

# The North-Eastern Naturalist

Issue 182 July 2011

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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.**

**July 9**

**Lesley Nicklason Hosts Film Day.**

Lesley has made a DVD of the North East Highlands Track : a five day walk. Also a 15 minute slide show "From the Ground Up". We invite members to bring pictures to share. If weather good, explore nearby. To get to Lesley's: Turn right into Forest Lodge Road, at bottom of Weldborough Pass and just over the North George River, if coming from Scottsdale. Follow Forest Lodge Road for just over 1km., take left fork and continue 300 metres, turn left into Dobson's Lane, [with a No Through Road sign], and Lesley's place is a further 300 metres.

Bring lunch to share. Meet 10 - 10.30 am. Contact person: Jill van den Bosch ph. 63 560483.

**August 13**

**Annual General Meeting—Guest Speakers : Craig and Debbie Searle—Maatsuyker Island.**

Our AGMs are always great social occasions with a shared lunch etc. Revel and Helen Munro will host the day. Hear of the fascinating experiences Craig and Debbie had whilst caretaking on Maatsuyker. Meeting begins 11 am. "Kanara Neika" is at Telita on the Derby Back Road.

Contact Revel : ph. 63542254.

**September 10**

**Exploring Binalong Bay.**

The precise format still being decided. Possible coast walk to Dora Point. Members will be informed by email. Meet at The Gulch, Binalong Bay, 10am. Contact: Lou Brooker. Ph. 63560381

**October : 8**

**New Bridport Walking Track.**

Just recently opened, this brand new walking track is an amazing showcase for the Bridport Innovations Group and the Conservation Volunteers. Hear from those involved in the creation and the organisation of this amazing project. Walk approx 4-5 km on formed tracks through bush and beside the Brid River. Meet 10am car park opposite Cafe Rahra. Contact person: Lou Brooker.

**October 28th, 29th & 30th.**

**Federation Weekend Get together: Bruny Island.** Hobart Club hosting. Staying at 'Murrayfield' . Cost \$10/ head/night. Register interest with Secretary.

**November 12**

**Captive Devil Program** Visit the property of Scott Bell who is part of this program. Hear a presentation from a staff member, Wildlife Management Branch of the Captive Animal Program. Bring B.B.Q. lunch, then afterwards visit wombat release pen. Explore other walking tracks in the afternoon. Meet 10 am. Saltwood Road, approx 20 km west of Bridport. 1.5 km up and enter through double red gates. Contact: Scott Bell ph. 0419 527 354.

**December 10**

**Exploring the Slopes of Mt. Arthur.**

Our guide will be David Lewis who knows the mountain well. He will interpret both the natural history and 150 years of sociological history. Rated 'medium' - possible scrub and scree, limited off track. Bring binoculars. Meet 10 am top of Mountain Road, 3km from Main Road. Turn-off 1km out of Lilydale towards Launceston . Contact: Lou Brooker ph. 63 560381.

**Editor:**

\*Thank you Ann Scott, Mike Douglas and Revel Munro for your contributions to this edition.

\*Thanks also to those who helped CoastCare pull sea spurge, despite the realisation of the enormity of the task.

\* Please note ! Memberships are due in **August**, no complimentary newsletters from then on. Treasurers detail on front of n/ letter or payable at AGM.

**Our club's web address is <http://www.netasfieldnats.org.au>**

To navigate past the front page use this username 'forester' and this password 'trueroo'.

**Dorset Coastal Working Group.**

This group has been meeting quarterly to discuss priorities for action in the various coastal communities in the Dorset Municipality. The group consists of representatives from Dorset Council, DPIPWE, Dorset NRM, Parks and Wildlife Service, Bridport Coastcare, Tomahawk and Musselroe Bay Community Associations, Bridport Innovations and NE Field Nats.

