

# The North-Eastern Naturalist

Issue 162 JANUARY 2004

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## PROGRAM

Please note ..... We have changed the dates in April and May from the usual 2nd Saturday in the month.

- FEBRUARY 14th**      **FAMILY DAY AT THE BEACH :** See Bridport from a different perspective. Heaps of great activities to enjoy with the kids. Meet in Car Park opposite RSL Club at 10 am. Leaders: Lou and Jill.
- MARCH 13th**      **CONSTABLE CREEK WALK:** Meet at History Room car park in the main street of St. Helens. We will have a brief look at the extensions to the History Room before driving to Constable Creek for a gentle walk beside and sometimes IN the Creek. Wear old shoes for wading . Leader: Denny Walter ph. 63 761096
- APRIL 3rd**      **HERITAGE FALLS: DOUGLAS APSLEY RESERVE.** This walk is for the fully fit. Return trip is 10km on a track with no steep slopes. Try and include Douglas Apsley Map in kit. Park fees may be payable. We will need some vehicles with reasonable ground clearance for the final section of the E road. Meet 7am. Lord's Car Park, Scottsdale or 9am at Chain of Lagoons . Leader: Mike Douglas, ph 63 561243.
- MAY 1st**      **FUNGI HUNT ON THE ELEPHANT PASS :** Pam tells us there was a fantastic display here last year and we have invited Sarah Lloyd to help us learn more about the fungi we find. Gentle walking and browsing. Pancakes after if we choose. Meet at the Pancake Barn 10am. Leader: Lou Brooker 63522122.

**MINI CONFERENCE:** Sarah and the fungi group 'FLAG' are proposing a weekend of Fungi related activities on the 14th, 15th, & 16th May at Skemps, the Launceston Field Nats. Field Study Centre, Myrtle Bank. There will be trips into the field and tutors who will guide in the use of keys and microscopes. Ring Sarah on 63 961380 to register an interest and find out about costs.

**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.

# club news / reports

## Greetings to all.

And it is with pleasure that we welcome new members Helen Preston from Bicheno and Paul Frater and Sandra Krstic both from Scamander. We first met them in St. Helens the day we went frog hunting. On the Blue Tier recently we were joined by visitors Rod and Karen Davis and newcomer to St. Helens, Bill Thompson, as well as many other 'Friends of Blue Tier'. Rod submitted the beautiful piece titled 'The Green Blue Tiers' for which I am grateful and which I am sure you will enjoy reading. Thanks Rod.

## Vale Charles Taylor, Life Member

Members will be saddened by the news of the death of one of our long time life members Charles Taylor. When our club came into existence following a public meeting in Branxholm, Charles was elected its first Secretary. In promoting the newly formed club, Charles wrote "there are no experts in the club—so you will be on equal footing and assuredly amongst friends".

Well, Charles was being modest. For we always looked on him as an "expert". Even as recently as 1999, I referred to Charles for information. And he gave it willingly.

For twenty one years, Charles, as Newsletter Editor contributed to the cohesion and effectiveness of the club by keeping members informed and widening their fields of interest with his reports and quotes from various scientific sources.

It saddened him to leave his home in Pioneer, and since his health declined, he was unable to attend field excursions, but he still kept an interest in the club and would often ring me to correct some minor errors in the newsletter.

Charles Taylor was a unique individual whose contribution and commitment to the club and its activities we will always commemorate.

## Jenny Bicanic—Author

Just in case you wondered why you haven't seen Jenny Bicanic on any of our recent outings, I'll tell you the reason. Jenny's been researching and writing a book. It's called "Down the Sledge Track" and is a history of Lietinna and West Scottsdale, where she grew up.

I don't think Jenny realised how time-consuming the task would be, but inspired to do her very best, she gave it her undivided attention. The book was published by the Advertiser and on November the 8th it was launched in style at the Lietinna Hall.

Congratulations Jenny. [and we hope to see you at Field Nats. reeeel soon !]

## New Chapter in History of North East Park.

North East Park in Scottsdale has been an important place for the Scottsdale community since the 1920's. Way back then, Tuckers Creek containing a natural pool fed by springs was used as the local swimming pool.

Another chapter in the history of North East Park began in 2002 when the Dorset Council and Forestry Tasmania engaged the environmental, landscape and recreational planning company "Inspiring Place", to propose a Master Plan for North East Park. This company researched the cultural history, conducted flora, fauna, geology and hydrology audits, and consulted extensively with the local community.

A group called "The Friends of North East Park" has been formed and will oversee the implementation of the master plan. In the natural zone of the park, an attempt will be made to protect and restore the natural values of the bushland and creek. A submission for a Greening Tasmania Project was successful and their project will begin on November 23rd and continue for 22 weeks.

Some of the jobs the young people will be involved in will be identifying and mapping weed species, identifying local fauna and building bird and platypus hides, revegetating areas with local species, working on interpretation and signage and weeding and updating signage of the endemic flora section of the park.

## Naturalist Network : 2004 Get Together.

The next get together of the Australian Naturalist Network will be held in Western Australia. So far, only dates and the venue for accommodation have been set. Pre-tours begin on 22nd September. The core program will run from September 25th until October 4th. Then the post tours will happen from 5th-8th October. If anyone is interested, I have addresses and phone numbers of contacts.

## Tasmanian Land Conservancy

This is the organisation to which we made a donation in June this year. Their first newsletter contains the good news that the TLC has been able to purchase the Long Point Reserve on the East Coast.

The TLC is a new organisation and has no paid officers. The office is staffed by volunteers and an answering machine. The campaign to purchase the Long Point Reserve was the TLC's first permanent reserve project. When they began planning the project a year ago, the organisation had only \$2,000 in its account. They invested all of this in printing the advertising material ! Now, due to the passion of Tasmanians for the state's important natural places, the group is in a position to implement more conservancy programs. Purchasing their first property will not be the end of the story though, only the beginning. The group will be working to fully restore the ecosystems of Long Point.

