irrigated field crops or alpine herbfields.

McQuillan, P, B. Micheals, K.. First record of Pseudoheteronyx Blackburn (Coleoptera: Scarabidae: Melolnithinae) from Tasmania. With description of Pseudoheteronyx littoralis sp. N. from sandy beaches. Aust Journ of Ento (No. 36, 121-127)

Tasmanian Bettongs

C. Johnson from University of Tasmania has been studying the Tasmanian bettong (*Bettongia gaimardi*) and has found that high frequency of forest burns in fire-prone dry sclerophyll forests may be unfavourable for this species. Previous studies have shown that some of the hypogeous fungi on which it feeds become abundant soon after fire, and have suggested that bettongs depend on regular burning of its habitat. By counting the number of fungi species at six sites ranging from 1 to more than 50 years since fire, Johnson found that the sporocarp density and biomass was lower in the recently burnt (1-2 year) sites. The same fungi species were found in both the recently burnt and older sites suggesting that it is not essential to create available habitat. Some of the fungi are also associated with the litter layer and organic matter.

the soil surface, and would consequently decline as a result of the removal of their substrate by fire. Other species, however, were abundant soon after fire, such as *Mesophellia* spp. And *Castoreum* spp. Because of these observations, Johnson suggests that fire should be used cautiously in the management of *B. Gaimardi*.

Johnson, C. N. *Fire and habitat management for a mycophagous marsupial, the Tasmanian bettong Bettongia gaimardi*. *Aust Journ of Ecology*, 1997, 22, 101-105.

The following summaries come from reports produced for the R.F.A. for Tasmania. Copies of the reports can be viewed on the R.F.A website:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/land/forests/cra/tas.html>

Invertebrate Bioregions

Locality records for selected groups of Tasmanian invertebrates were analysed in a search for invertebrate bioregions, faunal boundaries, 'hot spots' and data gaps. Twelve invertebrate bioregions were tentatively identified on mainland Tasmania. Most of these bioregions overlap fairly broadly with neighbouring bioregions. There are at least three well-documented, four poorly documented and five suspected faunal breaks (narrow transition zones between invertebrate bioregions). Several of the uncertain breaks run through largely cleared land and may no longer be demonstrable.

'Hot spots' (areas with unusually high species diversity or high numbers of rare or unusual species) could not be located at a spatial scale of use to conservation planners. The main obstacle is the recorder effect: invertebrate sampling in Tasmania has been

highly biased (towards particular areas) at both coarse and fine spatial scales.

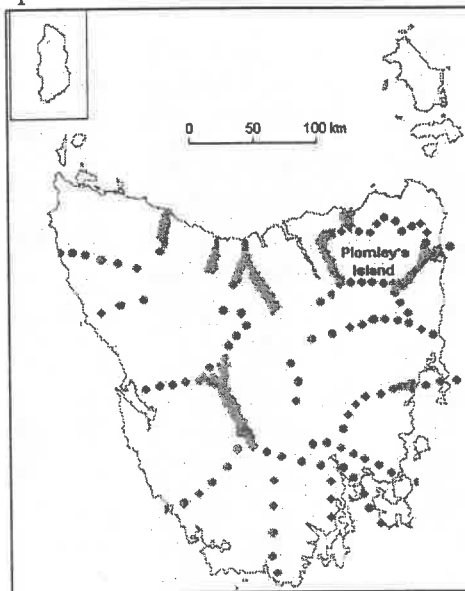


Figure 1. A provisional map of invertebrate bioregions (see Mesibov 1996 for further details).

Robert Mesibov December 1996 *Invertebrate Bioregions in Tasmania*. Report to Tasmanian RFA Environment and Heritage Technical Committee

The decaying-log habitat

In Australia, and Tasmania in particular, rotting logs have been identified as a critical habitat component for many invertebrates including threatened species. The quantity and characteristics of the decaying-log resource (fallen, dead wood) was sampled in two 5-7 year old cable logged coupes, two 15-24 year old conventionally clearfelled coupes, and adjacent unlogged control stands of mature wet *Eucalyptus obliqua* forest in south-eastern Tasmania.