Reports of recent actions :

- rice grass, asparagus fern, boneseed, sea spurge, and numerous other removal.
- development of a walking track to complete town circuit to be opened July.
- Animal control: micro-chipping cats and dogs. Review of dog policy—when?
- Three permanent rangers; discovery ranger activities in summer; continuing focus on Waterhouse Campground.
- Bellingham Campground closed.

**Beneath the Tamar—More than Silt.**

Two Maritime College lecturers David Maynard and Troy Gaston have released a book with this title. They intended, with the book to showcase the rich diversity of animal and plant life that exists within 15metres of the surface of the Tamar River.

A stunning exhibition of the photos included in this photographic essay, were on display at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery earlier this year.

The book depicts giant kelp forests, vibrant corals, patterned sea-stars and brilliantly coloured sponges, and was designed to be used as an educational tool to change peoples' perceptions of the Tamar River.

The book received the prestigious UTAS Vice Chancellors Award with a \$10 000 prize for Creative Partnerships with the Community. Its available in Launceston bookstores.

**Tasmanian Bushland Garden.**

About ten years ago, a group of people came up with the idea of creating a botanic garden to display some of the native plants of South Eastern Tasmania. A 20 ha block was purchased with a donation from Glad Dobson, now 90 years old, and the display garden set up near a former quarry on the site near Buckland.

The garden is organised into different beds representing the vegetation communities of the South East. There are plants for grassland, wet gully and rocky areas, all landscaped and labelled and incorporating sculptures by local artists.

If one enjoys visiting native plant nurseries [as the writer certainly does], the garden is right next door to Pulchella, just before Buckland, if you're driving north from Hobart.

**Sustainable Seafood Guide.**

To help people make educated choices about which seafood to eat, The Australian Marine Conservation Society has produced a sustainable seafood guide which points out which fish to say "no" to, which fish to "think twice about" and which fish are

altogether "better choices."

Fish such as gemfish, orange roughy and shark may be overfished or vulnerable to overfishing and sometimes involving a by-catch of threatened species. It suggests saying "no" to Atlantic Salmon as a farmed species; farming methods place additional pressure on the marine environment.

Better choices are the Australian sardine, whiting, calamari, trevally and farmed oysters and mussels.

The mini guide or the full version can be downloaded at [www.sustainableseafood.org.au](http://www.sustainableseafood.org.au)

**Weeding the Andrew, Franklin and Gordon Rivers.**

It had been noticed that blackberries were spreading along the banks of these rivers, so in 2009, after word being put around the University Rafting Club to see what support there would be to take part in a survey and control trip, eight rafters put their hand up, including one who was a qualified herbicide sprayer.

On that trip in April 2009, blackberries were found at 64 sites on the Andrew River, 10 sites on the lower Franklin, and one site on the lower Gordon River. On a subsequent trip in November of that year, weeds were treated at 49 of these sites.

As you might imagine, these trips are not all hard work and rafters have a great time shooting rapids, camping on the banks and swimming in the waters, but what a fantastic way to approach the problem!

The blackberry weeding has now become a normal part of Uni rafting trips, although the infestation on the Andrew River is acting as a weed source and is being tackled as a dedicated trip. Source: Wildtimes Edition 37.

**Rubbish Haul Alarms**

Many market goers at Salamanca Market recently screwed up their noses in disgust asking "what on earth is that?" as they walked past the stall displaying some of the 3 ½ tonnes of marine trash [18, 300 pieces] collected from the beaches in Tasmania's iconic South West Debris Clean-up at Easter.

Environmental Scientist and Clean-up organiser Matt Dell, said it was frustrating to collect 600 beer cans from New Harbour Beach last year and then to have to collect the same number again this year.

Marine researcher Jennifer Lavers is concerned about the effect that dumping rubbish in the ocean has on seabirds. In the four years Dr. Lavers has been documenting the contents of birds' stomachs, she has found a disturbing amount of plastic, including cigarette lighters, balloon clips, broken toy parts, plastic pop-tops from milk and juice cartons. The seabirds on Lord Howe Island which feed in the Tasman Sea, are the most contaminated.