Another project is being conducted in conjunction with the King Island Natural Resource Management Group. Here, the two groups are making what they call a 'revolving fund purchase'. Funds are spent on purchasing properties, placing them under conservation covenants to permanently and legally protect them, and reselling them to new owners who will manage them for

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conservation. The funds can then be reused to repeat the process.

Three highly significant 200ha properties on King Island's east coast have been identified for potential purchase.

Under this scheme and with a very generous loan from two private individuals, the TLC has also purchased the Dorothy Reeves Reserve at Port Sorell. This reserve has exceptional flora and fauna values and was purchased after unsuccessful attempts to acquire the land for the public reserve system.

If you want to know more or are interested in purchasing a conservation property contact Jim Mulcahy on 6223 1100 or e.mail [info@tasland.org.au](mailto:info@tasland.org.au)

## Bridport Wildflower Reserve Update.

A small brochure has been printed highlighting the features of the reserve, its walks, its wildlife and its wildflowers. A map indicates the various activities permissible in certain areas. Permits are required to ride horses in the reserve. Dogs are permitted in the reserve providing they are kept on a lease and all faeces removed. Interpretation signage is about to be installed.

## Club Library

A new addition to the club library is "King Island Flora: a field guide." This very thorough coverage of the Island's flora would be an invaluable reference for anyone visiting there. The most used reference in the library at the moment is "The Orchids of Tasmania" by Jones, Wapstra, Tonelli and Harris.

## July Outing - Mt. Cameron Range

This is the area Mike Douglas knows best, and in July he led eight brave field natters along the Dryden Creek Track, to the Wedgetail Peak Track then into a patch of rainforest at the head of Sextus Creek.

In his usual thorough fashion, Mike researched mining history, nomenclature, plants seen en route and presented them in a booklet format to those participating.

In the dry eucalypt forest on Nobbly Knoll the Granite Heath can be seen. This heath was first brought to notice by Charles Taylor in the mid 1950's. In 1985 he wrote: "After about 30 years since I first captured its impression on 8mm cine film, this attractive white Epacris has been identified as *Epacris exserta* var *glabella*. It is closely related to *E. tasmanica*, *E. stuartii*, *E. barbata*, *E. exserta*, and *E. virgata*."

The designation *E. exserta* var *glabella* has not stood the test of time. Prior to that, field naturalists had tentatively identified it as *E. paludosa*—which occurs in Victoria and on Mt. Strzelecki, Flinders Island.

The taxonomic status of this plant is currently unresolved. Readers may be aware of the controversy associated with the proposal to build an irrigation dam on the Meander River and the part played in that argument by the "Meander Heath". The controversy has prompted epacrid specialist Ron Crowden to look again at this taxon.

Mike says the genus will, in due course, come up for treatment in the Flora of Australia Project, where all Australian taxa will be subject to revisionary studies.

## August—A Day at Skemps.

I've been at many outings where it's quite the usual thing to see field nats. poring over reference books trying to identify what they've just seen after a walk. But the scene was just a little different here at Skemps, the field study centre of the Launceston Field Naturalist Club.

Jeff Campbell had given us a talk about the taxonomy of the plant kingdom, about the function of a herbarium and about the process which a botanist goes through when describing a new species. And some of the words he'd used had sent this group of field nats. scuttling off to find a dictionary.

The words that were causing all the interest were *holotype* and *isotype*. The holotype is the original specimen[s] from which a description of a new species is made. The isotype is a duplicate of the type specimen.

But !!! If the type specimen is missing, the specimen selected from the original material is then called the *lectotype*. And if it becomes necessary to replace the type specimen if all the original material is lost or destroyed, this specimen is referred to as the *neotype*.

## Is that clear ? Hmmm.

There were other names that were cause for some joviality on the day. We pondered over the naming of the mothershield fern, and were amused by Jeff's reference to *Notelaea ligustrina*, the native olive. [rooster...not-a-layer]

But the last word of the day that had us pondering its origin was *sangiovese*. This was the type of wine we drank late in the afternoon to signal the end of an enjoyable day.

Special thanks to Jeff Campbell .

Source: Abercrombie, M., Hickman, C.J. and Johnson, M.L. [1980] *The Penguin Dictionary of Biology*, Penguin Books Ltd., Hammondsouth, England.

## September Outing - Tasmania's Frogs

We were fortunate to have Dr. Karyl Michaels from Hobart visit us at St. Helens. Karyl delivered a lecture, showed pictures, and led a field trip to Windmill Lagoon to look for frogs.

Karyl co-ordinates the WWF Australia Frogs! Program for Tasmania and has set up a community action program called *Frogseekers*, which involves people listening and looking for frogs in swamps, wetlands, dams, ponds and backyards. By learning the calls of the various frogs and recording what is heard, more will be learnt about frog distribution and conservation, and a clearer idea of the health of our land and water will be obtained.

Karyl uses the tape/cd 'Natural History and Calls of Tasmanian Frogs' recorded by the Central North Field Naturalist Club in her presentation. It is an excellent reference when identifying frog calls. When in the field, and searching for frogs, Karyl sometimes plays the tape aloud to the frogs to encourage them to respond.

Triangulation is a way of tracking down frogs involving three people. To pinpoint a frog's location, participants surround the frog, keeping roughly equal positions from each other. Each person approaches slowly and carefully pointing as they move closer to where they hear the frog. Where they meet is usually where the frog will be found. The same procedure can be done at night using torches.

The loss of large areas of native vegetation to agriculture and forestry, wetlands being drained and the frequent burning of bushland are constant threats to frog numbers. Agricultural pesticides and chemical fertilizers pouring into drains, creeks and waterways have a negative impact as well.

An exotic minnow, the mosquito fish, *Gambusia holbrooki*, devours native frogs eggs and tadpoles. This fish was recently discovered in the Tamar River and is the subject for concern by DPIWE and conservationists. See more about *Gambusia* on the Threatened Species Network page later in the newsletter.

Out at Windmill Lagoon we were able to find the Smooth Froglet, *Geocrinia laevis* and heard but didn't see the Banjo Frog, *Limnodynastes dumerilii*. It wasn't the ideal place to practice our triangulation as most of the calling seemed to be coming from the water.

