

The North-Eastern Naturalist

Issue 178: JULY

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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.

AUGUST 8

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

Jill van den Bosch will host the AGM at 311 East Minstone Road, Scottsdale.
Meet at 11am for meeting. Bring lunch to share. Speaker to be announced.

SEPTEMBER 12 HARRIDGE FALLS TO WELDBOROUGH.[+SHORT OPTION TO FALLS &BACK]

Meet at Weldborough Pub promptly at 9.30am to arrange car pooling—only space for 6 cars at start of track. Track to falls steep with few minor obstacles graded medium. Then after lunch, short and long options. Track to cars—easy. Track to Weldborough, recently marked, takes 3 hours sustained walking on a marked track, some ups and downs, rough underfoot at times. Requires reasonable fitness. Superb forest with a range of vegetation types.
Contact: Lesley Nicklason 0400557418 bh. or 63736195 ah.

OCTOBER 10

EXPLORING MT. BARROW.

Twenty five different plant communities here: boulder-field, sub-alpine, rainforest and dry heaths, to mention just a few. This walk will be semi-exploratory. Grading medium : short walks mostly on tracks/roads with possibly some scrub and scree. Maybe windy. Will we find the Mt. Barrow Falls ? Meet 10am at junction of Tasman Highway and Mt. Barrow Road.
Contact: Lou Brooker 63560 381

NOVEMBER 14

FEDERATION WEEKEND GET-TOGETHER - MT CAMERON.

Two options—come for the day or stay the weekend and meet other Field Natters. from around the state. Staying Sat.night ? - bring sleeping bag, all own food—barbeque available—salad to share. Cost \$20. Meet 9 am. at jcn. of Tomahawk Road and Old Boobyalla Road 10km west of Gladstone, 12km east of Tomahawk turnoff [map ref. 770/702 Cape Portland Tasmaph 1: 100 000] Variety of walks both days. Contact Lou Brooker for more, closer to time.

DECEMBER 12

WINIFRED CURTIS RESERVE SCAMANDER + CHRISTMAS BARBEQUE

Many members recently have requested a visit to this wildflower reserve just a kilometre south of Scamander, to see how it has recovered from the 2006 bushfire. Meet at 10am at main entrance on the highway. Morning tea in the reserve, late lunch, barbeque if weather suitable, at Pam's place. Contact Pam Bretz: 0439 547529.

News and views

Condolences.

Our heartfelt condolences go to Jenny Pixley after losing her life partner John.

Access by members to club website.

The username and password needed by members to access the photo gallery on our website will be forwarded by email soon.

Goodbye and good luck Bob and Rae.

Bob and Rae Harris who came and settled at Legerwood and kept us company on outings over the last couple of years, have been yearning for their past life on the water, and have left Legerwood looking for a new boat on which to live and cruise. We have enjoyed their company and wish them safe sailing and happy times.

Outing to Lair Rock, Mt Cameron Range. 13.6.09.

Because the Gladstone area was once virtually an alluvial tin field, a supply of water was essential for sluicing and in 1881 an extensive network of water races and dams was begun with its intake at the Great Musselroe River. On the way to Lair Rock we cross and walk along many of the water races dug by hand all those years ago.

Of interest along the way is the variety of fungi. Yellow brain is a frilly yellow jelly fungus forming a soft gelatinous mass. We see yellow coral fungi growing in small groups, with its many tiny branches. There is a wonderful tan and cream coloured pagoda-type fungi with each layer becoming smaller towards the top, and a lovely clump or purple agarics. It is obvious our knowledge of these is sketchy. Never-the-less we are learning to recognise the major groups, and it helped to have Clinton's knowledge.

Orchid spotters find two orchids in flower, the mosquito orchid, *Acianthus pusillus* and one of the helmet orchids, *Corybas sp.* There is a patch of leaves belonging to the fire orchid or red beaks, *Pyrorchis nigricans*, at one of our stops, and amongst them, many leaves of the bird orchid, *Chiloglottis*.

We sit at the base of this huge monolith which is Lair Rock, with the remnants of many a devil's meal at our feet, and enjoy our lunch together. The scene is quite convivial until someone remembers a story about one such huge rock in France that rolled over and flattened people. It was time to move off.

A great day, thanks Mike.

Gardens for Wildlife Scheme

This new scheme is an initiative of the DPIW Private Land Conservation Program and has been developed as a sister program to the long-running Land For Wildlife scheme.

The message from the 140 GFW new members is of the need to promote the role home gardeners can play in biodiversity conservation and to encourage others to welcome wildlife into their gardens.

Website: www.gardensforwildlife.dpiw.tas.gov.au or contact Iona Mitchell on 6233 6427.

