

The North-Eastern Naturalist

ISSUE 168 MARCH 2006

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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.**

MARCH 11th

MOULTING LAGOON. A rare chance to visit the newly proclaimed Long Point Reserve. Meet at **11am** at Grange Road turn-off just south of where the Lake Leake Road meets the Tasman Highway. Will need some 4WD's for the access across private property so we will car-pool. Bring lunch and binoculars. See more detail under heading 'Why come to Long Point ?' on page 2. Contact: Helen Preston 6375 1565, Lou Brooker 63522122

MARCH 25th & 26th

FEDERATION OF FIELD NATURALISTS WEEKEND GET-TOGETHER . Our club is hosting this weekend, so please support us by coming. Lots more info. on page 2. Contact person : Lou Brooker 63 522122

APRIL 29th

FUNGI FORAY - KIM & PETER EASTMAN'S - NORTH S'DALE. Learn heaps about the fungi at Kim and Peters' from two of Tasmania's experts in this field, Genevieve Gates and David Ratkowsky and visiting world renowned mycologist, Machiel Noordeloos. Meet at 9.45am. at Kendall's Hotel Scottsdale, if you want guidance to 1425 Forester Road, North Scottsdale. Otherwise.....see you there at 10am.

JUNE 10th

MIKE DOUGLAS EXPLORES GRANITE POINT, BRIDPORT.

A leisurely 3km. return walk around the rocks to Adams Beach. Looking at plants, rocks and conservation issues. Meet at Old Pier, 10am. A set of notes will be available for a small fee. Leader: Mike Douglas 6356 1243.

JULY 8th

A.G.M. AT THE HOME OF RON AND JILL HARRIS.

Meet 11am. 35 Ringarooma Road, Scottsdale.. Inspect the regeneration work Ron and Jill have undertaken. Jill will deliver a picture / talk about Deal Island. Bring something to share for lunch. Contact: Jill 63 523033.



Our club usually meets on the second Saturday of the month, but members will notice some changes from the usual format including no outing in May, two outings in March, and a later date for the April outing.

Club news and reports

Vale Nic van den Bosch

In the latter part of Nic's life, we saw him only at A.G.M.'s but he was still, never-the-less very enthusiastic about catching up with his friends in the club.

Nic and Corrie brought their family up in Tullendeena where Nic specialised in growing hot-house tomatoes and cucumbers. They joined Field Nats. in 1974 when Nic retired and were regulars on outings and served as our delegates to Federation meetings. Nic was Treasurer from 1979 until 1985.

Nic was well known for his passion for growing cymbidium orchids and in the field had a particular interest in birds.

Nic became a life member of our club in 1986 and we pay tribute again to his contribution to the club.

Why come to Long Point ?

Long Point has been rated among the highest priorities for conservation in the state. It includes important values such as native grasslands, woodlands, saltmarshes and wetlands.

The list of threatened species that inhabit the property is extensive and includes Tasmanian devils and Eastern curlews, endangered migratory wading birds that spend summers in Australia after their breeding season in Siberia, 10,000 km away. Other smaller wading birds make similar remarkable journeys from Japan and China. Birds such as the red-necked stint, the whimbrel and the bar-tailed godwit can be found on the shores of these wetlands.

Now owned by the Tasmanian Land Conservancy, the Long Point Reserve had its official opening a couple of weeks ago, so it's a privilege to be able to visit the reserve so soon. We initially thought we may kayak across the Lagoon, and this is still a possibility, but will happen on Sunday. Helen Preston is arranging for those who wish to, to camp on her friends' property nearby. **So please let Lou know if you intend to stay and camp and kayak the next day.**

Tasmanian Land Conservancy News.

Very much in the news lately and with success at Recherche Bay, this group has also bought an outstanding piece of coastal salt-marsh and saline grassland in the head of Simpson's Bay at South Bruny Island.

The 42 ha site provides conditions for twelve different vegetation communities and because it has very little human disturbance, it is a hotspot for birds, particularly raptors.

Lutregala Marsh is also known as an important site for invertebrates specialised for saline conditions, hence a varied population of crustaceans and molluscs.

The purchase of this site was made possible by a number of generous donations.

Federation Weekend : March 25th, 26th.

It is our club's turn to host the Federation of Field Naturalists Weekend Get together and we have booked the Mt. Cameron Field Study Centre. Some members will remember the excellent weekend Jill and Revel organised in 2003, when the venue was Bridport. We hope this one will be as enjoyable. The weekend is usually attended by a hand-full of members from each club and provides interesting cross fertilization of ideas. The theme for the weekend is "**Aspects of Landscape : granite country.**"

People usually arrive casually on Friday night. There will be walks on Saturday and Sunday morning and dinner and a talk delivered by Mike Douglas, with pictures by Jeff Jennings on Saturday night.