With support from the Southern Waste Strategy Authority, this year's clean-up was filmed by Bookend Trust and the footage will be turned into a documentary and used in schools and online. Twenty three people took part in the clean-up which has happened annually since 1999.

Source: Sunday Tasmanian, May 8, 20011.

**FIVE MILE BLUFF : 12 / 2 / 2011**  
**Report by Ann Scott.**

A small group assembled at Low Head on February 12th.. After car pooling, we set off on another adventure, leaving our cars at Bell Buoy Beach to walk eastwards towards the tessellated pavement at Five Mile Bluff. The beach was made up of small stones or shingles, not particularly easy to walk on but many collected egg-shaped rocks and formed caches to collect on the way back. We rounded several headlands, noting the sea spurge on the way. Hopefully the local Coast Care will have a working bee soon.

Looking back toward Low Head, over Hebe Reef we could see all the way to the Dial Range near Penguin. Hebe Reef was named after the first vessel to be claimed there - the ship called the *Hebe* from India in 1808. Its last victim on 10 July 1995 was the Iron Baron which became Tasmania's largest shipwreck, a bulk tanker of 37,557 gross tons. The ship was holed and released approximately 350 tons of fuel oil. It was later scuttled west of the Furneaux Group.

Environmentalists and local residents were greatly concerned about the environmental impact this would cause. Birds were coated in the oil slick including many local fairy penguins. The beaches were awash with a thick oily sludge. A recent paper on the impact of the Iron Baron to Hebe Reef by Dr Neville Barrett reports that the collision of the tanker has completely destroyed the sub-tidal reef community within a localized area of 170m by 20m. Due to the continual wave disturbance of this area, the re-establishment and future colonisation of seaweeds has been slow, causing the reef sub strata to convert to unstable gravel. Hopefully, in time, the scar will heal. Good news, though - it appears that both animal and plant species have recovered rapidly after the spill. We didn't see any signs to the contrary.

While walking around one of the spits, Mike pointed out the difference between two plants both commonly called Boobyalla : *Myoporum insulare* and *Acacia sophorae* which were conveniently growing next to each other. Both species are useful in preventing soil and /or sand erosion. *Acacia sophorae* has long arching branches which take root when they come in contact with the sand. Its roots are capable of stabilizing large areas, as seen at East Sandy Cape on the sand dunes.



The tessellated pavement is a rare find in

Tasmania with perhaps the best example being down at Eaglehawk Neck on the Tasman Peninsular. Along with the flat rock platform caused by the slow weathering and eroding process, another interesting feature was the large holes eroded into circular pools with crystal clear water, and ringed by Neptune's necklace. They looked very inviting if only the weather had been warmer.

References: Impact of the Iron Baron Oil Spill on Subtidal Reef Assemblages in Tasmania by Dr Neville Barrett.  
 The companion to Tasmanian History, Graeme Broxam.



**WAVE CUT PLATFORMS**

We deduced the geological story of the formation of the platform from our research.

There is a narrow flat area at the base of the cliffs that looks as though it has been created by the action of the waves. Wave-cut or shore platforms are formed after destructive waves hit at the cliff-face causing undercutting between the high and low watermarks. This corrosion and hydraulic power creates a wave cut notch. This notch enlarges into a cave, which continues to be affected by wave pressure and freeze/thaw weathering, until it collapses. [see picture above]



Some waves have been measured to exert 32 tonnes of pressure per square metre. This hydraulic action is aided by compressed air pushing into cracks and fractures in the rocks. When the tide retreats, the crystallisation of salt causes further cracks and fractures. Salt forming on the surface of the platform also causes erosion, even more quickly than in the joints which become 'rims'.

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References: 1] Wave-cut platforms :  
 from Wikipedia  
 2] Fact sheet: Landforms Explained, Parks and Wildlife Service Tasmania.

### **The humble Antarctic Krill.**

The sheer abundance of the humble Antarctic krill makes it one of the most desirable sources of protein on the planet, sought by fish, penguins, whales and man.