The results of this study suggest that logging of mature wet eucalypt forest has a negligible impact on the decaying-log resource, at least in the short-term. Further research is required to determine the likely impact of second rotation logging of native forest and intensive forest management practices such as plantation forestry. These activities have the greatest potential to

negatively effect the long-term quantity and quality of decaying wood in the forest, particularly through their impact on the continued supply of large-diameter logs at varying stages of decay, as has been shown overseas.

J. M. Meggs Nov 1996 *Forestry Tasmania. Pilot study of the effects of modern logging practices on the decaying-log habitat in wet eucalypt forest in south-east Tasmania*. Report to the Tasmanian RFA Environment and Heritage Technical Committee

Rare Tasmanian Forest Ferns

Michael Garret has identified eight species and one subspecies of ferns occurring in forested habitats in Tasmania and as being rare or threatened. Four of the taxa, *Asplenium hookerianum*, *Asplenium trichomanes* subsp. *trichomanes*, *Cheilanthes distans* and *Hypolepis distans*, have been discovered in Tasmania in only the last 20 years and are very rare.

The remaining five species have been known from Tasmania since the nineteenth century, and have a history of decline in numbers of individuals and populations and in their geographic range within the State.

Land clearance for agriculture, and to a lesser degree for forestry, has been the major reason for the decline.

Future threats to the ferns are seen as mostly from continued clearance of land for agriculture, and from the consequential, and existing, adverse effects of competition from exotic weeds and trampling by stock.

Michael Garrett, 1997. *Rare or threatened Tasmanian forest ferns*. Report to the Tasmanian RFA Environment and Heritage Technical Committee

Forest Owl habitats

Two owl species breed in Tasmania, the Masked Owl *Tyto novaehollandiae castanops* and the Southern Boobook *Ninox novaeseelandiae leucopsis*. A third species, the Barn Owl *Tyto alba* occurs as a vagrant but with no confirmed reports of breeding. Both the Masked Owl and Southern Boobook are forest dependent requiring cavities in eucalypt trees for nesting. Changes to the structure and/or floristics of forests as a result of logging have the potential to influence the distribution and abundance of these species, either directly through the removal or modification of essential habitat, or indirectly through effects on the abundance of their prey species. Recent research in southeastern mainland Australia has provided a considerable addition to our knowledge of the habitat requirements, geographic distributions and abundance of some species of forest owls. However, as ecological studies of owls in Australia are a recent phenomenon, much ground needs to be covered in order to fully appreciate the effects of forestry practices on owls and their prey. There is a dearth of information on the distribution, population status and habitat requirements of the Masked Owl and Southern Boobook in Tasmania. Consequently there is little on which to base assessments of conservation status, reservation status or the effects of forest modification on these species. Phil Bell, Nick Mooney and Jason Wiersma, December 1996. *Predicting Essential Habitat for Forest Owls in Tasmania. Australasian Raptor Association Report to the Tasmanian Environment and Heritage Technical Committee*

Outing Reports

8/11/97 Friends School Land at Spring Beach

by Genevieve Gates

The November outing to Spring Beach, Orford, was a very pleasant and informative day for the 18 members who attended. The major part of the day was spent at the Friend's School land, observing and identifying flora and fauna. We thank Mary Beadle, one of our members who is a biology teacher at Friend's School for arranging this excursion. After lunch at Spring Beach several members walked to the beach and rocks and found 5 crab species including the Green Crab *Carcinus maenas* which had been the subject of Craig Proctors talk at the previous meeting. Other crabs identified were, Smooth shore crab (*Cyclograpsus audouini*), purple mottled shore crab (*Cyclograpsus granulosis*), Half-crab (*Petrolisthes elongatus*), and notched shore crab (*Paragrapsus quadridentalus*).

7/12/97 Crabtree-Jefferies Track

by Genevieve Gates

Twenty members met for a walk starting at the Crabtree end of Jerfferies track. The steady climb took us through wet sclerophyll gully forest with Swamp Gum (*Eucalyptus regnans*) and Whitetop stringy bark (*E. delegatensis*) dominating an understorey of *Pomadouris apetala*, *Olearia argophylla*, *Phebalium squameum* and *Prostanthera lasianthas*. Shrubs such as *Cyathodes glauca*, *Correa reflexa*, *Leptospermum lanigerum** (*=in flower), *Anopterus glandulosus**, *Aristoleia pedunculata**, *Oxylobium ellipticum** and *Gualtheria hispida** together with various ferns and orchids formed the remainder of the understorey. Orchid species in flower included

Caledonia alpina, *Chiloglottis gunni*, *Chiloglottis cornuta*, and *Thelymitra pauciflora*.