In a recent 10 day field trip around Tasmania, data was gathered at 55 sites and the Smooth Froglet was consistently found outside its previously known range.

**October: Big Tree, Lehnors Ridge Road.**

Many of us know the Blue Tier intimately, but Lesley Nicklason and her 'Friends of Blue Tier' were to show us parts of this area quite newly explored on tracks fairly recently marked.

It is the intention of the Friends to give as many people as possible an appreciation of this area considered to be the icon of the Break O'Day Municipality. Despite the recommendations of many eminent scientists—Forestry Tasmania, using the Regional Forest agreement as justification, is logging in this area with total disregard for its importance for the future. Here, in this forest are the North East Forest Snail, the Simpson's Stage Beetle, the Grey Goshawk, the Tiger Quoll and the Wedgetail Eagle, all rare and vulnerable species.

As well as this, all four of the major river systems in the North-East have their headwaters on the Blue Tier. The George River which consists here of the Groom and the Ransom, are Tasmania's best examples of rehabilitated mining water courses and are classified as pristine. Once the foothills have been stripped bare, irreparable damage will be caused.

This is an area rich in mining heritage, indigenous history and home to some of Tasmania's awe-inspiring giant trees. On this trip with Lesley we saw the Blue

Tier Giant with a girth of 19.4 metres.

It is the aim of the group to form the Blue Tier Nature Recreation Area by seeking to have a further 6000 ha protected. Although there were nearly 80 submissions to the Public Land Use Commission during the formation of the RFA, only the area -around the summit was protected. The campaign seeks to include the area from Margurita Ridge [Gould's Country] to Emu Flat [Weldborough] and Lehnors Ridge [Pyengana]. Forestry Tasmania has 158,000 ha of State Forest available to them in the Break O'Day Municipality. This proposal would increase the area protected on the Blue Tier from 5500 ha to 13,600 ha. A small proportion of the total.

Lesley, Beris, Ian..... thanks for taking us on this walk, and good luck with your campaign. Members could assist by lobbying, ringing talkback radio or writing letters.

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**AN END TO CLEARFELLING BY 2010 - OR AN END TO OLD GROWTH FORESTS BY 2010 ?**

"Asking Forestry Tasmania how best to protect old-growth forests is like asking the fox how best to protect the chickens".

A quote from **Taswild** the newsletter of the Wilderness

When you take kids to the beach to look in rock pools, invariably the first creature they'll find is a crab. In fact, that's all they'll be interested in .... all day!

And so it was with this small group of budding marine naturalists who came to Bridport to join Jill and I for our "Family Day at the Beach".

Jill and I had grand ideas of doing some bird watching, we had games to play and we thought we might pick up some rubbish as we combed the Bridport beaches. But we were having such a great time at the "rocky island" that we forgot all the other activities.

It'd be nice to say we planned it, but in actual fact we were lucky with the tide. It was just two days off springs and the little rocky island near the old pier was uncovered and there were things to see here that many of us hadn't seen before....

....like the elephant snail [*Scutus antipodes*]. This snail is common in pools at low tide levels. If you look in the crevices you will see it: the shell, much smaller than the animal, is not unlike a limpet although it has no trace of a spiral shape. Its soft parts are jet black and its hard parts are white. It may reach 15—16 cms overall. It has two long black tentacles at the head which sway about when it moves. It feeds at night on drift algae. In Tasmania the *Scutus* is protected by law from harvesting. ►

Hidden under a rocky ledge we found the purple sea urchin, *Heliocidaris* sp. We were fascinated to observe

## November outing : Cape Portland.

Short report.....

.....9 terrific people  
.....1 very knowledgeable leader  
.....the beautiful remote beaches of Cape Portland  
.....fascinating scenes of windswept dunelands  
.....learning about the waterplants on the banks of the Tregar-  
ron Lagoons  
.....lunch by a curious cemetery  
.....360° views from Vinegar Hill  
.....stories of the past told beside the ruins at Foster Inlet.

Conversations.....

Jeff Jennings, describing the proposed day's activities says  
"We'll walk along this beach, head into the dunes until we  
reach the lagoons, have lunch at the cemetery, then we'll walk  
up to the settlement".

At that moment one person thought "I wonder how I'll go".  
Another person said "That'll test me".

Soon, in the dunes behind the beach we came across a blowout  
where there were the calcified remains of trees covered and  
uncovered by the movement of sand over millennia. We were  
in a lunar landscape. There were upright "trunks" about a me-  
tre tall. There were brittle branches of wood in gloriously frag-  
ile shapes. There were pieces of petrified wood with tiger eye  
bands of black, brown and tan. There were rocks containing  
what looked like fossils. . And on the ground, an abstract of  
calcified wood interspersed with purple mussel shells. We were  
gobsmacked !

Some of us were lagging behind. When we finally caught up  
someone asked me "what were you all looking at when the rest  
of us headed into the dunes?" .

"Oh. . . just things. Revel had a caterpillar in his hand. Pam was  
wondering if anyone knew what the silvery grass was.  
Jill had found a pile of purple seeds blown into a heap at the  
base of a clump of grasses. Louise and Helen were deep in con-  
versation about what it is to be a collector."

It seemed, in fact, that we didn't really want to leave this fasci-  
nating area. For here we were doing what field nats. do best :  
enjoying the outdoors, observing the forces of sun and wind  
and at the same time, marvelling at the fact that we have found  
other people to share it all with.

And as for the people who were worried about whether they  
would make it or not, they really didn't give it another thought.

Thankyou Jeff Jennings for being prepared to share what you  
know about this beautiful area. And for allowing us to enjoy it  
all at such a leisurely pace.

\* For more information about the science of coastal calcification, read Ross  
Coad's account in the last newsletter.

### Devils:

By now, the news of the demise of the Tasmanian Devil has  
been heard by all. But it wasn't until we started seeing pic-  
tures, that we realised just how serious and deadly a disease  
has hit our devil population.

A pamphlet prepared and circulated by the Nature Conserva-  
tion Branch of the D.P.I.W.E. asks for help from members of  
the public. Farmers, hunters, naturalists.