Jill and I have decided to organise the Saturday evening meal and would really value assistance from as many members as possible. The meal will consist of a barbeque and salads and sweets. **Please contact Lou if you can help with a salad.** If you decide you can help but are not able to attend the weekend, that's o.k., I can collect contributions on Friday the 24th.

Cost is \$10 per person per night, and \$15 for the meal. We could organise a discount if club members attend AND contribute a salad !

All you need to do if you'd like to be part of the weekend, is ring me or email me. [L.B.]

Travellers :

Joy Rayner and Clover Davey in company with their daughters Ann and Meryl are enjoying a cruise in South America at the moment. They flew to Santiago and will cruise down the Chilean Archipelago, around Cape Horn and then to the Antarctic continent, back up to Ushuaia, then to Buenos Aires.

National Book Council Invitation.

All Field Nats. are invited to attend a meeting of the National Book Council of Tasmania on March the 15th when the speaker will be Janet Fenton author of **A Century Afield**, the history of the Tasmanian Field Naturalist Club.[ie. the Hobart Club] Janet Fenton, who is the club's president now, is a daughter of Deny King, of Melaleuca fame. She developed her love of nature during her childhood in Tasmania's remote South-West.

The meeting will start at 1.15 pm in the Phil Leonard Room at the Launceston Library and coffee and sandwiches will be available from 12.45 onwards for \$5.

news and reports

Crown Land Assessment & Classification Project.

A project begun in 2005 and continuing until June 2006, will assess and classify unallocated Crown Land and public reserves in Tasmania. There are approximately 9000 parcels of land to be assessed. The project is a response to commitments under the Regional Forest Agreement on Financial Reform between the State Government and Tasmanian Councils.

Following extensive consultations with the public in each of the municipalities, the parcels of land will be recommended as suitable for the following uses:

- a] reservation under the Nature Conservation Act for significant natural/cultural values.
- b] reservation for public use as a public reserve.
- c] transfer to other public ownership such as local government, forestry etc.
- d] designation to major development such as tourism development or housing.
- e] sale of land which is not suitable for reservation or for public use.

In Dorset, some properties along rivers, including the Great For-ester, Tomahawk, Boobyalla, Ringarooma and St. Patrick are suggested to become Conservation Areas to protect water quality and riparian vegetation communities.

Areas adjoining the Lower Ringarooma River Ramsar site, which is a wetland of international significance, have been suggested for reservation.

Some of our members have lodged comments and suggested allocations for areas they consider ought to be reserved. Although the date for consultation in the Dorset municipality has closed, it's possible to comment on suggested Break O'Day allocations until early April.

Information about the project is available on www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au/clac

News from Jo Colahan : email 2/11/2005.

"You may have heard I am now out of Tas - in NSW between gold mines and cherry farms with grapes in the future. Great to be on the move again - but of course sorry not to participate in things like Field Nats".

More De-marking of Tracks.

The northeast highlands trail was first walked in January 2001. Over the next 5 years countless hours were spent by a group of dedicated N.E. walkers, led by Lesley Nicklason re-walking sections, taping the track, further exploring the area, writing track notes and mapping the track.

In 2003 the northeast highlands trail was the cover story of outdoor magazine (having been walked by the editor, photographer and coordinator in November 2002). Interest in the track grew to a point where it could no longer be ignored and in 2004 Forestry Tasmania announced that they would fund a feasibility study into the proposed track. Early in 2005 the fantastic but unauthorised

walking tracks to the Blue Tier Giant (fattest tree in Tassie), Crystal Hill and the Groom River Trail were closed by Forestry Tasmania. Now, almost the entire track has been "untaped" by FT staff.

In October 2005 the report and feasibility study were released and while the independent track consultant employed by Forestry Tas. to conduct an on-the-ground survey found that "a *very real potential exists for a track from Mt. Victoria to the Blue Tier*", the track has been found "unviable" by Forestry Tasmania staff who reviewed the survey and conducted the feasibility study. The main points against the walk are the supposed expense of the track, and the lack of "features". Forestry's survey claims that most of the walk has "little to no scenic value".