At the end of the climb, where the track joins part of the Tasmanian Trail, the vegetation was very similar to that found at Snug Tiers. This included *Westringia sp.**, *Pentachondra involucrata*, *Banksia marginata*, *Acacia ricena*, *Pultenea juniperina**, *Baura ruboides**, *Hibertia sp.**, and *Telopea truncata**.

The main aim of the walk was to investigate a patch of forest to see if it contained a wedge-tailed eagle's nest. Whilst we didn't spot any eagles or their nest, we did see a baby currawong being fed in it's nest. Other birds seen/heard included the thornbill, cranky fan, shining bronze cuckoo, and spotted pardalote.

Carabid, lady bird and leaf beetles were also observed, along with native slugs, a flat worm, and a swallow tailed butterfly. Kevin Bonham identified 10 snail species including an uncommon one *Dentherona dispar*. The other nine species were;

Caryodes dufresnii
Tasmaphena sinclairi
Cystopelta bicolor (native slug)
Paralaoma Caput spinulae
Trocholaoma parvissima
Allocharopa legrandi
Mulathena fordei
Dentherona dispar
Roblinella gadensis
Pernagera architectonica

Watch This Space

Next bulletin we will be publishing a list of the names and contact details of all our members for your information. If you would prefer not to have your address listed, then please let me and I will not include you.

©Andrew Walsh

Library

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7th May Roy Swain-University of Tasmania. **Reptiles.**

10th Feb (Sun) A walk through the Myrtle Forest, Collinsvale.

4th Jun Susan Gunter-The Environmental Defenders Office (Tas) Inc. **Planning, the Environment and the Law.**

6th Jun (Sat) Orielson Lagoon. An exploration of the northern end of this lagoon to look at the Lemon Beauty Head flower, *Calocephalus citrus*, and also see some birds with Priscilla Park.

2nd Jul Stuart Nicoll (Assoc. Prof of Physiology) and Neils Andersen. **Echidnas.**

5th Jul (Sun) Waverley Flora Park, Bellerive. An investigation of the colonisation of the park by both flora and fauna some six months after the bushfire swept through.

1998 Committee

The following people were elected as committee members for 1998 at the AGM in March; Kevin Bonham (President), Genevieve Gates (Vice President), Julia Scott (Secretary), John Reid (Treasurer), Amanda Thomson (Walks + Talks), Andrew Walsh (Bulletin Editor), Rob Taylor (Naturalist Editor), Jim Paterson (General Committee), Janet Fenton (General Committee), Len Cusack (General Committee)

Other Activities

The Tasmanian Marine Naturalists Association have provided a list of activities for the next 3 months. General meetings held at 7:30 pm in the Brownlow Room at Hampden Rd Community Centre Battery Point Hobart.

Wed 13th May David Hanson-DELM Ranger. Wildlife rescue.

Mon 8th Jun (Public holiday) Excursion; Meet 9:00am at Eaglehawk dive centre. Dive with Gary Myers to look for seadragons in areas at Eaglehawk not usually dived.

Wed 10th Jun Gary Myers-TMNA project Officer for Dragonsearch. Audio-visual presentation on seadragons.

Wed 8th Jul Mike Sugden-Senior science teacher Hobart College. Changes of a reef from day to night.

Sun 12th Jul 4pm Tinderbox excursion. Mike will lead a night dive on Tinderbox artificial reef.

A letter from the Colliers

Dear Fieldnats,

this is a thankyou all for the excellent print you sent for our leaving present. We have put it in a frame and it is now in our hallway as a reminder of our time with TFNC. Sorry we could not be with you for our last meeting.

Our move has gone fairly well and we have now bought a house in one of the outer suburbs of Canberra. It is a lovely spot which adjoins a small reserve. There are lots of birds which we can watch from our private garden. A small group of Sulphur Crested Cockatoos seem to be semi-resident here and quite noisy at times. The garden needs a few more natives but we given up the time-consuming process of growing vegies. They are not as good as from the shops.

We haven't been able get to any field nats meetings yet but we went to the bird club (C.O.G.). There were 80 or 90 people- we thought that we were in the wrong place! Canberra is excellent for bird watching and lots of other things. I am sure we will enjoy our time here for a few years while we turn into (early) grey nomads!