If you find dead devils check them and make the following  
records.

- 1] Sex
- 2] Age - a] Juvenile— up to 4kg [cat sized] no scars  
b] Sub-adult—about 4-6 kgs. with few scars  
c] Adult— more than 6 kgs. with scars on  
face and rump.
- 3] Physical condition: often the fatness of the tail is a good  
indication
  - a] good
  - b] medium
  - c] poor
- 4] Whether the devil appeared diseased. If possible photo-  
graph.
- 5] Where you found it : grid references or such like
- 6] When you found it : date
- 7] If there was some obvious cause of death eg roadkilled.
- 8] If still alive, make a note on its behaviour.

These observations can be sent to Nick Mooney,  
G.P.O. Box 44, Hobart, 7001 or to his e.mail address :  
nick.mooney@dpiwe.tas.gov.au

# A Day at the Beach

not only purple spines but purple tubed feet that reached out past the spines, enabling it to move. In an aquarium, sea urchins may even creep up the vertical surface of glass using these tubed feet. It was a truly beautiful sight - the hard spiky spines with the soft tubed feet waving about.

Of course, sea urchins don't move about as freely as sea stars, [which also have many tubed feet] their bodies being too bulky to withstand the actions of strong waves and their spines making it too difficult for them to manoeuvre among the rocks. Apparently they use either their spines or their teeth to grind away at the rock and gradually excavate a resting hollow from which they can feed on algae and the insides of small shellfish which they open with their tubed feet. Sometimes whole areas of rock are honeycombed with spherical hollows made by sea urchins. Its just as well, Lucinda returned this fellow to the exact spot in which we found him. ▼

How did Nicholas know what he was seeing when he found the decorator crab, for this crab is a master of disguise. Here it was, trying to look like a rock covered in sea weed. One problem though..... it moved and attracted Nic's eye. The decorator crab is in the family *Majidae*—the spider crabs. It's hard to know what this crab looks like without its decoration for its carapace is covered with hairy tufts and it has adorned itself with bits of seaweed which then grow attached to its shell. It's the glimpses of bright orange coloured legs that give it away. It really does look ridiculous and was, of course, the centre of attention for quite some time.

Other finds included the rock pool shrimp with its ten pairs of legs. The first two pairs with nippers, then three pairs of walking legs, then finally five pairs of swimmerets. As well as being able to walk and swim, these shrimps can use their fan-like tail to escape danger with rapid backward jumps.

And there was the eleven armed sea star which had been washed up well and truly beyond its comfort zone. But as we turned it over, we observed the hundreds of tiny legs which are actually hollow tube feet powered by water pressure. This sea star can grow new arms or reproduce by splitting in half and its not uncommon to find specimens that have arms of different length. It has a voracious appetite and eats all kinds of molluscs, echinoderms and invertebrates.



# in the douglas apsley national park

The E road had been seriously eroded by the floods earlier in the year and we were glad we were in 4 wheel drives as we headed upwards into the hills behind the coast. Mike Douglas, our leader today, is very passionate about this national park and recalls his many visits to other parts of the park which are no longer accessible.

The park consists of a deeply dissected dolerite plateau ranging in altitude from 40-700 metres. It is a diverse region of steep, rugged boulder-strewn gorges, several waterfalls and with rocky spires overlooking the coastal plain. It comprises 16,000 hectares, stretches 16 kilometres from north to south and includes the catchment of the Douglas, the Apsley and the Denison Rivers.

Sixty bird species have been recorded in the park and twenty seven mammal species [including eight bats]. The park is an important habitat for the Southern Greyling, one of the country's most endangered fish. But above all else, the area has been reserved for its floral richness with more than ten recognized forest communities. It certainly is the largest remaining single area of undisturbed dry sclerophyll forest and contains a number of poorly reserved endemic native plants.

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It is a small group that has risen to the challenge of this walk, although few among us would have called ourselves "fully fit". The pace set by leader Mike Douglas allows for plenty of verbal exchange, and along the flat but rocky path at the edge of Thompson's Marshes, we certainly manage to catch up on all the news of the past month. Someone remembers meeting *Veronica* here on their first walk into the park, so we are looking for blue flowers, although we suspect it is far too late for those. *Veronica formosa*, named after Saint Veronica and called the Tasmanian speedwell, is certainly here in proliferation, most of the plants being about a metre tall, but it's the wrong time of the year for flowers. We notice its similarity to the hebes and parahebes; indeed some plants appearing in this genus are now classified as Parahebe.

Our search for "blue" however, is completely satisfied, although in an entirely unexpected way !

Here and there we see a purple brachyscome daisy; then some wahlenbergia, but as we walk into the wetter, denser forest, there is a feast of blue berries. *Dianella tasmanica*, the flax lily loves the shady moist sites, as does *Drymophila cyanocarpa*, the native solomons seal. Quite often this plant develops only a single curved stem, with a few berries, but here the plants are quite robust with many branches supporting a profusion of blue berries. They are quite spectacular ! And of course there is *Billardiera longiflora*, the climbing blueberry .

In this 'botanical paradise' there are many more berries. Two specimens of the coffee berry *Coprosma hirtella*, are noted but no berries seen. The fruits of the native olives, *Notelaea ligustrina*, are at varying stages of ripeness and therefore different colours: some white, some red, through to dark purple. Down in a gully where a stream trickled over rocks and in and out of pools, we see the mountain pepper, *Tasmannia lanceolata*. In a patch of wet sclerophyll we see the black [poisonous] berries of *Pimelea drupacea* and here too we are surprised and delighted to find the heart berry, *Aristolelia peduncularis* .

*Cyathodes pendulosa* is a threatened species occurring only on the east coast. The description [1] notes similarities to *C. divaricata* and *C. parvifolia*. We can't be certain, but the plants we see certainly hold their big pink berries in a pedulous fashion.

One of the reasons for protecting this area as a national park was that it contained 14 of the state's endemic Eucalypts. Before our attention turned to berries, we saw *Eucalyptus pauciflora*, *E. rodwayii*, *E. amygdalina*, *E. ovata* and *E. viminalis* on the margins of Thompson's Marshes. In the gorge near the falls is *E. obliqua*, and in the mid-section of the track—*E. delegatensis*.