Orchids in the Rough

The roughs on the Campbelltown Golf Course are home to eleven threatened plant species, including a leek orchid found almost nowhere else in the world: the 'Golfer's leek orchid', *Prasophyllum incorrectum*

Prior to its use as a common, a horse track and a bicycle track, fire would have burnt periodically through the tussocks, maintaining a mosaic pattern of habitats. When it became a golf course the roughs were slashed once or twice a year to keep the vegetation at a height of around 10cms., but care has been taken to emulate the mosaic pattern by undertaking the slashing on a patch by patch basis.

Care is also taken with the slashing to avoid compacting the seed bank and when the flowering has been prolific, slashing is delayed until the flowers have set seed. The orchids have responded favourably to this disturbance.

These two extracts are from the Running Postman, the newsletter of the Private Land Conservation Program, December 2008. Author: Stuart King.

Ten Things We Can Do.

1. Change a light globe. Replacing six regular light bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs will save 400kg of carbon dioxide a year.
2. Drive less. Walk, bike, carpool or take public transport more often. You'll save 1.5kg of carbon dioxide for every five kilometres you don't drive.
3. Recycle more. You can save 1000 kgs of carbon dioxide per year by recycling half of your household waste.
4. Check your tyres. Keeping your tyres inflated properly can improve your car's efficiency. Every litre of petrol saved keeps 2.5kg carbon dioxide out of the air.
5. Use less hot water. By installing an energy efficient triple A rated shower head 3 tonnes of carbon dioxide are saved per year. Washing your clothes in cold or warm water can save 225kg's per year.
6. Avoid products with a lot of packaging. We could save 545 kg. of carbon dioxide if we cut down on our garbage by 10%.
7. Move the hot-water thermostat down 2 degrees in winter and up 2 degrees in summer. This could make a saving of 900kg of carbon dioxide.
8. Plant a tree. A single tree will absorb one tonne of carbon dioxide in its lifetime.
9. Turn off electrical devices. Turning off DVD players, stereos and computers will save thousands of kilograms of carbon dioxide a year.
10. Visit Christine Milne's website on <http://christine-milne.greensmps.org.au/climatechangeaction>

This article is reprinted with the permission of the editor of Green Tasmania and the office of Christine Milne.

..... The sequestration potential if we were to stop logging in our eastern native forests, could be the equivalent of 24% of Australia's annual greenhouse emissions for 100 years. *

* Quote from Mackey BG, Keith H, Lindenmayer DB, 2008, *Green Carbon: The role of natural forests in carbon storage*. ANU E Press.

Latest Land Conservancy Project

Excerpts from the Tasmanian Land Conservancy Brochure advertising their latest project.

"Remarkably close to the wild jagged peaks of Cradle Mountain lies the Vale of Belvoir, a romantic, natural, secret garden filled with threatened species and communities. This wonderland is of world heritage significance. It is the only surviving grassy valley of its kind, unchanged since the time of the wallaby hunters of southwest Tasmania, 18,000—20,000 years ago when glaciers covered much of highland Tasmania."

News and views

And from the TLC Summer Newsletter.....

“Viewed from a spur of grass and rocky outcrops a hundred metres or so above the Vale of Belvoir’s valley floor it’s easy to see why this is one of Tasmania’s conservation jewels. At the southern end of the valley lies a lake, mirror smooth, reflecting the last patches of winter snow on the surrounding hills. Trickling from the lake a tiny creek is visible snaking north along the wide open valley floor; but this small creek is deceptive, the rock below ground is limestone and honeycombed with caves and underground streams. At intervals the creek is fed from deep pools of mysterious turquoise where the water wells up from deeper underground. By the time the water-course tumbles out of the valley to the north, it has earned its title of Vale River.”

Away from the riverbanks the valley floor is a treeless native grassland, with tussocks of poa and delicate wildflowers. The fertile soils support an ecosystem teeming with life. Shy ground parrots, the rare Ptunarra butterfly, the vulnerable spotted tail quoll and the Tasmanian devil are all at home here.

The Tasmanian Land Conservancy intends to work alongside the current owners to implement modern conservation science to protect the valley’s conservation significance.

The TLC seeks support from the public to protect this irreplaceable site. More information is on the website at www.tasland.org.au

A Sound Idea.

There are difficulties in monitoring bird populations in Tasmania. Firstly, there are relatively few people with the necessary skills to monitor bush and forest birds effectively and, as well, governments seem reluctant to fund monitoring projects.