Good luck for 1998 and thanks for your good wishes.

Sue & Phil.

Outing Reports

by Andrew Walsh

7th Feb, Cape Deslacs & Shearwaters

This field trip was organised to coincide with a Parks & Wildlife presentation over the summer period. Located at the Clifton Beach Cape Deslacs Nature Reserve, we observed Short-tailed Shearwaters (*Puffinus tenuirostris*), or Mutton Birds, come into land at their burrows at dusk after a day foraging at sea. Around 5pm that night a pretty fierce rainstorm hit Hobart, no doubt discouraging many members from attending.

Those (brave) few who did (around 8 people, plus members of the public) were treated to a marvellous nature display.

As the sun set into the clearing and flaming sky, way off to the west shards of lighting flashed across the sky. Irene Skira from Parks & Wildlife gave a short talk on the biology and migratory

habits of Shearwaters before venturing into a burrow to bring out a young chick show us all. Around 8pm as twilight fell upon us, the first of the Shearwaters appeared over the bay. Then began what Irene described as "a very good night!" as hundreds of the birds began to circle around the viewing platform centimetres above our heads, and land at their burrows. A couple of Brushed-tailed possums were seen moving around between the burrows, and these are known to be a source of mortality amongst the chicks. As darkness fell and the full moon rose more Shearwaters arrived and the air became full of the smell and noises of hungry, feeding chicks.

5th Apl, Warra.

This trip was led by Rob Taylor and we visited the forests down past Geeveston. Here we first began with a trundle around the Huon Pine Walk near the Tahune Forest Reserve, where many fungi were seen. Next we move onto the Long Term Ecological Monitoring site in the Warra block where Forestry Tasmania is conducting a long term study looking at ecologically sustainable forestry. We visited a coupe that had been partially logged, leaving some trees behind as a seed source for the regenerating forest. We then visited a Forestry Tasmania employee Bill Brown who was conducting a mammal survey of a nearby forest. All Bill had caught when we arrived were a couple of Swamp Rats (*Rattus lutreolus*) which we were able to get a close look at before he marked and released them. We then journeyed further along the road where we took an hour walk through a superb old-growth forest with many ferns and rainforest species. A five minute video of the field trip will be present at the May meeting.

1998 Members

As promised in the last bulletin, I have attached a list of members of our club for 1998. The purpose is to allow a better communication network amongst the members. To protect ourselves from marketers, it wont be posted on our Internet web site-Andrew Walsh.

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7th Aug Peter Stevenson. **Geological aspects of Ground Water.**

9th Aug (Sun) Geology environs of Hobart.

3rd Sep Pattie Dalton. **Liverworts & Mosses. Bryophytes- the forgotten flora..**

6th Sep (Sun) Bryophytes along Gordon Rd, west of Maydena.

1st Oct Phillip Bethge. **Platypus.**

3rd Oct (Sat) A trip to Hastings thermal pool picnic area. Platypus are known to frequent the streams nearby, while quolls are sometimes seen during the day foraging for food scraps. Entry to BBQ & Pool is \$2.50, or \$6 for family..

Other Activities

The Marine Field Naturalists now meet at the Life Sciences Lecture Theatre at Tas. Uni. Usually at 6pm, 2nd Wednesday of each month.

Aug 13th Thurs. 7:30pm Dr. Amanda Vincent. The international seahorse trade: its impact on Australia's unique fauna.

Sept 9th 6pm. A.G.M. and slides with talk by Brian Eldridge on his recent trip to the Galapagos Is.

Oct 14th 6pm. Prof. Craig Johnson. Understanding the dynamics of shallow reefs in Tasmania.

Nov 11th Barry Bruce. Recovery plan for the Spotted Hand Fish.

Feb 10th Mike Sugden. The reef day/night.

Threatened Species Day

A reminder that September 7th is Threatened Species Day. Parks & Wildlife will be organising a number of events on that weekend, and note we will be taken a field trip out past Maydena looking at bryophytes on Sunday 6th. Contact Parks & Wildlife closer to the date for further details on other activities.

