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Editor.

SOUTH-WEST TASMANIA CONSERVATION AREA

Last month the State Government announced the lifting of the moratorium on mining exploration and development which had been imposed by the previous Government.

It has been stated that the Government is anxious for development to proceed and it is encouraging to see that a working group of officers from the Departments of Mines, National Parks, Forestry and The Environment will have the oversight of environmental guidelines under which development will be permitted.

Some concern has been expressed, however, that the Director of Mines has shown a lack of concern for conservation issues, as evidenced in his letter of 26 July 1982 in reply to a letter from the Tasmanian Conservation Trust. The Trust sought his co-operation by encouraging mining companies to conduct surveys to ensure that rare plants or archaeological sites are not destroyed during exploration or mining activities, to which he replied, "I consider your request to be of the utmost impertinence . . ."

It is to be hoped that the Minister for Mines, who made the announcement on behalf of the Government, will see that his Department's approach to the working group's activities are more conciliatory.

A HUNTSMAN SPIDER FEEDING

A.M. Tagg

Hall St., Ridgeway, 7101

It was at 2000 on 10 February 1983 that we found the very young mouse that the cat had caught early in the morning still lying on the shed floor with no visible marks on it.

Ten minutes later, on entering the shed again, we found a male huntsman spider *Delena cancerides* apparently making a hole in the mouse's side just behind the shoulder. The spider remained there perfectly still, sucking the juices from the mouse. Four legs were wrapped over the mouse, the other four balancing the spider on the floor. Its "head" was twisted at an angle to keep its mouthparts in the hole. It remained like this for three hours.

Just after 2300 the spider left the mouse but remained curled up beside it for over an hour: it seemed very sluggish and didn't want to move when disturbed with a straw. While it was feeding it took no notice of us walking about and over it or shining a torch close to it. It was after 0100 before it moved off.

WHAT WAS THE HERON DOING?

On four occasions during the last week in February 1983 a White-faced Heron left its usual haunt — a waterhole some distance away from the house — and came onto a neighbour's verandah. It was heard and seen pecking at the walls of the house.

Would it be looking for spiders or insects owing to the drought conditions? Have herons been known to do this on other occasions?

A.M. Tagg.

BRIDLED TERN, FIRST TASMANIAN RECORD

R.H. Green

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The Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* Scopoli, 1786 is a widely ranging species which breeds in the tropical-subtropical regions of the Indian, Pacific and western Atlantic Oceans (Condon, 1975, pp. 153-54). In Australia it lives and-breeds off the west coast of Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland (Serventy et al. 1971, pp. 227-29). In January 1968 a pair was found nesting near Robe, South Australia (Bonnin, 1968).

On 8 August 1982 the partly feathered skeletal remains, including wings and skull, of a Bridled Tern was collected on Northdown Beach, northern Tasmania (lat. 41°, 10'S, long. 145° 28'E) by Paul Rosevear, Rodney Walters and John Biggs while on a routine beach patrol.

The identification has been confirmed by Drs. G.F. van Tets and P.J. Fullagar, Division of Wildlife Research, CSIRO, Canberra, who determined it to be a subadult.

The specimen has been lodged in the collections of the Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston; registered number 1983/2/102.

This constitutes the first record of a Bridled Tern in Tasmania and, with the exception of the nesting pair in South Australia, apparently the only record from southern and south-eastern Australian waters.

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ABORIGINAL USES OF SHELLS IN PREHISTORIC TIMES

J. Stockton

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Shells have been used by peoples all over the world as ornaments and tools. In Tasmania shells were used by the Aborigines as vessels, scrapers and ornaments.

One drinking vessel was described as "like ear-shell and the holes were stopped up" (Plomley 1966:167). Other references call these drinking shells "mutton fish shells" (Plomley 1966:58,170). Both terms refer to an abalone, probably *Notohaliotis ruber* (Leach, 1814) (nomenclature follows May 1952). Use of an oyster shell, presumably *Ostrea angasi* (Sowerby, 1871), as a cup was noted by the French explorer Labillardiere (1800 vol. 2:43).