A sound idea is a project that uses the latest in digital sound recording devices to monitor bush and forest birds. These devices [e.g. Zoom H2] are to sound recordists what compact digital cameras are to home photographers. They are relatively inexpensive, small, robust and have good quality inbuilt microphones. They require very little technical expertise to operate.

With a network of willing participants, Sarah Lloyd, of the Central North Field Naturalist Group, has begun to compile an aural archive of different habitats in Tasmania. Birds, frogs, crickets, cicadas and a very loud Tasmanian Devil, amongst other things, have been recorded so far.

Anyone wanting to participate in the project will receive by registered post the Zoom H2 recorder and a sheet of instructions. The recorder should be placed outside away from mechanical sounds and left to record for twenty minutes. It is preferable that the recordings are made between 0600 and 1000.

Back at the ‘lab’, Sarah’s home at Black Sugarloaf, an audio CD and locality list is made for each participant. The sound files will be made available to anyone who wants to

do further studies on bird distribution or vocalisations. The study of dialects, or regional variations in birdsongs, is little studied in Australia, but it is a growing area of interest. Already, Sarah has noticed the difference between the call of the Yellow Throated Honeyeater in a number of different locations.

The following are excerpts from a recent letter from Sarah to our club members.

Dear Field Natters,

I’m expanding the Sound Idea project as outlined above and am wondering if you or someone in your field nats. group would be interested in having a recorder with them permanently, or in making recordings for a month or more from a couple of different sites.

My ‘luddite guineapig’ recorder (as I call her) started recording in December 2008. She was so taken with the project that she purchased her own recorder and has the area around St Helens well covered. I realise that many people can’t afford to purchase their own Zoom, hence the purchase of four more recorders from Birds Tasmania.

One of the leading bird atlassers in the state made recordings in the northwest and also sent me his field observations. There were a couple of birds that the recorder didn’t pick up, but it did record a few species that he didn’t list. (It’s so easy to miss birds when in the field, especially when they only vocalise once in 20 minutes.)

Please let me know if you are interested. The Birds Tas committee will be meeting next week to consider how many to purchase. best wishes, Sarah

Anyone wishing to participate please contact Sarah Lloyd.
Phone: 6396 1380
Email: sarahlloyd@iprimus.com.au

P.S. Birds Tas. now has seven recorders available.

Report from a special general meeting of the Dorset Natural Resource Management Group. Tuesday 16th June 2009.

This well attended meeting, one held annually at Bridport, revealed the depth of interest in the issues being addressed on the night. A range of presenters gave information about current and proposed activities taking place near the coast.

Dams: Tasmanian Irrigation Development Board Project Manager, Semone Keppel, provided information on the current status of the NE Dams project. It would appear that the one dam which has had all the preparatory work completed is the Headquarters Road Dam where work will begin in December.

Other sites mentioned were the Great Forester River, Great Musselroe River, St. Patrick’s River, Brid River,

News and views

Little Forester River, Merrivale, Oxberry and Monarch. The proposed dam on the Boobyalla River is no longer a threat to the *Eucalyptus. ovata* forest there.

Originally, there was a fair amount of concern in the community that stakeholders had not been consulted, opinions not listened to.

Landholders are being consulted now, environmental flows calculated and flora and fauna surveys are being conducted.

Wind farm : The likely death of five wedge-tail and three white bellied sea eagles at the Roaring Forties Cape Portland wind farm site cannot be avoided, although the company seems to be working hand in hand with Birds Tasmania to minimise these fatalities. The company has been using 20 years of data gathered there by Ralph Cooper and has removed turbines from three originally proposed sites: Vinegar Hill, Tank Hill, and Sharman's Hill. One of these, Vinegar Hill, overlooks a large lagoon where the State's highest ever count of vulnerable hooded plovers was once made.

This company seems to have sound environmental credibility [in my opinion at least ed.] It has recently entered into a partnership with the Tasmanian Land Conservancy to protect viable nesting sites of Wedge-tailed and White-bellied sea eagles on private land. The average size of these sites is around 30 ha and conservation agreements for 11 nesting sites and surrounding habitats have been negotiated.

Offsetting programs like this are important to protect the 750 mature Wedge-tailed eagles and less than 1000 mature white-bellied sea eagles left in Tasmania.

Parks and Wildlife: The work of the Parks and Wildlife staff continues despite the Department having been dissolved by the Premier. Its portfolio has been added on to a plethora of other departments. [indicating its perceived importance] The principle of 'vacancy control' which has been adopted by the government, means that any vacancies which may arise in staffing, will not be refilled. So it looks as though even less work will be done under this banner.