NEWS FLASH: ANOTHER FOX SEEN ENTERING BURNIE HARBOUR

Picture by Joseph Collins



For more information about the fox hunt, visit the following Internet site
<http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/fox.html>

Outing Reports

Mt. Field

March 8th

by Genevieve Gates

My apologies for this report not appearing in the last bulletin. My fault!-Ed.

The T.F.N.C.s March excursion was not what was advertised in the bulletin. The weekend trip to Orford was cancelled due to insufficient planning by the committee but hopefully we can arrange a weekend away later in the year.

I apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused. It is a good idea if members who don't attend the meeting prior to the excursion but are interested in the outings ring me on 6227 8638 and find out if there have been any changes of plan. Sunday 8th Mar turned into a beautiful warm day as David had promised. Seven big people and one small person met at the Mt. Field car park and proceeded to inch their way (true fungi excursion style) to the Russell Falls.

Kevin's spectacular full length sprawls into the undergrowth to search for snails and other inhabitants of rotten logs and leaf litter brought polite smiles from the passer-bys.

Time was slipping away so we got a move on along the tall Trees Walk across the road and onto the Lady Baron Falls Track reaching the falls in time for lunch.

A leisurely stroll along the Tyenna River took us back to the car park.

We were lucky to find as many fungi as we did, given the very dry condition and the time of year.

Not being overwhelmed by a large number of different species, however, meant that we could stop and examine each in detail. Many thanks to David Ratkowsky for leading the walk and sharing his knowledge with us.

Observations:

Fungi

Amauroderma rude

Geastrum sp.

Mycena sp.

Stropharia formosa

Lycoperdon pyriforme

psathyrella

Stereum sp. (Thelephore)

Fomitopsis hemitephrum (Polypore)

Ganoderma applanatum ("Artists Conk"

Polypore)

Armillaria sp.

Lepiota sp.

Fistulinella mollis (Boletus mollis)

Clavicornia aff. Pierata

Gymnopilus sp.

Coperinus aramentarius

Russula sp.

Mycena interrupta

Bisporella citrina (Ascomycete)

Hypholoma brunnea

Snails

Tasmaphena sinclairi

Prolesophanta nelsonensis

Paralaoma caputspinulae

Trocholaoma parvissimia

Trocholaoma "spiceri" (Rare, 7 known sites)

Planilaoma luckmanii (1st record from Mt. Field)

Allocharopa legrandi
Ronlinella kngstonensis
Stenacaphia hamiltoni
Caryodoes dufresnii
Helicarion cuvieri
Cystopelta bicolor

Myrtle Gully, Collinsvale

May 10

by Kevin Bonham and Andrew Walsh

(This bit by Kevin)

The trip to Myrtle Gully was an extremely successful one for snail recording. In three hours, 14 species were found, many of which had not been recorded on my previous trips to the area.

Three finds were especially interesting.

Discharopa mimosa (which I found in a tree as soon as I got out of the car) has never been seen in the whole Wellington Range before. Just up the track *Roblinella roblini* was found under a rock - only the second Wellington Range specimen for this species. Most surprisingly of all, Amanda Thomson and I found six dead *Roblinella curacoae* in loose gravel and stones in a track cutting. Later I found two live *R. curacoae* under large dolerite boulders and another dead specimen under a log. It is very unusual to find *R. curacoae* in such numbers, and even more unusual to find it live at all.

(This other bit by Andrew)

Meanwhile, 10 people continued up the Myrtle Gully and walked to the top of Collins Bonnet. As the climb became steeper the forest changed from the wet mixed forest in the gully to the more open *Eucalyptus delegatensis* forest. Eastern Spinebills (*Acanthorynchus tenuirostris*) and New Holland Honeyeaters (*Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*) were continuously heard and seen flitting around the forest. A Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Aquila audax*) was observed circling around the top of the mountain as we reached the plateau below the summit. There we stopped to eat lunch in a small shed, which was a mistake as the clouds set in and covered the summit. We began the final ascent to the top, and gradually members of the group retired as the clouds became thicker, the air colder and the winds gale force. Four of us made it to the summit, where we spent 60 seconds taking photographs of each other clinging for dear life to the ice-clad trig station in thick cloud before we quickly returned to the shed to warm ourselves back up so we could begin the trundle back to the carpark.