The rapid growth in krill fishing is adding to the pressure of the already existing environmental changes threatening the creatures.

The global fish farming industry is using krill based fish feed. [Doesn't this seem ridiculous? L.B.]

One company based in Oslo, expects its krill catch from ONE of its THREE boats to be 180,000 tonnes this year—all for the aqua-culture market.

China is sending its first boat out this year and if it sends more, it will make the management of the fishery almost impossible.

### **New species to Tasmania.**

*Bossiaea heterophylla*, the variable bossiaea, a species which has not been noticed in Tasmania before this, has been found in the low hundreds on Commonwealth land at Stoney Head on the north east coast in coastal heath, growing on sand at the margin of the dry and wet heaths. This pea is rare in Victoria but is found in greater numbers in New South Wales and Southern Queensland. It is likely to have a restricted distribution in Tasmania but may have been overlooked until now because of its autumn/ winter flowering period - April to July.

Another species which was first collected by Rodway at Cape Portland and whose range has recently been extended is *Cassinia rugata*.

Information such as this is collected and collated by botanists at the DPIPWE Threatened Species Section from observations made by field naturalists and amateur botanists as well as people working in such areas as NRM etc. and are added to the Natural Values Atlas.

### **EPA issues fines for dumping household rubbish and green waste.**

Two men have been fined for dumping rubbish in Tasmania and have been ordered to return to clean up the litter left at the sites.

This \$650 fine was served by the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] on a man from the North East for dumping household waste, including domestic white goods on a Forestry Tasmania site.

Both men were also served a Litter Abatement Notice, which specifies that the offender must return to the site to remove all rubbish. If this is not complied with, a maximum fine of \$6,500 can result.

Witnesses to littering can phone a hotline number 1300 135 513

Between January 2008 and 1 June 2011, 2628 litter reports were made to the Litter Hotline, resulting in 1273 infringement notices, 120 written warnings and four (4) abatement notices being issued.

Source: DPIPWE website.

### **Walk Report [from Revel]**

Hi Folks, (including Bruce and Lesley who would like to have been on board), here are some notes, about a day trip from the Wyniford Diversion Weir down to Woods Mine, [Garibaldi / 3 Notch Track terminus way], by way of the Wyniford River Valley.

### **Preamble:**

Revel has been meaning to do this, (known to be a tough trip) for some years. This desire was due to:  
# a continuing interest and some research of the European & Chinese mining history of the area.  
# yarns told about the more remote parts of the Tier, particularly by Tom Yaxley, but also others who grazed or mined.  
# a follow up to a 2008 walk of the 3 Notch Track. This was just after its excellent rehabilitation by Jo Field and party.  
# a liking for the Diversion Dam, especially after reading reports of the efforts of the Endurance Tin Mining Co. to maintaining it. Interesting logistics involved with unplanned major incidents in the 1940's & 1950's with mine workers from the Endurance Mine, Sth Mt Cameron, having to camp up there. The concreting mix is testimony to these difficulties.

### **Route and Observations.**

# walked up from Emu flats up the "bike track" after early start and car shuffle. Undisturbed 2.5km ascent, though obvious that there was plenty of bike traffic that day.  
# the plan was to either walk an untracked 3 to 4 km line through the forest over Masher Hill to furthest penetration of old logging tracks up stream to the junction of the Wyniford River and Cotton Creek or do the same by walking some 7 km down the more windy Wyniford River. We ended up doing the latter.  
# initially walking the river below the Diversion Race, it was noted that a very significant amount of water seems to be leaking from the race back into the river. Logistics for WIS Ltd fixing this would seem to be interesting.  
# this 7km section of river certainly has an attractive wildness...except for two large old logs with bridge spikes (long gone from the weir?)

### **The Natural Values Atlas.**

The NVA is a data base on the web that allows observations of Tasmanian plants and animals to be viewed, recorded and analysed. It also provides access to management documents such as listing statements [rare, vulnerable etc] and recovery plans.