The benefits of a multi-day walking track through Tasmania's northeast Highlands are many.....the track links numerous existing walks and is able to be walked as a series of day walks opening the way for a vehicle assisted multi day walk or a wilderness experience for the self sufficient! The track offers walkers a fantastic array of forest types, visits stunning waterfalls, crosses pristine streams, contains many interesting relics from the past mining era, offers sensational views, unusual rock formations, towering tree ferns, Gondwana forests, glacial refugia etc... and is habitat for a great many species of native wildlife. Protection of a continuous tract of land through the northeast - from Mount Victoria to the Blue Tier would bring social, environmental and economic benefit to the communities of the northeast and would require the protection of areas of forest which link the existing Mt. Victoria, Frome and Blue Tier Reserves. The area required for protection is minimal considering that the Bass Forests still contain approximately half a million hectares of unprotected forest - **most likely destined for the pulp mill if it goes ahead.**

The entire Groom River Valley and Blue Tier foothills remain unprotected with future logging planned. The forests surrounding Emu Road (behind Weldborough) are also unprotected and parts of this area have been clearfelled and converted to plantation. The Star of Peace rainforest is also unprotected - protection of these key areas is critical to maintain a continuous tract of forest through the northeast.

The sheoak skink.

Recently while poking about on the Blue Tier I came across the longest skink I'd ever seen. In fact it was so long, it looked at first as though it might have been a small snake, for it measured about 25cm's. I was indeed relieved when I saw legs and feet.

Fairly unremarkable on its topline, when turned over, it revealed an intricate pattern on its underbelly. The whole length of its body carried a beautiful geometric pattern consisting of three colours : black, a mustardy yellow and tan. It was stunning !

So I set about getting an i.d. on this skink and sent my pictures to an address I found for the Tasmanian Museum in Hobart. I had a very prompt reply telling me it was the sheoak skink. The address is : tmagmail@tmag.tas.gov.au

A little later, Jill Harris sent me a page out of a book

Visiting Coal Falls.

Report by Mike Douglas, who led the walk.

Coal Falls, altitude 1200m., is on Storys Creek—high on the southeast slopes of Ben Lomond, above the abandoned mining town of Storys Creek.

There is no track, so the 12 participants ‘boulder hopped’ up the bed of the creek, reaching the falls in time for lunch. A good introduction to bushwalking for visitor Inge from Belgium.

Later, most of the group ascended to the edge of the plateau [1300m] for a panoramic view including Mt. Wellington, Freycinet Peninsula and the nearby precipices of Denison Crag.

The falls are of modest height and consist of horizontal beds of sandstone, shale and coal of Triassic age. These sediments are part of a sequence known to geologists as the Parmeener Super Group.

In the late Triassic, 230 - 210 million years ago, the area consisted of flood plains and swamps. Plant matter [rushes, conifers, ginkgos and club mosses] was deposited and compressed - eventually becoming coal.

About 165 million years ago, as Gondwana began to split apart, molten magma rose through the crust and spread out between the flat sediments to form thick dolerite sills. At the end of the Cretaceous Period [about 70 million years ago] the Ben Lomond horst - an upthrust block - was formed by faulting. The overlying sediments were removed by erosion, leaving the resistant dolerite cap seen today.

Although the Ben Lomond plateau had two ice caps during the last phase of the Pleistocene glacials [29 000 - 13 000 years ago], the extensive dolerite block fields seen below the cliffs and also on the plateau, are the result of periglaciation or mass wasting - in which water, freezing and expanding in cracks, split up the rocks and slowly moved them downhill.

The Ben Lomond blockfields are amongst the largest in the world.

It was surprising to find an audit [horizontal drive] at Coal Falls. One can only wonder how the extracted coal was transported - pack horses?

The Examiner of May 15th 1874, has an account of coal seam investigations on Ben Lomond up to an altitude of about 1200 m. but that seems to have been to the west of the Storys Creek area. Eventually the Stanhope Colliery [1904—57] was established at Buffalo Creek.

Some interesting plants were noted on this walk. [E = Tasmanian endemic] The eucalypt cover, almost up to the falls, was provided by contorted, old growth white top, Eucalyptus delegatensis subsp. tasmaniensis [E], with a fair amount of regrowth, happily growing amongst masses of boulders.

A rare, white-fruited form of cheeseberry, Cyathodes glauca [E] was plentiful as was the pink mountain berry Leptecophylla juniperina subsp. parvifolia [E]. Others worthy of mention were a daisy bush with wedge-shaped leaves, Ozothamnus rodwayi [E]; the shrubby form of the Alpine Tea Tree, Leptospermum rupestre [E]; the purple flowered Spathulate Daisy, Brachyscome spathulata and the Needle Bush, Hakea lissosperma. Mountain Rocket, Bellenden montana, was also in flower.