Labillardiere also noted that a shell scraper was used to make a wooden shellfishing spatula (1800 vol. 2:52). Baudin (1974:350) observed an oyster shell scraper used to smooth a spear.

Small shells were used to make necklaces (Labillardiere 1800 vol. 2:33; Mortimer 1975:19; Plomley 1965:Plate 3; 1966:178,619). A number of types of shellfish were used in these necklaces. The following list was supplied by Elizabeth Turner from specimens held in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

- Acmea vincentiana* (Cotton, 1943)
- Acmea scalarina* (Cox, 1867)
- Phasianotrochus irisodontes* (Quoy and Gaimard, 1834)
- Phasianotrochus rutilus* (A. Adams, 1851)
- Bembicium auratum* (Quoy and Gaimard, 1834)
- Melanerita melanotragus* (Smith, 1884)
- Marinula xanthostoma* (H. and A. Adams, 1854)

All are small species, which do not appear to have been eaten. However, the ethnography clearly shows that a desire to collect shells for necklaces could be a sufficient stimulus for the Detention River band (the TOM.ME.GIN.ER) to travel to Robbins Island where shells were available (Plomley 1966:866, but see also pp. 178 and 619). In archaeological excavations, larger shells have been found which appear to have been punctured, possibly for use as pendants (Jones 1966:8; Stockton 1976:158).

Three unusual species of shellfish were found in middens at Ordnanee Point during a recent study (Stockton 1982). At one site a fragment of *Mactra rufescens* (Lamarck, 1819) was found. This species is not uncommon on the west coast (E. Turner pers. comm.). A single *Tucetona flabellatus* (Tenn Woods, 1877) shell was found at a nearby midden. The Tasmanian Museum collections of this species include specimens from the northeast corner of Tasmania across to the northwest, but it is regarded as unusual on

the west coast (E. Turner pers. comm.). On the surface of another site was a complete valve of *Tucetilla striatularis* (Lamarck, 1819). This shell has a hole through its apex and the surface is polished. I first thought this hole might have been deliberately made as a piece of slate with a drilled hole was excavated from Sisters Creek (Jones 1964:305-306). If such shells were used as pendants, one would expect to see polish around the hole from rubbing with the string or thong which secured it. It is not apparent in this specimen. As holes are common in the apices of beach washed specimens of *T. striatularis*, one must assume that the perforation is of natural origin, despite the unexplained presence of the shell in site 627.

Punctured oyster shells were occasionally found in deflated middens on the west coast. Although it is likely that these shells were carried or traded from Bass Strait, the possibility of their being locally available cannot be entirely discounted. Their transport onto the surfaces of shell middens, however, almost certainly demands human transport. Just what they were used for by the Aborigines remains one of the mysteries of Tasmanian prehistory.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Elizabeth Turner of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery for discussion on this note and for the identification of specimens.

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SOME NEW ADDITIONS TO THE BRYOFLOTA OF TASMANIA

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We have recently published an account of the bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) of Mt. Wellington (Ratkowsky and Ratkowsky, 1982) and we reported a few new records from that mountain range. In the present paper, we give an account of new bryophyte records from the whole of Tasmania obtained during the past five years. We consider a moss record to be new to Tasmania if it is not listed for Tasmania by Scott and Stone (1976). Because there is as yet no recent comprehensive work on the liverworts of our region, liverwort records are considered to be new on the word of Dr. Riclef Grolle of Jena, East Germany, who has identified dozens of specimens for us. Most of the new liverwort records are due to his identifications. Unless otherwise noted, all collections were made by one of us (AVR).

Mosses:

Acrocladium cuspidatum (Hedw.) Lindb. - widespread in pastures, lawns, waste places, and at The Springs on Mt. Wellington.