Orielton Lagoon

Jun 6th

by Genevieve Gates

Orielton lagoon is that area water to the left of the Sorell causeway between Midway Pt and Sorell (as one travels to Sorell). Eleven T.F.N.C. members ignored the unfavourable weather conditions and met at the first bridge at the Shark Pt Rd end of the lagoon.

Priscilla gave a most informative account of the history of the lagoon and the struggle to have it classified as a Nature Reserve (Len Walls name was mentioned quite often during this).

In 1993 the blue green algal bloom drew much public attention to the lagoon and caused the local council to improve the drainage through to Pittwater. Surrounding landowners are also becoming aware of the importance on this wetland area which once covered a much larger land area than it does now, and they are changing their stock watering procedures in an effort to protect the area. WE managed to identify six succulents (Specific halophytes), birds & bettong footprints and molluscs.

Find of the day goes to Robyn for a birds nest fungus which was growing amid the *Sarcocornia* bushes.

Many thanks to Priscilla for leading the excursion and also Veronica Thorpe, one of our members, who is also currently compiling two handbooks with funding from the Tas. Environment Centre;

- 1) Restoring Wet Lands and Waterways-A guide to action; and
- 2) A Wildlife Guide to the Derwent.

Observations:

Halophytes:

Sarcocornia (Salicornia) quinqueflora
Sarcocornia blackiana
Suaeda australis
Sprengularia media
Disphyna cressifolia
Hemichroa pentadra
Sclerostigia arbuscum

Birds:

Lapwings
Yellow-rumped thornbills
Forest raven
Native hen
Chesnut teal ducks
Pied oyster catcher

Fungi

Tricholoma sp. and a Birds nest fungus

Molluscs (thanks to Liz Turner at the Tas. Museum)

Cochlicella barbara (introduced)
Nassarius pauperatus
Cernuella vestita
Salinator fragilis
Notospisula trigonella

Waverly Flora Park

Jun 5th

by Genevieve Gates

Four very keen members met at the Winifred Curtis entrance of the park at Bellerive to take a stroll over the areas that had been burnt six months previously (Jan. '98 bushfires).

We noted that ground cover regeneration was well underway. This included vast amounts of weeds such as fumitory and *Plantago coronopus*, but also a lot of native species as well, eg. *Helichrysum sp.*, *Dianella sp.*, *Lomandra longifolia*, *Clematis gentianoides*, *Acacia dealbata*, and *Bursaria spinosa*. We also found a large patch of Greenhood orchids (*Pterostylis sp.*) just about at maturity.

Fungal find of the day goes to Andrew for the *Cordyceps sp.* (probably *gunnii*). These unusual club shaped fruiting bodies are attached to a host moth or beetle larvae which the fungus has parasitised; unfortunately the host body could not be found.

Remember the more people that attend excursion the more finds we make (especially fungal).

Observations:

Birds

Yellow rumped thornbill
Grey currawong Yellow wattle bird
Yellow-tailed black cockatoo

Flowers

Linum amrginale
Pterostyus sp.
Stylidium graminifolium
Brachysome sp.
Clematis gentianoides
Pimelia sp.

Fungi

Laccaria sp.
Agaricus sp.
Xerula australis
Cortinarius sp.
Galerina sp. and other *L.B.M.s*
Cordyceps (gunnii?)

Mycena sp.

Collybia buryrae

Marasmius oreades

Platypus Field Work Experience

Philip Bethge, from the Dept. of Anatomy and Physiology at the Uni. of Tas. is conducting a project looking at the energetics of the Platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*). He requires volunteer field assistants to help him with his work at Cradle Mountain. Accommodation, food and transport is provided and trips of 5-10 days is preferred. You will need to be fit and healthy. He has provided a list of dates, subject to change;

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 21/8/98-30/8/98 | 5/10/98-14/10/98 |
| 19/11/98-28/11/98 | 2/1/99-11/1/99 |
| 17/2/99-26/2/99 | 4/4/99-13/4/99 |
| 11/6/99-20/6/99 | 25/7/99-3/8/99 |
| 7/9/99-16/9/99 | 21/10/99-30/10/99 |
| 4/12/99-13/12/99 | 18/1/00-27/1/00 |

His contact details are as follows;

Philip Bethge

(w) 6226 2683

(h) 6225 4069

e-mail: p_bethge@utas.edu.au

Wilderness Society Slideshow

The Wilderness Society will be holding a free slideshow and guest speaker night on the first Wednesday of each month from August to December at Cafe Who, 251 Liverpool St. at 7pm. Sessions of particular interest to naturalists might be the August presentation on Marine Life-Our Forgotten Wilderness, and the December show titled Unique Flora and Fauna of Tasmania. Further details can be obtained from the Wilderness Society offices or shop.