Higher up we saw belts of Archers Gum, Eucalyptus archeri [E] This is classified as a nationally rare species. It is the most elevated tree species on Ben Lomond - the Tasmanian Snow Gum, E. coccifera, being absent from the northeastern mountains.

We will return to see more of this part of the Ben Lomond National Park.

Report by Mike Douglas, who led the walk.

'Bugs, Birds, Bettongs and Bush' in which there was the following :

"The common names of some animals can be confusing. The sheoak skink [*Cyclodomorphus casuarinae*] is a good example. You would assume that the name sheoak skink would indicate a skink with an affinity for the sheoak tree - now *Allocasuarina*, but previously *Casuarina*. However, this is not so.

Often, the Latin name is the clue to the origin of the common name. In the case of the sheoak skink, the specific name *Casuarinae* is similar to the old Latin name of the sheoak tree *casuarina*. In Latin *casuarina* means "like the drooping feathers of a cassowary", which alludes to the drooping foliage of the tree.

However, the sheoak skink is certainly not like the feathers of the cassowary. The first collected specimens of sheoak skinks were procured during the voyage of Nicholas Baudin, the French explorer who mapped the coast of Tasmania in 1801-02. A schooner used in this expedition was called the *Casuarina*. So the skink was named after a schooner not a tree.

Cyclodomorphus casuarinae is named after a schooner, which was named after a tree, which was named after the cassowary's feathers. It could just as easily have been called the *casuarina* skink or the cassowary feather skink."

Surely members of our club are finding out little tit-bits of information every day and have stories like the one above.

I wrote this story to show how easy it is to put something together for the newsletter, and urge others to consider making a contribution.

Trent water Bridport Planning

Gwen Armstrong

Tuckers

De-marking of North Eastern Highlands walk. Email Lesley

List of books in the Field nats library.

Old newsletter items September 1983 Volume vs velocity [quote]
From Kayak Club Nr. 83

Recent outings..... a summary.

Waratahs on the Blue Tier : November 2005.

"Reviving the old tradition of visiting the Tier when the waratahs are in flower," she said in the blurb for this outing. She had planned the outing at the right time; the waratahs were flowering. She took them to the correct geographical location.....well, almost. But how many waratah flowers did they see ? Two !! Very high up on very tall slender trees . How pathetic was that !!

Did these fifteen field nats. mind, though ? It would appear not. For they happily walked through ancient rainforest stopping to examine the "middens" of discarded shells of *Anoglypta launcestonensis* and *Caryodes dufresnii*, admiring the amazing bracket fungi, *Ganoderma applanatum* with its pure white undersides, and photographing the eye-catching strawberry bracket fungus, *Tyromyces pulcherrimus*.

In fact, so impressed with the day were they, that they planned another visit, next time past their lunch stop by a little stream and on to McGough's Lookout. Forget about waratahs !!

Tam O'Shanter Bay : December 2005.

Now, in terms of the leader of the day being organised.....this outing was a very different experience.

Under the guidance of geologist, Henry Shannon, we visited Graeme Smith's farm on the ancient sand dunes, now rolling pasture overlooking magnificent coastline and heard the story its formation long ago.

South Sister : February 2006.

It was refreshing to have newcomers on this outing; we welcomed five of them and enjoyed their company.

Todd Dudley, who through the North East Bioregional Network, is leading a WildCountry project linking landscapes in the northeast in order to protect important habitats and ecosystems, was the leader for the day. He showed us some of the 1000 ha. in the area protected by covenants.

We walked through *Eucalyptus brookeriana*, a threatened forest community recognised by the RFA. This forest has a diverse understorey with *Correa reflexa* reaching two metres in height. Again we saw the white form of the cheese berry seen by some on the Coal River walk.

The day was finished off in a very relaxed fashion at the pancake barn where we were shouted a feast by Pancake Pam.

The St Helens Landcare and Coastcare group is raising funds for a court case to challenge the establishment of a resort right next to the Winifred Curtis Reserve.

For those who want to contribute, the address is:

St. Helens Landcare and Coastcare Inc.
24751 Tasman Highway,
RSD ST MARYS 7215.

Exploring Uppper Scamander Number 87

Velvet worm nr. 90 & 107

Lower Marsh Creek report Michael Garret Number 118 & 119

Velvet worm report Bob Mesibov number 102

The Blue Tier

A brief History

The Blue Tier is a mountain plateau 100 sq kilometres in area, rising at the highest point to 802 metres. It was described by the early settlers as a mountain of tin, and it was the discovery of tin that brought the early pioneers to the mountain. They discovered cassiterite, the ore of tin in 1880, in heaps behind rocks in the creek and the river beds. This began a rush to the mountain and a number of open cut and underground mines were opened. Lottah thrived at the turn of the century supporting schools churches and hotels.