Campylium polygamum (B.S.G.) C. Jens. - Chimney Pot Hill. Recently identified for us by Prof. D.H. Vitt.

Cheilothea chilensis (Mont.) Broth. - many locations in the upper regions of Mt. Wellington and two localities at Mt. Field National Park. In addition to AVR collections, Dr. Ilma Stone, coauthor of Mosses of Southern Australia, has also collected it from both areas, but too late for inclusion in that book.

Dicranella dietrichiae (C. Muell.) Jaeg. - Hartz Mountain National Park, The Springs.

Grimmia inaequalis Dix. & Sainsb. - near Lake Youl (Ben Lomond National Park). New to Australia. Characterised by an immersed seta.

Polytrichum formosum Hedw. - Mt. Rufus (Lake St. Clair National Park), near Dove Lake (Cradle Mountain National Park). New to Australia.

Pseudoscleropodium purum (Hedw.) Fleisch. - on road behind Cascade Brewery.

Racomitrium Ptychophyllum Lindsay - Legges Tor (Ben Lomond National Park).

Collected by Mark G. Noble.

Tortula pagorum (Milde) De Not. - Botanic Gardens, Hobart, on bark.

Tortula rubra Mitt. - Trestle Mountain, Coalmine Crag (Ben Lomond National Park), Cradle Mountain.

A further new moss record is *Ischyrodon lepturus* (Tayl.) Schelpe, found by Steve Harris of the National Parks & Wildlife Service at Tasman Island (Harris & Ratkowsky, 1982).

Liverworts:

Acrobolbus ochrophyllus Schust. - Schnells Ridge.

Acromastigum cavifolium Schust. - Schnells Ridge.

Cephalozia sp. - Mt. Wellington Plateau. Genus requires revision before the specimen can be named with confidence.

Chaetophyllopsis whiteleggei (Carringt. & Pears.) Schust. - on rockside beneath Ridge-way Reservoir Dam.

Cheilolejeunea campbelliensis (Steph.) Schust. - Adamsons Peak, Naturalist Peak (Mt. Field National Park), Milligans Peak.

Geocalyx caledonicus Steph. - Kermadie River, Lake Skinner Track, New Road (Franklin Township).

Gymnomitrium incompletum (Gott.) Schust. - Zig-zag Track and summit rocks of Mt. Wellington.

Haplomitrium gibbsiae (Steph.) Schust. - below The Springs (Mt. Wellington).

Hygrolebidium australe (Steph.) Schust. - Mt. Wellington Plateau, Mt. Field, Milligans Peak, Cradle Mountain.

- Neosioscyphus phoenicorhizus* Grolle — Mt. Wellington, Mt. Wedge, Mt. Lord, Adamsons Peak, Milligans Peak.
- Pallavicinia connivens* (Col.) Steph. — Mt. Snowy South.
- Pallavicinia xiphoides* (Hook. f. & Tayl.) Trev. — Mt. Wellington, Mt. Field East.
- Paracromastigum* sp. — Mt. Wellington near S. Trig.; may be conspecific with one of several species described by Professor R.M. Schuster from New Zealand.
- Plagiochila ratkowskiana* H. Inoue — Mt. Wedge, Mt. Rufus, Mt. Wellington, Adamsons Falls. (See Inoue, 1980).
- Schistochila balfouriana* (Hook. f. & Tayl.) Steph. — Adamsons Peak Track.
- Trichocolea rigida* Schust. — Mt. Wellington, Mt. Dromedary, Snug Tiers.
- Vandiemenia ratkowskiana* H.J. Hewson — Mt. Wellington. (See Hewson, 1982).