Frogs & Fungi

Some of you may have recently heard news of a fungus, new to science, that is killing frogs and toads throughout the world. Here's the latest. The fungus belongs to a new genus of chytrid fungi, a group that is thought to be related to the earliest fungi. Chytrids parasitise a range of organisms, from microscopic algae to insects, but have never before been found to cause disease in vertebrates. As yet unnamed, the fungus coats the undersides and legs of frogs and toads, and has been implicated in the death of frog and toad species from locations in Australia, Panama, California, and from four American zoos and aquariums. Since the amphibians breathe through their skin, it is thought that chytrids suffocate the

animals. An alternative theory supposes that because of the infection, the animals are laying down extra layers of keratin in their skin which results in suffocation. Another possibility is that the fungus is releasing a toxin. However, the researchers don't yet know if the fungus is the primary cause of death, or is killing animals weakened by other factors such as UV radiation due to the thinned ozone layer, or agricultural chemicals. Further, nobody knows where the fungus came from or how it is spread. It is possible that humans, particularly those studying the animals, may help spread the pathogen between sites. Director of the Declining Amphibian Populations Task Force at Open University in Milton Keynes, Tim Halliday, has issued a code of practice for field workers when handling amphibians. He says that mud and other debris should be removed from boots, clothing, traps and vehicles. Equipment should be scrubbed using 70% ethanol solution and disposable gloves should be worn when handling animals.

Source: New Scientist 27Jun1998.

Further reading: Alex Hyatt and Lee Berge *et al* will publish a paper about their research into the occurrence on the chytrid fungus on amphibia in Australia in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* this year (ca. July).

Competition

In this issue we're asking all you budding bards and bardettes (that's tiny bards) to put pen to paper and come up with some poetry. Recently published by Kangaroo Press was Ron Strahan's and Pamela Conder's *An Incomplete History of Australian Mammals*, which contains a collection of factual poems about our furry fauna. While essentially a children's book, it's an entertaining book for a naturalist of any age. This is the first and only prize for our competition, and we want you to come up with a **short** poem about your favourite Tasmanian natural history subject, so it can be about anything from an *Acianthus pusillus* (Mosquito Orchid) to a *Zizina labradus* (Common Grass-blue Butterfly-OK that's not strictly native to Tas). Hopefully (if we have room) all the poems will be published in the November issue of the Bulletin, and the author of the best poem will be presented with the prize at the November general meeting.

Conditions of entry: All club members and their families and friends are eligible to enter. One entry per person. Poems must be original and by the entrant. Closing date Friday 2 Oct 98. Judges will be Andrew Walsh and one other person from the

committee (both whom will be ineligible to enter). There will be one winner who will receive a copy of Ron Strahan's *An Incomplete History of Australian Mammals*. Judging will be purely subjective and based on the criteria of "the one we like the most".

Send your entries to;

Poem Competition

A. Walsh

146 Misty Hill Rd

Mountain River 7109.

Example from Ron Strahan's book:

Platypus

The first *Ornithorhynchus*

Confused early thinkers.

They said, 'Oh good lord,

it's obviously a fraud!

'Somebody has stuck

The front end of a duck

(with the skill of a weaver)

To part of a beaver.'

'It's no less a fake

Than the mermaids they make

From a fish and an ape-

a ridiculous jape!'

We now know it's real

Though I can't help but feel

That from tail tip to muzzle,

It still is a puzzle.

Notice of Special Resolution

In order for our club to become tax exempt (because of the investment of the club's funds) we need to add a new clause to the club rules. As such, the committee wishes to give notice to members that at the general meeting in September (3rd) we shall vote on a special resolution to add the following clause to our rules (the wording is suggested by the Taxation Department's Tax Pack for Clubs):

6.4 In the event of the organisation being dissolved, the amount which remains after such dissolution and the satisfaction of all debts and liabilities shall be paid and applied by the organisation in accordance with its powers to any organisation which has similar objects and which has rules prohibiting the distribution of its assets and income to its members.