Mining continued until the 1930's when low tin prices and the depression caused mining activities to peter out.

After the large mines closed, tributers and tin scratchers set up camp alongside their workings and eked out a living mining the elusive remains of a once rich ore body.

Farmers followed the miners and overgrazed the grasses that grew after the temperate rainforest had been burnt.

By the 1970's the farmers and miners had left the Blue Tier and the rainforest had begun to make a come-back. The mountain is now enjoying a healing process and new life can be seen everywhere alongside abandoned mines and living sites.

The St. Helen's History Room and those associated with it, in the 1990's began to mark tracks on the Blue Tier so that people could explore the area and appreciate its beauty.

Just lately, since 2000, there has been an increasing amount of forestry activity around the Blue Tier with remnants of Glacial Refugia being threatened with clear-felling and burning. This has led to the formation of a group called the "Friends of Blue Tier" , who have actively defended the Tier and its values.

Media Release

1st June 2005 The commencement of logging on Tasmania's Blue Tier has signaled the start of a logging onslaught of high conservation value forest left out of the recently released Supplementary Regional Forest Agreement (Supplementary RFA).

The protection of Crystal Hill in the Blue Tier has long been campaigned for by local community conservation campaigners and The Wilderness Society. Significant environmental and historical values have been identified and tourism opportunities have been developed with the creation of a number of walking tracks. The Crystal Hill walking track highlights the presence of a rare stand of trees, *Eucalyptus subcrenulata* (Mountain Yellow Gum), not typically found in the area and evidence of glacial refugia.

"The logging of this coupe is highly provocative, and identifies the need for an ongoing forests campaign to protect high conservation value forests in Tasmania" said The Wilderness Society's Tasmanian Forests Campaigner, Vica Bayley. "There are so many reasons why this area should be protected, those reasons have been ignored and now it is being destroyed."

The Blue Tier received a total of 774ha of new formal reserve in the recent Supplementary RFA, well short of community expectations and conservation needs. Closer examination reveals that these new reserves were unlikely to be logged anyway, being too steep, visible from a tourist lookout and undesirable to the industry.

"The forests of the entire North East were largely ignored in the recent forestry announcement" said Mr Bayley.

"They remain unprotected, slated for logging and certain feedstock for the proposed Tamar Valley pulp mill."

Further risks to rare and threatened species are posed through continued logging in the North East. A recent study concluded that the Wedge-tailed Eagle has up to a 97% chance of extinction in the North East should planned logging operations proceed.

Blue Tier

Blue Tier, which is one of the few remaining areas of wild forest in Tasmania's North-East, is currently Tasmania's most controversial forest flashpoints in the state-wide debate over logging.

Featuring wild forests, giant trees, hidden waterfalls and unique wildlife, including many threatened species, Blue Tier is part of a critical water catchment area for Tasmania's North-East.

Despite this, the area is threatened by logging. A local conservation group, Friends of Blue Tier, is locked in a desperate battle to protect the area. Friends of Blue Tier have wide community support, including the unanimous support of the local council - a ground-breaking decision which has attracted the ire of the State Government.

Local community members set up the Blue Tier Base Camp in March 2004 deep in threatened forest and are maintaining a presence at the Camp around the clock. So far, police have made seven arrests, including an 82-year old man who is the local Council's Citizen of the Year.

Attractions

- Explore the magnificent Big Tree Walk, which passes through fern glades before descending through huge gums, musk, myrtles, and mosses to the Blue Tier Giant with its massive 19.4 m girth.
- Walk to Crystal Hill, with its wide vistas of forested slopes reaching to the ocean. This walk features rare and ancient plants as well as nineteenth-century mining relics.
- See Hall's Falls, nestled in giant trees and rainforest.
- Visit Blue Tier Base Camp and discuss the area's future with concerned local residents. Have a cup of tea and some damper by the campfire, and experience first-hand a peaceful community vigil deep in the heart of Tasmania's forests. The camp is surrounded by steep slopes of tall forest, and pristine creeks run close by.

Where is Blue Tier?

Blue Tier is located 2 hour's drive from Launceston, Tasmania's northern capital. Blue Tier is 30 minutes' drive from the picturesque tourist town of St Helens, on Tasmania's East Coast.

Waratah: Tasmanian endemic

Telopea truncata

Stands to eight metres

Four species min Australia.....*Telopea speciosissima* emblem of N.S.W.