On one of the many short stops along the way we see a drill hole, a remnant of times when geologists were surveying the area to ascertain the quality of the 160 million year old coal deposits which lay in faults under the dolerite. Areas in the vicinity were worked on a small scale from the 1850's : Dalmyne for example. It seems there is plenty of coal beneath this park but it lies in faults and is "dirty". [ask Revel what that means!]

# news / views

## Some good news and some bad.....

Great news in a recent Advertiser- Scottsdale's Weekly Newspaper. The heading tells it all:

"Clearfelling on Mt. Scott put on hold".....with a sub-heading of "waterwatch highlights deficiencies in planning".

Ever since its inception, Dorset Waterwatch has watched over the upper catchment of the Brid and the Great Forester Rivers. In 2001 it conducted a community based audit which highlighted deficiencies in planning and correctly identifying streams in the area. Forestry Tasmania then withdrew the plan at the time and it had not been reactivated since.

Recently, though, Dorset Waterwatch was called to a Forest Practices Plan briefing one day before the operation was about to begin. During their discussions which took place at the site, the Supervising Officer for Gunns listened to the group's concerns willingly and in a spirit of co-operation, withdrew the starting date of the operation to allow further ground surveys to be conducted.

The group expressed concerns that much of the area was unsuitable for logging and plantation establishment because of a high level of surface and sub-surface water. In other words the plan had failed to correctly identify streams within the coupe—streams which often disappeared underground and then reappeared further down the slope.

Once Gunns considered the ground survey results, nearly two thirds of the coupe which consisted mostly of rainforest, was removed from the logging plan.

Congratulations, Kim and your group for maintaining a serious and professional attitude and relying on factual evidence in all your negotiations. Your group has set a great example to the community showing the positive results of vigilance and hard work.

## Community Based Auditing

Since 1998, Philip Tattersall has been working with a group called Tasmanian Community Resource Auditors looking at new ways to bring community directly into the environmental management process. He believes members of the community are the ultimate "responsible persons" for in their hands lies a vast amount of knowledge and this can play a vital role in resource planning and action.

The test case in 1999-2000 on the Diddleum Plains, began with an examination of the forest practices plan and after a long process of enquiry ended with the above success story.

Since then the TCRA has been involved with a number of other cases and has published a number of journals which consist of case studies containing reports about soil, water, floral and faunal values, archaeology and other upper catchment issues relating to specific logging coupes. As well, there are copies of faxes and letters between individuals, municipal councils, Forestry Tasmania and politicians along with maps, tables and graphs.

The journals have been prepared in a very professional manner and so far have been purchased by people in government departments and municipal councils. Those who want to be truly informed of the issues would find them fascinating reading. I have a

copy to lend.

[L.B.]

## Blue Tier Update:

16/04/04.... A sad day for the Blue Tier ! After many months of campaigning and 34 days encamped at the boom gate on the Anchor Road where logging was expected to take place, the Friends of the Blue Tier lost the fight and were asked to move.

Our friend Deny Walter writes....

"The Friends group, led by Lesley Nicklason and supported by Beris, Lorraine and Fran had kept a peaceful vigil at the entrance to Coupe GC 134d. until early on the afternoon of the 15th April, when a Forestry Tasmania officer read out orders issued by Mr. Creak forcing the group to relocate outside an extraordinarily large exclusion zone. It was at this stage that three of the party decided to TRESPASS."

..... "The F.O.B.T. has worked tirelessly over many months to activate and arouse the St. Helens community and to alert the Break O'Day Council of the potential dangers to the town's water supply if logging were to take place. A community based audit was embarked upon to investigate the basis on which F.T. felt justified to log this sensitive coupe"

Deny was one of those arrested at the site of Coupe 134d and he pleads with readers to "get behind the friends, and support them. There will be more coupes, more exclusion zones, more implacable regulations and curtailments of citizens' freedom of movement. It is the community who, ultimately is responsible for the health and well-being of the environment"

The campaign to save Blue Tier has been based on the potential for nature based tourism, which in the Regional Forest Agreement was recognised as being more valuable than other pursuits.

The F.O.B.T. group have proven the potential of the area over the last year and especially over the last few months - the organised walks hosted by the 'Friends' have attracted 700 people, and that's not including people who have visited the area independently.

Slightly better news....the camp has moved about 1 km up to the Lottah crossroad ...close to the exclusion zone barricade and right in line for all the tourists going up to the Tier. While "the Friends" were at the base camp they had over 300 visitors. They have invited all who care, to visit them for a chat and a cuppa.

## Want any Bioactive Roundup ?

This is a bit cheeky, I know..... but recently I purchased 5 litres of Bioactive Roundup because I couldn't buy a smaller quantity. I'd be interested in re-selling some, so if you're interested, give me a buzz on 63 522122. I guarantee a good price ! And its frog friendly !

## North East Bioregional Network

[some notes from Volume 1, Issue 1 of the Network's Newsletter]

This group was formed in 2003 as a response to ongoing degradation of the environment in N.E. Tasmania.

The group intends to

- protect and restore bioregional ecosystems
- work in partnership with groups such as Tasmanian Land Conservancy to purchase and covenant private land for conservation.
- share information and network with groups and individuals.
- promote the ethical concept of ecological protection and restoration as an intrinsic value.



# news / views

Its newsletter lists the “hotspots” in the North East, gives information about conservation, deforestation, and water issues and notes on upcoming events.

The contacts for the Network are Patricia O’Donnell 63 7222418, Eo Greensticks 0438 571291, and Todd Dudley 63 761049. Membership is \$10 p.a.

Todd has kindly told people about our outings, proving the value of this new network. Thanks Todd.... we hope it works both ways.

**Duncraggen Hill**— report by Mike Douglas  
“I recently visited Duncraggen Hill to view the 130 ha of logging now underway”.

Remember, Mike took us on a visit to the area in January 2003?

