

# **The North Eastern Naturalist**

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**IT IS THE MISSION OF THIS CLUB to encourage the study, appreciation and preservation of our natural and cultural environment, the animals, plants, geology and landforms, including those of the coastal and marine areas in the North East region of Tasmania.**

**The Club conducts outings on the second Saturday of the month.**

**SEPTEMBER 6th**  
**\*\*[note change from usual date]**

## **NATIONAL THREATENED SPECIES DAY : SCOTTSDALE.**

We celebrate National Threatened Species Day with a visit to the habitat of the Scottsdale Burrowing Crayfish. Meet at North East Park at 10a.m. on the eastern outskirts of Scottsdale and travel to Old Waterhouse Road in convoy. Mike Bretz has arranged a guide. Limited walking—gumboots recommended. Contact: 04301 32000.

**OCTOBER 11th**

## **SEARCH FOR THE BORNEMISSZA STAG BEETLE : GOSHEN**

Come beetling with Ian and Kim Matthews at their place near Goshen, looking for the Bornemissza Stag Beetle which has a limited habitat including being protected on their property. Congenial hosts; an interesting story. Meet 10a.m. at the junction of Lotta Road and the Tasman Highway, about 2 km. West of Goshen. Contact person: Lou Brooker 0417149244..

**NOVEMBER 8th**

## **EXPLORING ANSON'S BAY**

Amble along Jenny Bicanic's favourite paths looking for orchids, listening for birds. Field Nat's pace, not strenuous, the distance of your choice but attempting to cover bushland, riparian and seashore habitats.

Meet 10am @ Jenny's shack. Directions: At the fork at the bottom of the hill entering the bay, turn right. At the next fork, turn left into Melaleuca Place. Look for sign on gate on left. Camping welcome: B.Y.O. Everything. Leader: Jenny Bicanic 0429 041 580.

**Also on the 8th, 9th :**

**Federation Get-together North west coast. See page 2 for info.**

**DECEMBER 13th.**

## **BIRD WATCHING AT GREENS BEACH.**

We have been invited to visit the property of Barbara and Don Pitt who have 850 acres on Friend Point, where the Tamar River meets Bass Strait. It's a bird watching day—throw in some gumboots and a pair of binoculars. Maybe orchids to see as well. Meet 10a.m. main street of Green's Beach. Contact: Lou Brooker 0417149244 or 6356 0381

### Information about payment of subs.

**Annual Subscriptions are due this month.**

They can be paid electronically to the Bendigo Bank, by entering the following information.

**Name on Account: North East Tasmania Field Naturalist Club**

**BSB: 63 3000**

**A/C number: 128381860**

**Please include your name in the transaction or send an email to confirm payment to [brooker@vision.net.au](mailto:brooker@vision.net.au)**

**I'm taking a punt that subs will remain at \$20 for both single and family.**

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### From the Editor:

It sometimes takes people a long time to read the writing on the wall. For a long time, a couple of years in fact, I've seen the writing, I've read it, but have not actually taken on board what the implications are. I'm talking about this newsletter and the fact that I need to inform members in print [not just mumble about it at an AGM.] that I cannot sustain the amount of work I have put into our club's newsletter.

I took over from Phil de Salis as editor in 1996 with Issue 137. It was a pretty basic newsletter in pretty much the same format as now: reports on outings, snippets of news from other newsletters etc. There were sketches and black and white photos. We sometimes had three newsletters a year, but jump forward to 2011, 2012, when we had two newsletters a year, and then I look at the date on the last newsletter and realise it was a year ago !

There are lots of ways to resolve the problem and I hope we can brainstorm them at the AGM. and come up with a solution. I've loved doing the job. I realise its been an important part of my learning—part of my becoming the naturalist I am. And I do love writing.

I'd like to especially thank a couple of people who have contributed to making the newsletter the success its been - people like Mike Douglas, Pam Bretz, Jenny Bicanic, Dee Mills and Ross Coad who have written reports, added interest with a different way of reporting and lightened the load for me.

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### Federation Get-together.

**Friday evening meal** [\$25] at Two Oaks Cafe—Beachside Caravan Park, Somerset.  
Illustrated talk by David Cooper on the Geology of Wynyard.

**Saturday**— David Cooper will conduct a tour of the various geological sites in the Wynyard area.  
BYO lunch.

Orchid expert, Barry Dudman will lead a trip to either Rocky Cape or Fern Glade depending which has best orchids.