Parks and Reserves Manager, Donna Stanley attended the meeting along with "the lone ranger" Dominique Couzens, and together they reported on the fire management strategy for the Bridport Wildflower Reserve, the latest Green Corps projects and various Waterhouse site management projects. One of the big issues concerning everyone at the moment is the ongoing illegal foreshore clearing.

Members views on the loss of the Parks and Wildlife Portfolio

Email from Pam Bretz

"The decision of the State Government to abolish the ministry for Parks and Wildlife seems illogical and contradictory. Parks and Wildlife has long been under-funded, while its areas of responsibility have grown in size and complexity. The axing of the Ministry indicates the level of importance that this government places on the service. While selling tourism as the "Clean, Green" way to go it hobbles the very service that helps to provide the "Wilderness Experience". As the shrinking workforce of

Parks and Wildlife struggles to maintain tracks and campgrounds, control weeds, protect wildlife etc. etc. its status is downgraded. A sad sign of how out of touch with reality this State Government really is."

Email from Lesley Nicklason

"It is beyond belief, in an era when protection of the natural environment is critical, that the Tasmanian Government would abolish the very Department responsible for managing our Parks, Reserves and Environment. Just how many portfolios can one Minister manage.....David Llewellyn is now Minister for Primary Industries, Water, Resources, Parks and the Environment...this could lead to a potential conflict of interest with Resource extraction vs. Environmental protection !

The value of the natural environment seems to have been ignored with the axing of the department.

An intact native forest (regardless of age) provides a significant carbon store; protects and builds up soil; filters, purifies and protects water courses; breathes in carbon and breathes out oxygen; provides food and habitat for a huge range of native wildlife and birds as well as supporting a range of nature-based employment opportunities. The natural environment is under threat from ongoing clear fell logging of native forest, proposed damming of numerous fragile rivers and large scale mining proposed in areas of importance socially and environmentally.

The Parks and Wildlife / Environment Department should have remained a stand-alone Department with **increased** funding and a Minister dedicated to the proper management of this magnificent and important asset not disbanded with services tacked onto an already huge workload for one Minister."

MUTUAL TO MOORINA : 9.05.09

Report by Bill Beaumont.

This is the closest walk we have done to our place with the Northeast Field Naturalists, just 9 km from home. The walk followed the Ringarooma River from the Mutual Bridge (near Derby) to Moorina. The Tasman Highway also runs from Derby to Moorina, but follows a longer arc to the north of the river to pass near Winnaleah. Our walk today followed the river, a distance of about 8 km.



We met at 10 am at the junction of the Tasman Highway and Mutual Road in Derby, and drove a short distance to the Mutual Bridge. A car had already been left at the other end of the walk, which we would only be doing in one direction.

We set off following the Ringarooma River downstream. The route was along a road at first, but it soon became a narrow track, passing through a forest of mostly young *Eucalyptus regnans* trees with an understorey of ferns and other plants. Much of the original forest in the valley would have been felled during the tin mining boom, when the Mutual mine was in operation.

To our left (north) there were frequent views down to the Ringarooma River, which was flowing very fast across a rocky bed. There were frequent pauses while individual plants and fungi were examined and identified. As always I was impressed by members' knowledge, not only of the scientific names for plants, but also the confusing welter of common names that many of them had. We discovered where a carnivore had feasted on a bird. We examined the remaining feathers, but there were not enough for us to determine the species, nor was there anything to identify the predator. We also found the remains of what had clearly been a domestic garden, with fruit trees and other exotic plants.



At one point we had to get off the track quickly as a group of trail-bikers roared past. There were about ten altogether, but it seemed that the procession would never end. We discovered a place where we could get down to the river, and chose this spot for our lunch, as it was warm and sunny.

Mike Douglas told us of a place along the river where a channel had been blasted to shortcut a bend in the river. This used to be done in the days of alluvial tin mining to expose the river bed on the bend. We had a couple of off-track excursions to look for it. On one of them we discovered this surprisingly luxurious campsite. It was fully furnished, with lounge suite, stove, kitchen sink and wood supply all under a substantial roof. Two walkers took full advantage of these unexpected luxuries. [see picture]

We did eventually find the spot where the short-cut had been blasted in the river. Shortly afterwards we came to a place where the forest, young though it was, had been logged, and we could see grassy fields on the opposite bank. It was clear that we were nearing the end of the walk. A kilometre later, we were at Moorina, formerly an important tin mining centre but now a sleepy hamlet where the Tasman Highway crosses the Ringarooma River. As we waited for the drivers to return with the cars from the other end of the walk, we listened to the butcher birds calling in the surrounding forest. I have often heard these birds around our house, but I did not know what they were until today. The drivers returned and we finished a most enjoyable day with afternoon tea at the Painted Door art cafe in Derby.