“I had been told by Forestry Tasmania’s planning officer that selective logging would take place, but was rather disappointed by the scene on the slopes above Platypus Pool” .

Evidence of yet another definition of what “selective logging” means.

“In effect F.T. have carried out a clearfelling operation with retention of seed trees and some small patches of regrowth only”.

## Next Round of Green Corps Projects.

Green Corps is a Commonwealth Government initiative delivered by Job Futures and Greening Australia. Programs run for 6 months and provide on-the-job and accredited training in Conservation Land Management and Youth Development for young Australians.

Any 17-20 year old is invited to apply for the upcoming projects. Interested applicants need a genuine interest in their own leadership development; a willingness to be part of an educational program and be prepared to make significant contributions to environmental and community projects. Green Corps is a positive, proactive, educational opportunity for young people. The program aims to provide participants with confidence and the skills for any future work or study.

There are positions available for the following new projects:

Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden Project: Based out of Burnie, focusing on horticultural, building and interpretive projects.

Sykes Sanctuary Project: Based out of Railton this project will be focusing on rehabilitating the Sykes Sanctuary, undertaking flora and fauna surveys and constructing picnic tables and walking tracks.

Southern Midlands Show Team: Based in Glenorchy and the Southern Midlands. Tasks will include stone bridge restoration, tree planting and preparing and helping to run the Royal Hobart Show.

Dru Point Project (Start date August 2004): Based in Margate.

If you know anybody who would be interested in participating in a Green Corps program, please pass on this information or ask them to contact Neri Jamieson in the Green Corps State Office on (03) 62236377 or Email: [nerij@tas.greeningaustralia.org.au](mailto:nerij@tas.greeningaustralia.org.au).

Alternatively they can apply on the Green Corps website: [www.greencorps.com.au](http://www.greencorps.com.au)

## How tall can a tree grow?

Source: Internet article by Michael Hopkin.

It might sound like an unanswerable question, but researchers working in California's redwood forests have placed the theoretical height limit at 130 metres: the height of a 35-storey skyscraper.

They discovered that despite the moistness of the ground far below, the leaves at the treetops struggle to get enough water, so they are effectively living in constant drought. The difficulty of getting water so far up into the sky is what ultimately constrains growth, suspects the research team.

For California redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*), the tug of gravity and the friction between the water and the vessels through which it flows mean that fluid cannot be dragged any higher than 122-130 metres, the researchers conclude in this week's *Nature*<sup>1</sup>.

Similar growth limitations could apply to other species around the world, such as the eucalyptus trees of Tasmania, which can exceed 70 metres, Koch says. Although shorter than redwoods, they may also have a theoretical 'drought ceiling', he suggests. "They could experience the same water gradient but at a lower height."

Reference: Koch, G. W., Sillett, S. C., Jennings, G. M. & Davis, S. D. *Nature*, **428**, 851 - 854, doi:10.1038/nature02417 (2004). **[Article]**

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## in the Douglas Apsley National Park contd.

The park is dominated geologically by Jurassic dolerite and Triassic sediments and most of the park's landscape has been moulded by the action of water flowing over millions of years. As we lunch at Heritage Falls, we imagine this impressive place in a time of flood and pondered the massive energy brought to bear over the ages to form such an impressive drop with its deep plunge pool at the base.

We are lucky with the weather. A few drops of rain at lunch time didn't bother us really, it only made the rocks a little slippery on the return upriver. Here's Mike with his favourite piece of bushwalking equipment. →

### References:

1. Threatened Plants of the Tasmanian Central East Coast by J.B. Kirkpatrick, M.J. Brown & A. Moscal.  
Draft Management Plan for State Forests in the Douglas Apsley Region by Forestry Commission Tasmania.  
"A Victory for Ecological Integrity" by Helen Gee 1990.

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### **Other plants seen but not included in report:**

Acacia mucronata— around river margins  
Acacia mearnsii [black wattle in flower]  
Leptospermum lanigerum  
Melaleuca squamea—widespread in Thompson's Marshes  
M. ericifolia—river margins etc.  
Hibbertia riparia [guinea flower] rather different in appearance from H. riparia in Bridport area.  
Tetratheca pilosa  
Westringea rubiaefolia endemic.  
Davesia ulicifolia [native gorse]  
Leionoma squameum subs., retusum [formerly Phebalium]  
Callistemon viridiflorus [green bottlebrush] Common on the first half of the track. Endemic.  
Hakea epiglottis S shaped fruits. Endemic  
Beyeria viscosa [pinkwood] with distinctive three lobed woody fruit. Near H.F. camp.  
Micranthemum hexandrum  
Monotoca glauca [currant wood]  
Bedfordia salicina [cabbage musk]



# The North-Eastern Naturalist

Issue 163 : JUNE 2004

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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.**

## **JUNE 19th**

[date changed to avoid school holidays]

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & GUEST SPEAKER**

Meet at Brooker's - 482 East Minstone Road, Scottsdale at 10.30 am. Annual General Meeting begins promptly at 11 am. This will include some special presentations. Lunch 12—1 pm. Then at 1pm. Guest speaker : Dr. Bob Mesibov will deliver a power point presentation titled "**Millipedes, Maps and Mysteries**" revealing some remarkable observations about the distribution of millipedes in Tasmania.

## **JULY 10th**

### **CAMERON REGIONAL RESERVE**

Mike Douglas has prepared and will lead an easy 4.5 km.walk beneath the Mt. Cameron Range. This walk includes a forgotten branch of the historic Mt. Cameron water race and other interesting features. Meet at 10am. On the Waterhouse Road, 7.2 kms east of the Old Port Road junction and 3.3 kms. West of Gladstone [Grid Ref. 820652] Mike's ph....63 561243.

## **AUGUST 14th**

### **QUEEN VICTORIA MUSEUM : LAUNCESTON**

Here's another fantastic opportunity to see behind the scenes at the Queen Victoria Museum. Peter Duckworth has agreed to show us the bird collection. This will be a two hour visit beginning promptly at the front entrance of the Royal Park section of the Museum at 12pm. Suggest people have lunch beforehand. Questions ? Ph. Lou.