**Saturday Evening:** Dinner at Seabrook Hotel, own choice from menu.

**Sunday:** Drive to Heybridge to visit Margaret Kinsey's famous garden of Native Plants.

**Accommodation:** Beachside Caravan Park.  
Cabins: 2 rooms—sleep 6. Single person, \$80.  
Caravans and Campsites: Powered site \$27  
Unpowered site \$20  
Kitchen and toilets open 24/7.

#### **Proposed attendance:**

If attending, email [bekayee@gmail.com](mailto:bekayee@gmail.com)

Field Nats are to make own accommodation booking by phoning [03] 6435 2322

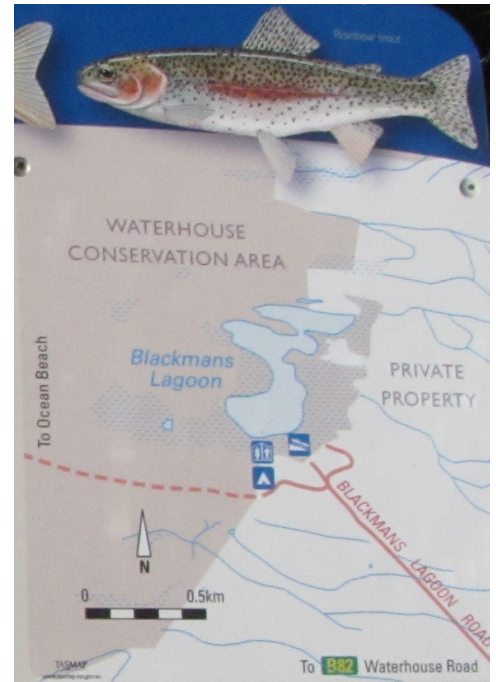
Or by emailing [wayne@somersetbeachside.com.au](mailto:wayne@somersetbeachside.com.au)

## BLACKMANS LAGOON : JUNE 2012

Peter Hodgetts has been visiting Blackman's Lagoon for fifty years. I don't think there'd be anyone in the North East who would know it better. He's a fisher and a shooter, but he and his friends have also been 'caretakers' for the last thirty years. He used to go out to the Lagoon when he was a little tacker and can remember when all the land surrounding the lagoon was sand dunes. He tells a story about his father getting caught in quick sand out there and his mother calling out as he sank into the sand, "don't spill the frogs", for he was carrying a bucket full of green and gold frogs for their fishing expedition. He's our guide for today's outing.

There are still as many frogs out there, its just that we value them differently now-a-days. Blackman's Lagoon and its feeder creeks constitute the most important site in the state for the green and gold frog. And of course it is no longer permitted to use them as bait.

Casting your eyes around the perimeter of the lake now, its hard to imagine sand dunes, for the vegetation is dense and lush. This vegetation has built up since the planting of marram grass, a project aimed at stabilising the dunes that were moving inland and engulfing the farmland at a rapid rate.



Blackman's Lagoon is one of three significant wetlands in the area. The other two - Little Waterhouse and Big Waterhouse Lakes are nearby and are part of the Waterhouse Conservation Area.

The landscape for 120<sup>2</sup> kms is flat, flat, flat, and its hard to tell which way any excess water might flow. Ok, its easy to see what might happen to the water that falls over the dunes, its seems natural for it to sit at the base of the dunes. But I think it would take meticulous observation and measurement to be able to calculate a drop of a metre between one waterway and another. But that's how the lagoon has been managed. To the west is Stone Chimney Creek and a weir has been built there and a channel takes the overflow about 500 mtrs. to Blackman's Lagoon. The fisherman keep the channel clear at their own expense and the result is a waterway which supports a rich and diverse aquatic population.

Blackman's Lagoon covers 28 ha. And is an important site for the rare State and Commonwealth protected dwarf galaxias *Galaxiella pusilla*. This is a small scaleless species which grows to a maximum of 40mm and can survive in the substrate even when the water dries up. Other native species present at Blackman's are the jollytail, another galaxia - *Gallaxiella maculates*, the pygmy perch - *Nannoperca australis*, and the short and long finned eel. Stocked by inland fisheries with both brown and rainbow trout, this lagoon is managed by them as a trophy fishery. As part of that fishery, the lagoon supports a commercial harvest of 1½ tonnes of short finned eel per annum.

So, its little wonder that with this diversity of life in the water, there would be a corresponding diversity of bird life using this as a feeding place. The water bird list includes: Ducks: Mountain duck, Black duck, Grey teal, Chestnut teal, Hard head [200 at a time], Pink eared and Musk duck. There are also White-faced heron, Great egret, Grebes—probably Hoary headed, sometimes 300 at a time], Little pied cormorant, Great cormorant, Black Swan, Eurasian coot, and of course the White bellied sea eagle.