The information on the 20,000 animal and plant species from Tasmania assists planning and decision making across all levels of government, industry and the general public and improves conservation outcomes for threatened species.

The Natural Values Atlas is a valuable resource available for government and non-government organisations, scientists, consultants, students, educators, travellers and nature enthusiasts.

For enquiries please contact :

[support@naturalvaluesatlas.tas.gov.au](mailto:support@naturalvaluesatlas.tas.gov.au).

## LADES BEACH : 12 / 3 / 2011

Report by Mike Douglas.

This sandy, seaside ramble was attended by 14 members and visitors. After traversing Adams Beach and wading across the Little Forester River, most of the outing was spent observing the shorebirds on the Lades Beach spit and the adjoining tidal flats - which are within the Double Sandy Point Conservation Area.

The spit is an interesting feature. It appeared in the early 1980s and quickly subsumed a smaller spit near the northern end of Lades Beach. Since then it has extended in length by two kilometres and pushed the estuary of the Little Forester River eastwards.

The sand sources for this growth were three large dunes that began moving across East Sandy Point in the 1960s. By the mid 1970s these dunes were pouring vast amounts of sand into Anderson Bay.

A marram grass planting programme in the 70s and 80s, by the now defunct Lands Department, stabilised these sand blows.

A tidal lagoon with sand /mud flats and salt-marsh is situated on the inner side of the spit. Broad tidal sand flats extend seawards from the outer side.

The Lades Beach spit is an important breeding site for local shorebirds. The lagoon and tidal flats are feeding areas for these birds and also migratory species such as the Bar-tailed Godwit and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper which fly 12 000 km from the high Arctic to escape the northern winter.

Birds seen during the walk included a large flock of Crested Tern which are regulars on the outer margin of the flats, a lone Caspian Tern, a few Hooded Plover and Red-necked Stint, lots of Red-capped Plover, numerous Pied Oystercatcher and a few Sooty Oystercatcher, Pelican, Black Swan, Australian Shelduck [commonly called Mountain Duck] and Pacific Gull. Forest Raven [ie. Crow] were seen on the flats near the old shacks, probably feeding on the ubiquitous soldier crab.

Insensitive people in off-road vehicles are a threat to the area and, as usual, tracks were seen right through the raised part of the spit where birds breed and nest. This is part of a more general problem in Tasmania where a sizeable minority regards beaches and headlands as part of the national highway system.

Signs erected near the northern end of the spit ask drivers to respect the bird breeding site and to keep on the designated track to East Sandy Point and St. Alban's Bay. The Parks and Wildlife Service is soon to place an illustrated bird information sign in this vicinity.

To date, the spit has only been lightly colonised by plants such as Spinifex—a native sand grass, Grey Saltbush and the exotics Sea Rocket, Marram Grass and Sea Spurge. The salt-marsh fringes of the lagoon are dominated by Glasswort, which seems particularly attractive to Pied Oystercatcher. The dreaded Sea Spurge, *Euphorbia paralias*, is starting to take hold and has the potential to have a serious impact on nesting shorebirds.

Lades Beach and, indeed, the entire Double Sandy Point Conservation Area is a valuable asset that is demeaned by heavy impact users, many of whom appear to have no environmental conscience.

Roaming dogs are an even greater menace. Regrettably, some Bridport residents take their dogs to Lades Beach and allow them to run free on the beach and splash through the lagoon. It is indeed ironic, that a visiting bird can survive the rigours of a 12 000 kilometre flight from Siberia, only to be harassed by trail-bikes or chased and perhaps killed by unrestrained dogs.

A final note of interest:

On November 22nd 2009, an unusual fast-moving high tide was noted at Bridport, Port Sorell and Stanley. This was a meteo-tsunami, caused by an atmospheric disturbance above Bass Strait—probably an intense high pressure cell. Locally, the greatest inundation was at Lades Beach where the sea surged almost to the bird breeding sign located in front of the old shacks. A surge of that magnitude must have poured over the lower parts of the spit.