## **SEPTEMBER 11th**

### **NORTH EAST PARK : SCOTTSDALE**

It will be three months since the completion of the Green Corps project in the park, so its a good time to inspect the changes and have a working bee in the endemic section. Not heavy work....light weeding, planting out, moving interpretation signage etc. Then afternoon tea at Jill and Ron's across the road. Come whenever you can from 10am. onwards.

► **Members are reminded that subs are now due: \$15 at A.G.M. or by mail to the Treasurer.**

## Notes from the fungi foray on Mt. Elephant...May 1st.

We had met in the warmth of the dining room at the Pancake Parlour and Sarah had given us a pretty thorough introduction to the world of fungi. We were a mixed bunch. The Central North members had driven big distances to join us, and the feeling was one of conviviality. Sarah's last words as we set out on the foray were "go slowly, stay together, and share what we see where its growing before we cut and collect".

For some, it took five minutes to get to the turn-off to Mt. Elephant Road. For others, it took five minutes to advance one metre, such was the diversity of fungi along the roadside.

Quoted at the time "We must never be anxious to complete the journey" [someone]

Important equipment ..... a bucket, a magnifying glass or hand lens, a knife, maybe a trowel for digging and a mirror. The latter to view undersides of fungi.

Its important to learn a few acronyms before you start.

l.b.f.....little brown fungus.

a.b.m.....another blooming mycena

b.f.g.....referring to a fungus that's a bit far gone

t.f.g.....too far gone

At the same time creative attempts are always rewarded

Carl and Robina told an amusing story about gathering enough 'slippery jacks' last season to make a soup. They gave some to Pam, but after experiencing the unexpected laxative effect of the mushrooms, were quick to rush next door to warn her. Luckily the soup was still in Pam's freezer.

There we were on Mt. Elephant. It seemed serendipitous that Jacinta should find a small [was it plastic or china?] elephant a bit broken and dirty sitting on a fallen log by the side of the road. It had probably been ages since anyone had scoured this roadside with such keen eyes.

A useful reference for beginners might be "Australian Fungi Illustrated" by I.R. McCann.

**A very successful day !! Special thanks to Sarah for sharing her knowledge and to Pam for her generous hospitality.**

### Fungi list

*Amanita muscaria* fly agaric  
*Amanita xanthocephala* pretty grisette  
*Amauroderma rude* red-staining stalked polypore

*Boletus sp.* bolete  
*Calocera sp* pretty horn  
*Clavaria amoena* yellow club coral fungus  
*Clavulina sp ?* coral  
*Daldinia concentrica* cramp balls  
*Exidia sp.* witch's butter  
*Flamulina velutipes* velvet foot  
*Galerina hypnorum* moss galerina  
*Geastrum* earth star

*Heterotextus miltinus* yellow jelly bells  
*Hypholoma sp.* sulphur tuft  
*Macrolepiota clelandii* slender parasol mushroom ]

*Marasmius elegans* velvet marasmius  
*Marasmius sp.* maze gill  
*Mycena austrororida* slimy white mycena  
*Mycena sanguinolenta* bleeding mycena  
*Mycena viscidocruenta* ruby mycena  
*Peziza (repanda?)* spreading brown cup fungus

*Psilocybe subaeruginosa* blue-staining psilocybe

*Rickenella fibula* little pin  
*Russula sp. (White)*  
*Schizophyllum commune* split gill  
*Stereum hirsutum* hairy stereum  
*Stereum ostrea* gold-lip stereum  
*Stropharia semiglobata* dung round head  
*Trametes versicolour* rainbow fungus  
*Uredomycladium* rust fungus (on wattle)  
*Zelleromyces sp.* gastroid lactarius  
*Fomitopsis lilacinogily* lilac shelf fungus

List Compiled by Sarah Lloyd

**A letter written by Sarah Lloyd on behalf of Birds Australia, & Birds Tasmania opposing the subdivision of land next to the Winifred Curtis Reserve, Scamander.**

I'm including this letter here to reinforce what we members know and feel are the values of the Winifred Curtis reserve. The information may be useful if members are involved in representations to B.O'Day Council or feel moved to make public comment about the issue. Ed.

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**REGARDING: Conservation significance of the land at Scamander proposed for a Subdivision (DA 432-03) by Smartgrowth Integrated Architecture and Urban Design Pty Ltd and Numero Ace Pty Ltd.**

Over the past several years I have made several visits to the Winifred Curtis Reserve and environs with field naturalists groups and with members of Birds Tasmania. We have all been impressed not only with the botanical richness of the area and the number of bird species present (see attached list) but also with the health of the area in question. There are very few non-native plant "weeds" and the eucalypts are showing no signs of stress or dieback. I believe that it is one of the last remaining intact habitats of its type along the east coast as similar areas have been cleared for housing development in recent years.

The area comprises a diversity of vegetation types. On the western side, where the proposed 101-lot subdivision is to be located, the forest is dominated by ironbark *Eucalyptus sieberi* and coastal peppermint *E. amygdalina*. To the east of this area is coastal white gum *E. viminalis* forest with the wetter low lying areas dominated by Black (Swamp) Gum *E. ovata* with a dense tall understorey layer of paperbark *Melaleuca ericifolia*.

Inland from the dunes are stunted honeysuckle *Banksia marginata*, prickly Moses *Acacia verticillata* with an understorey of sags *Lomandra longifolia*. Throughout the area - and particularly under the ironbark and peppermint - is a rich diversity of understorey and ground layer plants. These are characteristic of coastal heathlands, which comprise some of the most botanically rich areas in the state.

This variety of vegetation types supports a high diversity of insects and other invertebrates, many fungi species and a corresponding diversity of birds. Coastal areas in Tasmania contain some of the best bird habitat in the state. This is because the mosaic of vegetation types, such as dune vegetation, dry sclerophyll forests, wet swampy areas and lagoons all occur within a relatively small area. As well, the variety of plant species means that there is always something in flower to provide a year round food source for nectar feeding species such as Eastern Spinebill and Crescent Honeyeaters. These nomadic bird species are dependent on the rich nectar source provided by plants such as heath *Epacris impressa* and flowering banksias to sustain them, especially during lean times in winter. Similarly, nomadic flocks of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, a bird that is believed to be declining because of the loss of suitable breeding habitat, periodically visit coastal heathlands to feed on the flowers and old cones of the banksias.