Three further new records have been reported by Grolle (1982) in the family Lejeuneaceae, viz. *Cheilolejeunea comitans* (Hook. f. & Tayl.) Schust., record based upon collections by Charles Turnbull, Dr. D.H. Norris and Dr. J.J. Engel, *Cololejeunea laevigata* (Mitt.) Tilden, record based upon collections by Dr. J.J. Engel, and *Lejeunea cucullata* (Reinw. & al.) Nees, record based upon a collection by Dr. D.H. Norris. In addition to the Tasmanian 'mainland' and adjacent islands, bryological discoveries have been at Macquarie Island (see Seppelt 1977 and Seppelt 1981).

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SNOWBOUND GOLDFINCHES

Russell Morse

On 25th August, 1981, at the Ben Lomond ski slopes, near blizzard conditions were blowing in from the north. Visibility was approximately seven metres.

We came across a flock of goldfinches which had obviously flown into the snow storm. I assume they had flown up from a lower valley. Because of poor visibility it was difficult to guess the size of the flock; however, I would estimate it at between 150 and 200 birds.

They had no fear of us and when we approached they quickly perched on us and our skis, I suppose being the only bit of relief from the whiteness. They were obviously badly lost and intent on flying further into the storm. I presume the wind was too strong for them to fly with it rather than into it.

I do not know if they all perished — there were a lot of dead bodies in the snow the next day. However, it would not have been the entire flock, although they could have been covered with snow.

EXCURSIONS

Pitt Water, 5/2/83

The first stop was at the mouth of Sorell Rivulet to look at the shore birds. The tide was falling but still fairly high.

Hoary-headed Grebes were seen in the mouth of the rivulet and a Tasmanian Native Hen was watched swimming across to the small island covered in samphire. Close by on the bay were Black and Little Pied Cormorants, Silver and Southern Black-backed (Kelp) Gulls, Black Swans and two Australian Pelicans, and feeding on the recently exposed mud were Eastern Curlews, Bar-tailed Godwits, Pied Oystercatchers, Red-necked Stints and White-faced Herons. On the rocky point on the west side were Crested Terns.

Some years ago when the adjacent poultry processing factory was operating as a general abattoir the Kelp Gull was present in considerable numbers, but few occur there now.

The party then moved to the west end of the old Sorell Railway causeway near the mouth of the Coal River where, after lunch, members scattered over the samphire flats and exposed tidal mudflats.

In the samphire the chief interest was in the marsh plant, Sea Lavender *Limonium australe* which was in full flower. To most of the party this was a new plant which is closely related to the garden plant *Statice*.

On the open water of Barilla Bay were Black Swans, a pair of Chestnut Teal, Silver Gulls and Crested Terns, while White-faced Herons and four Little Egrets were wading in the shallows. Large numbers of Red-necked Stints and Curlew Sandpipers and a few Pied Oystercatchers, Red-capped Dotterels and Spur-winged Plovers were feeding on the exposed mud or at the edge of the water.

On a farm close to the bay a Black-fronted Dotterel was seen as the party moved homewards.

Green Valley, Bagdad, 6/3/83

This very pleasant valley was unknown to any of the party and was unfortunately suffering severely from the current drought: it will certainly be worth another visit when seasonal conditions are better. The open land was very dry and almost without any grass and the day was spent in light forest with a few sandstone cliffs.

The bird list for the day was:- Flame Robin, Scarlet Robin, Dusky Robin, Brown Thornbill, Yellow-throated Honeyeater, Strong-billed Honeyeater, Green Rosella, Golden Whistler, Grey Fantail, Laughing Kookaburra, Superb Blue Wren, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Butcherbird, Yellow-tipped (Striated) Pardalote, Dusky Wood-swallow.

On the homeward journey a farm dam in the valley allowed us to add Coot and Hoary-headed Grebe to the day's tally.

RECORDS OF SPINE-TAILED SWIFTS

During this autumn I have seen Spine-tailed Swifts over Hobart on 18 March, 2 and 6 April.

In searching my old notes I have recorded them in April in 10 years, the latest date being 17 April in 1965 during the Club's Easter Camp at Douglas River.

Has anyone got a later record than this?

L.E.W.