Part of the overflow channel of Blackman's Lagoon



Aleuria rhenana—a soil inhabiting bright orange cup fungi, about 1-2cm in diameter.



Layers of reflections—the Triglochin species



## ROCKY RAMBLE AT MT. CAMERON July 13, 2013.

A small band of nine members enjoyed this walk partway up the Wedgetail Peak Track, starting from the Field Study Centre. The track wandered through a woodland of gnarled black peppermints, stringy barks and white gums and then climbed up rocky slopes dotted with granitoid monoliths resembling abstract sculptures.

From the lunch spot, there was an expansive view out to the mouth of the Ringarooma River and Cape Portland, but low cloud over Bass Strait hid the islands of the Furneaux Group. We also looked down on the towers of the Musselroe Wind Farm, 25 kilometres away but still near enough to threaten the famed Mt. Cameron eagles. Three eagle deaths have already occurred at the wind farm.

As with the Mt. Stronach range, the Mt. Cameron range is a monadnock—an upstanding mass of resistant rock rising abruptly from surrounding lowlands. Both ranges are comprised of granitoid rocks, mainly adamellite of Devonian age. Mt. Cameron is part of the Blue Tier Batholith—vast dome-shaped structures produced when granitoid magmas welled up through the earth's crust 370—395 million years ago. These never reached within several kilometres of the surface but are now exposed in various places.

Some plants worthy of mention:

- Soft dusty millar, *Spyridium parvifolium* var. *molle*. This endemic, a member of the dogwood family, is classified as rare. It is seen just across Hardwicke's Creek from the F.S.C. above the flying fox platform. It was wiped out by the 2006 fires and has only recently reappeared.
- White kunzea, *Kunzea ambigua*. This shrub, noted for its scented foliage, is widespread at Mt. Cameron. It is closely related to the tea trees.
- Streaked rock orchid, *Dockrillia striolata* subsp. *chrysantha*. This endemic subspecies is common at Mt. Cameron. Not in flower at the moment.
- Spurred helmet orchid, *Corybas aconitiflorus*. This was in flower. It has a helmet-like, purple-brown dorsal sepal that forms a hood over the labellum [lip]. In addition to seeding, it reproduces by forming tubers on the ends of long lateral roots, forming small colonies of plants. The flowers are pollinated by gnats [not field nats.!!] attracted by small growths on the labellum that resemble the fungal fruiting bodies on which these insects feed.
- Spreading wattle, *Acacia genistifolia*. A fiendishly prickly shrub.
- Southern storksbill or wild geranium, *Pelargonium australe*, seen in crevices in rock faces.
- Rockfern, *Cheilanthes austrotenuifolia*. Short erect fern on thin soil on rocky outcrops. It often dies back during hot, dry weather, recovering later. Hence the name 'resurrection fern'.

Thanks to Mike Douglas for this report.

## HARRIDGE FALLS : 14th September 2013.

We couldn't have asked for a better day for bushwalking than this day in September. Fifteen fieldnats. Set off for Harridge Falls just 5kms south of the Weldborough Pub. It was sunny, still and dry after what had seemed like weeks of rain and cold. It was quite a scramble down the steep, humus-rich and damp hillside but we slid and wended our way over fallen logs covered in beautiful fungi such as the "curtain crisp" until we reached the Weld River and the falls.

The water was flowing strongly after lots of recent rain and we saw evidence of mighty flows which had removed islands and deposited tangled masses of vegetation. We disturbed an echidna at his ant lunch and caught a glimpse of the prized pink robin as we basked in the warm sunshine on the bank of the river, enjoying the movement of the tea-brown waters. We also spotted some maroon hoods, *Pterostylis pedunculata*, thriving in the sandy damp conditions.

After lunch, ten of our members followed our guide for the day—the very knowledgeable Lesley Nicklason, to return cross country while the remainder opted to return by a shorter route, thoughtfully collecting rubbish dumped by litterbugs on the side of the highway. [and thence returning to the pub for a game of 8ball].

Lesley had previously marked the track with tape, without which we would have felt quite lost in the constantly changing topography from steep hillsides to streamside pathways. Wet sclerophyll forest gave way to thickets of Casuarina. After a good three hours, we found ourselves entering "civilization" - old farmland, blackberries and other weeds, but also wonderful stands of giant eucalypts.

Reunited at the pub the two groups enjoyed cider, coffee and good company. A good day out. Thanks Lesley.

Thanks to Pam Bretz for this review.