Some particularly important habitat features in the area include:

**Large trees:** A range of bird species including the endemic Yellow-throated Honeyeater, Black-headed Honeyeater and Yellow Wattlebird favour large trees as they provide a greater area on which to forage.

As well, studies have demonstrated that eucalypts from the subgenus *Symphyomyrtus*, such as the white gums and black gums found at the site, have significantly higher nutrients in their leaves than those of eucalypts from the subgenus *monocalyptus* and support a greater number and variety of bird species.

**Logs and litter** on the ground are essential components of a healthy ecosystem. Fungi, which are vitally important to the health of most plants through mycorrhizal relationships, play an important role in breaking down this dead wood, returning nutrients to the soils in the process. Insects and other invertebrates move into the dead wood after the fungi have initiated decay and these in turn become an important food source for birds, reptiles, frogs and small mammals. The cool environments under logs provide refuges for a range of frog and insect species.

**The wetlands and lagoons** situated between the dunes and the forest support large animal populations, particularly invertebrates, frogs and birds. These areas are especially vulnerable to excessive nutrient levels that can build up where this sort of development occurs and where the disposal of stormwater has not been adequately addressed. A build up of nutrients causes undesirable algae to flourish and smother plant growth. Increased turbidity also causes the health of wetlands to deteriorate, with a reduction of invertebrates from a wide diversity of species to just the common species.

**The dense understorey vegetation** present in the area provides shelter from predators, nesting sites and nesting material for a range of species including the Brown Thornbill, Superb Fairy-Wren and the endemic Tasmanian Scrubwren. It is also suitable habitat for a range of small ground dwelling mammals such as the Eastern Barred Bandicoot and New Holland Mouse.

There is suitable habitat and/or foraging sites within the area in question for a range of threatened animals, including:

**Swift Parrots**, currently listed as endangered, (Commonwealth Endangered Species protection Act 1992) have been observed in the area foraging on the flowers of black gum. These migratory birds breed only in Tasmania returning in August/September each year. One of their main migration routes is the narrow strip of land within 5 kilometers of the state's East Coast.

Breeding Swift Parrots are nearly always associated with Blue Gum (*E. globulus*) and black gum and the flowering of these trees, particularly blue gum, triggers their breeding. However, in years when this tree does not flower sufficiently to support breeding, the flowers of the black gum provide an important alternative. One of the continuing threats to the survival of the Swift Parrot is the clearing of their food source.

Post breeding, these birds disperse widely throughout the state. Nectar from the flowers and leop insects that form on the foliage of trees such as white gum (*E. viminalis*) provide important sustenance later in the season.

These fast flying birds are particularly susceptible to collisions with windows, fences and other structures in their flight paths. This proposed development, to be located in one of their key breeding areas and on a major migration route, is likely to have an adverse impact on this species.

### **Eastern Barred Bandicoot**

This species is considered of high conservation significance in Tasmania because suitable habitat is being cleared for agriculture, forestry or housing developments. It favours areas of bush adjacent to grassy areas and requires dense vegetation for breeding, shelter and protection from predators. Thus the area in question is likely to provide suitable habitat for this species.

### **New Holland Mouse**

In Tasmania the status of this small native rodent has recently been upgraded from rare to endangered because it is restricted to the coastal dry heathlands in the northeast and east of the state. The area in question is likely to provide suitable habitat for this species.

It requires areas with botanically diverse, dense vegetation because these areas provide suitable foraging plants and protected breeding areas. These nocturnal mice feed mainly on seeds, flowers, leaves, fungi and invertebrates. The biggest threats to their survival includes habitat loss through vegetation clearing and coastal development, predation by dogs and cats and weed invasion in botanically rich areas which makes habitat unsuitable.

### **Conclusion:**

The development proposed for this site is totally unsuitable given the inherently unstable sandy soils, the botanically rich nature of the area and the wealth of animal species it contains.

Any attempt to clear only sections of the block in the hope that the remaining vegetation will be unaffected by the development is to misunderstand the sensitive ecology of such areas.

Any clearing favours the invasion of feral species, both plant and animal. Residents in such subdivisions invariably choose to plant gardens featuring extensive areas of lawn and garden beds using non-native plant species. Most of these plants require heavy applications of fertilizers to survive in the nutrient deficient soils characteristic of coastal areas, and many will inevitably become weeds and escape into the uncleared areas. This will change the floristic makeup of the botanically diverse vegetation eventually rendering it unsuitable for species such as the New Holland Mouse, and degrading the habitat for native bird species.

The excessive nutrients, both from stormwater and from cultivated gardens will also adversely affect the uncleared areas as the botanically rich coastal vegetation has evolved over the millennia to cope with the inherently low nutrient levels of sandy soils. Coastal heathland plants are unable to survive in areas where additional nutrients have been applied – either deliberately or inadvertently.

The location of houses and holiday cabins on the unstable sandy soils will have an adverse impact on the wetlands because eroding soils will increase turbidity in the water. Additional nutrients will also have an adverse effect on the wetlands and lagoons.

Chemical pollutants go hand in hand with such developments as residents wash cars, spray weeds etc. Not only will the wetlands and lagoons on the land itself suffer, but nearby Hendersons Lagoon, which provides shelter and foraging areas for a significant number of bird species, including Black Swan, Australian Pelican, Hoary-headed Grebe, Chestnut Teal, Pacific Black Duck and White-faced Heron may also eventually be affected.

Domestic animals that belong to the residents of the subdivision, or those roaming from other areas in the town will have greater access because of the extensive networks of roads that are proposed. These animals will have an adverse impact on the birds and animals that now inhabit the area.

**This botanically rich area contains vital foraging and breeding habitat for a large range of invertebrates, frogs, reptiles, mammals and birds and should be seen as an important asset for the community rather than one to be cleared for development.**