**BULLETIN OF THE
TASMANIAN FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC.**
<http://www.tased.edu.au/tasonline/tasfield/tasfield.htm>

Oct 1998

Number 292

Editor Andrew Walsh

The Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc. encourages the study of natural history and supports conservation. We issue our journal *The Tasmanian Naturalist* annually in October. People with a range of backgrounds and knowledge are welcome as members.

Contact Genevieve Gates (03 6227 8638) for further information, or write to GPO Box 68A Hobart 7001. Bulletin or website articles to Andrew Walsh (146 Misty Hill Rd. Mountain River 7109, 03 62 664543).

PROGRAM

General meetings start at 7:45pm on the first Thursday of the month in the Life Sciences Building at the University of Tasmania. Outings are usually held the following weekend, meeting at 10am outside the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery entrance, Macquarie St. *If you are planning to attend an outing but not the meeting prior, check as to the timing of the excursion as sometimes unforeseen changes occur.*

5th Nov Nick Mooney (PWS)- **Raptors**

8th Nov (Sun) Field trip related to raptors. Exact destination to be discussed at Nov 5th meeting.

3rd Dec **Members night.** This is an opportunity for members to give a short presentation on a topic of their choice. Don't forget you can also bring along slides. As this is the last meeting for the year we will be holding a bigger supper than normal afterwards so everyone bring along a plate of something to share.

5th Dec (Sat) To be discussed at Members night.

January **No meeting.**

4th Feb Natalie Papworth (Roy. Tas. Bot. Gardens)- **Roadside rescue of native vegetation.**

7th Feb (Sun) A journey to Old Beach to see native roadside vegetation.

4th Mar Mike Pemberton (PWS) **Maram grass in coastal ecosystems.**

Other Activities

The Marine Field Naturalists now meet at the Life Sciences Lecture Theatre at Tas. Uni. Usually at 6pm, 2nd Wednesday of each month.

Nov 11th Barry Bruce. Recovery plan for the Spotted Hand Fish.

Feb 10th Mike Sugden. The reef day/night.

Wildflower Gardens Show

Fri Nov 13th 10am-6pm, Sat 14th 10am-6pm, Sun 15th 10am-4pm.

Adults \$4, Concession \$3, Children \$1. Don't forget we will be holding a display, so if you want to help set it up or contribute display items, turn up on Wednesday 11th or Thursday morning 12th.

JOIN THE CLUB

by Jim Paterson

I'm often confused
By the words that are used
When describing a thing
Like a bird on a wing.

I constantly fail
When naming a snail
But there are among us
Those who name fungus.

I try to remember
What flowers in September
and I'm vague, so it seems
About monotremes.

But nevertheless
I must here confess
I've an interest in bees
and eucalypt trees.

And things under logs
And bubbles and bogs
And whole heaps on things
that haven't got wings.

But my great dismay
Is the people who say
I can't stand exploring
It's terribly boring.

A Letter From Don Hird.

Don Hird has sent Genevieve a letter, so we thought we should publish it in the latest bulletin.

“We expect to return to Tas shortly before Christmas but too late for the December meeting/excursion. We leave here early November but will take 5-6 weeks in all to reach Tas. Things have generally been going well although Hally is staying with her Tas cousins for a couple of months as she had some health problems. She will rejoin us in Queensland for the journey south etc.

Thanks for send the bulletins etc. which I've read with interest while I've been here. One of the frustrations here is having limited access to natural history guides although I've got some reasonable books on tropical reef fish and usually recognise another one or two each time we go snorkelling.

A month or so ago I saw a dugong, (captured by fishermen for kai kai) for the first time. It's hard to guess dugong numbers accurately but to the west is a very large area of shallow lagoon and reef habitat that is sparsely populated by people, so maybe plenty dugongs.

Best regards to all, Don Hird.”

Help Wanted!

The Seabird Project begins in October and runs through to March 1999. The project will involve surveying populations of shore birds and migratory waders, and the project needs regular observers to help with the study. People with some experience observing these birds are preferred, but training can be provided. If you would like to volunteer, **call Beatrice Bentley on 6234 6440 as soon as possible!**

WOMBAT

by Charles Thomson (age 10)

The wombat fell asleep
In his burrow so deep
That a birds loudest tweet
Would not wake him from his deep sleep