## VISIT TO WAG WALKER RHODODENDRON GARDEN, LALLA November 2013.

Sue was able to arrange with the owner of the W.A.G. Walker Rhododendron Gardens to lead this walk-and-talk. When her friends Margy and Chris Dockray took over the property in 2007 they had thought they were taking over a 20 acre reserve and 80 acres of native forest. After all, they had visited the property for decades while their children were growing up and they thought they knew it well. But, since that day, they have continued to uncover significant areas of heritage rhododendron plantings as well as wonderful avenues of exotic trees in hidden valleys. They have worked tirelessly at restoring and rehabilitating, revealing bit by bit the history of the place.

Frank Walker established a nursery here in the early 20th Century and it soon became THE major propagating nursery in Tasmania. Its specialty was rhododendrons. It donated the trees along the old midlands highway, developed the Lalla Red Delicious apple, and provided rhododendrons for many significant cool climate gardens along the eastern seaboard.

After the sale of the reserve to W.A.G. Walker the place was fallow for twenty years, during which time some of the plants were dug up and transplanted in the Gorge in Launceston.

A map of self guided walks, shows trails criss-crossing the hillside, each with descriptive names like Cliff Track, Chapel Track, White Gum Walk and the Vireya Trail, linking all parts of the Reserve. In the gullies there are waterfalls, bridges and a wonderful mix of tree ferns, dogwoods, *Bursaria*, white gums and various species of rhododendrons: some large leaved, some scented. In other parts of the reserve, we walk upward through *Eucalyptus obliqua* and a stand of *Eucalyptus viminalis*, up toward a lookout halfway up Brown Mountain. We are privileged to be guided by Margy who knows the trails like the palm of her hand. Her enthusiasm is delightful —a quality that would have been so valuable in tackling this enormous task of restoration.

As usual we have our eyes focussed on the ground as well, and here we see maroonhoods, the curtain crisp fungus, many healthy bandicoot diggings and even surprise ourselves at being able to recognise the dogs vomit slime mould.

In the canopy overhead we recognise the crescent honeyeater, the golden whistler, pardalotes, thornbills, cuckoos, the shrike thrush and everywhere there are wrens and robins.

We were interested in a mystery plant that no-one seemed able to identify. It was in the understory, in a gully. It was about 2metres tall and reminded me a little of *Goodia lotifolia*. A strange thing happened when I went to reference Tasmania's Natural Flora, for there it was on the page where the book fell open. I'm pretty sure it is *Phyllanthus gunnii* or shrubby spurge. It's in the Euphorbiaceae.

We were all absolutely in awe at the work Margy and Chris have done. What they have achieved with all their hard work and commitment must surely surpass and enhance the original vision.



Left: *Phyllanthus gunnii*,  
Shrubby spurge.  
\*Wikipedia.  
Right: Dog Vomit Slime  
mould.  
\*Curtis E. Young

\*Source for photos.



## OPEN DAY, VALE OF BELVOIR : Feb. 2014.

We jumped at the chance, having already missed one such opportunity last year. The Tas. Land Conservancy had offered an open day to view the stunning wildflowers at the peak of their summer splendour and explore the Vale of Belvoir with TLC staff and expert supporters as guides. We booked early and were able to join the 100 others from all over Tasmania for the day which presented as extremely hot and sunny.

The Vale of Belvoir is a large open limestone valley located about 15 km NNW of Cradle Mountain, in the lee of the Black Bluff Range. It is about 10 km long by 2 km wide, trends NE-SW, and has an open grassy floor flanked by strips of ancient rainforest and eucalypt forest. There are many important botanical, geological, geomorphologic, historical and cultural aspects associated with this valley, and it has a special welcoming ambience which has endeared it to many people. Cattle have been summer-grazed at 'the Vale' for over a century. The Tasmanian Land Conservancy purchased the grazing property in the centre of the valley from the Charleston family, but grazing will be allowed to continue because of its apparent beneficial effects on the floral communities. This aspect is being closely monitored by TLC.

The Vale of Belvoir lies at an average altitude of 800 m, giving it a sub-alpine character. It is underlain by Ordovician limestone (about 450 million years old) – the same 'Gordon Limestone' which forms most of the other large limestone valleys in the state, e.g. at Mole Creek, Gunn's Plains and Florentine Valley. However, those are all lowland valleys, at around 400 m, so that the Vale represents the only sub-alpine limestone valley in the state. The limestone is underlain by a formation of siliceous sandstone, quartzite and conglomerate – the same unit which forms the West Coast Range - and both have been folded to form a broad syncline or elongate basin, which forms the valley, with anticlines of the siliceous rocks rising up on either side to form the Black Bluff Range and Bonds Range .

As in our other limestone valleys, there are numerous sinkholes and caves across the floor of the Vale. The sinkholes are typically 10-20 m across, with grassy to muddy walls and floor where the surface soil has collapsed into the top of the cave beneath. Many have wombat burrows on the sides, hinting at the very large population of these, and other marsupials, in the valley. Some of the sinkholes have exposed limestone sides, and some have permanent ponds or small lakes in them. Several have water bubbling up and flowing out one side, with impressive water plants in some cases. Platypuses live in some of these ponds.



Above: the crowd assembled at the Vale.  
Right: a sinkhole with limestone sides and water at the bottom.

The most stunning vision impressing us as soon as we arrived was the masses of brilliant orange everlastings, *Xerochrysum subundulatum* and the small yellow billy buttons, *Craspedia alpine*, dotted with white flag irises, *Diplarrena latifolia*, and white gentians, *Gentianella diemensis*. But fluttering just 30 cms above the flowers were masses of butterflies. An amazing sight!

After the initial 'meet and greet', we headed off in three groups each with a volunteer group leader. Across the Vale and up into the adjacent rainforest, where we enjoyed a cool intermission in the heat of the day, a short break, then through the fields of everlastings until we stopped for lunch with the vista of Lake Lea stretched out before us.

OPEN DAY VALE OF BELVIOUR  
PAGE 2

The view looking down from the aptly named Daisy Hill towards Lake Lea with swathes of everlasting in the foreground.



On the Western edge of the Vale, we came across the Vale River which flows southwards and eventually into the Pieman River on the west coast. It was here, at the end of a long day in extreme heat, that we were relieved to take our shoes and socks off and just chill out on the banks of the river. As you can see— there was no holding back. It was a very fitting way to end an extremely interesting day.

At the end of the day, the cool water of the Vale River was irresistible



A group of six N.E.Field nats. made it to the open day. Here is their campsite.

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Source: geological information sourced from Vale of Belvoir Blog written by Keith Corbett.

## SHORELINE MONITORING—WEYMOUTH: MARCH 8, 21014.

Emma Williams of NRM North has been conducting a series of shoreline monitoring days across the north coast during the summer. She was able to lead us in our explorations in the morning and we took part in her monitoring activities in the afternoon.

We had chosen a site near a launching ramp at Weymouth. It consisted of rocks. It looked unlikely. But it was actually an extremely rich and diverse area. So rich, in fact that we walked a total of 50 metres. Yes 50 !! We would spend 10 minutes examining and talking about what we had found in one spot, then take another ten steps to find a whole different lot of creatures. And so this pattern went on.

In order to record some of the more unusual specimens found, I'll print thumbnail photos, a name and a brief comment. If viewed online, it might be possible to see more detail.



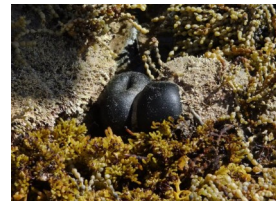
Rosette barnacle: with a hard external skin they are cemented to rocks. To eat the two tiny central plates open when under water.



The common sea urchin  
\*Spines two different lengths  
\*Seen in overhanging ledges in pools and gutters.



Eleven armed sea star.  
\*has between 7 & 12 arms.  
\*Can regenerate arms.  
\*Is a pest in scallop beds.



Sea apple:



The decorator crab: a very cryptic crab. Its carapace is covered with spines and fine hooked hairs [they can be seen on the right specimen] into which the crab threads algae and sponges to form an effective camouflage. The crab on the left didn't move while being held.



The Hairy Stone crab: not a true crab-its last pair of legs are small and hidden under the rear of the carapace. Mouthparts vivid blue.

Emma explains in a booklet about the intertidal program, "that our coastal environments are experiencing changes in response to human activity, but we are not always able to see this happening over short time intervals. Monitoring allows us to keep records for particular sites and to compare these over time, to identify any clear changes that appear in the data. The monitoring program uses methods of counting and measuring biodiversity, that are used in similar programs across Australia." \* Here we are counting and measuring



One of the more interesting sightings of the day was the blue ringed octopus. As soon as spotted though, it slithered into hiding and was not seen by all.

I have been looking for a guide to teach us about life in rock pools for ages and it was great that Emma agreed so willingly. She waxed lyrical about how much she enjoyed her job and it was obvious in her tireless enthusiasm about the specimens we brought to her attention.

\* NRM North's Intertidal Program—Methods Guide.



