



# North-Eastern Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc.

## The North Eastern Naturalist

Newsletter of the NE Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club

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**MISSION STATEMENT:** 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.

**From the Editor:** *NE Field Nats member Ross Coad alerted me to a recent article in the Launceston Examiner. Here is a summary of the article:*

At an undisclosed location in Tasmania's North-East, about 60 juvenile captive-reared giant freshwater crayfish have been released into the wild.

It is the first time in the world that giant freshwater crayfish have been released after being

hatched and reared in captivity. The crayfish were raised and released under a program that aims to boost numbers in the wild.

The Tasmanian giant freshwater crayfish is the largest freshwater invertebrate in the world. It is also a threatened species. The juveniles were measured and tagged before their release, and will be monitored in future.

### Members' photos of NE Tasmanian wildlife



**Orange everlasting (*Xerochrysum subundulatum*)**  
– Ross Coad



**Slime mould *Lycogala epidendrum*** – Susan McClenaghan

# Program for June-August 2021

## **JUNE 12<sup>th</sup>: FUNGI FORAY, NOTLEY FERN GORGE [WEST TAMAR]**

Meet at 11 am at the junction of Notley Hills Road C731 and Notley Gorge Road C731.

Bring fungi flips and reference books – we'll do the identifying ourselves.

We thought some may want more from the day, in which case Jay has suggested and checked out the Goaty Hill Vineyard at Kayena. It is open until 5 pm.

## **JULY 10<sup>th</sup>: MEMBERS' PICTURES AND SHORT FILMS**

11 am start.

Venue: Meeting Room above the Scottsdale library. Please bring food to share for lunch. Note that there are limited facilities for heating food, and that alcohol may not be taken into or consumed in the library.

There will be a showing of two short films before lunch: 'Tasmanian Big Tree Hunters' and 'takayna-patagonia film: What if Running could save the Rainforest'.

After lunch, 20 pictures from members on a chosen theme will be shown.

## **AUGUST 14<sup>th</sup>: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND INVITED PRESENTATION**

11 am start for the AGM.

Venue: 20 Edward Street, Bridport (Lou Brooker's home).

Guest speaker (following the AGM): UTAS first Professor of Aquaculture, Professor Nigel Forteach; best known for his seahorse research at Seahorse World, Beauty Point. His talk will be about the Tasmanian dragonflies.

**Cancellation Process:** If there is unpredictable and severe weather, or for any other reason, including if the leader considers the conditions to be unsafe, it may occasionally be necessary to cancel with short notice. Here is the process for cancellation: a global email will be sent by 1900 (i.e. 7.00 pm) on the previous day, or by 0700 (7.00 am) at the latest on the day of the outing. A notice will also be posted on the website: [netasfieldnats.com.au](https://netasfieldnats.com.au)

## **SUGGESTIONS FURTHER READING**

What will happen to Australia if the world heats up by 3 deg C:

<https://theconversation.com/seriously-ugly-heres-how-australia-will-look-if-the-world-heats-by-3-c-this-century-157875>

Richard Flanagan on salmon farming in Tasmania:

<https://thenewdaily.com.au/life/science/environment/2021/05/09/toxic-richard-flanagan-salmon/>

Invitation to submit photos of protected Australian sites for Wiki Commons

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Commons:Wiki\\_Loves\\_Earth\\_2021\\_in\\_Australia](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Commons:Wiki_Loves_Earth_2021_in_Australia)

Seabirds as 'canaries in the coal mine':

<https://theconversation.com/seabirds-are-todays-canaries-in-the-coal-mine-and-theyre-sending-us-an-urgent-message-160279>

Dancing peacock spiders are really in the groove:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYIUFEQeh3g>

## MARCH 2021: WHALE ROCK AND SHALLAMAR LAGOON

Text by Lloyd Reeves; photos by Lloyd Reeves (LR), Jay Wilson (JW) and Chris Forbes-Ewan (CFE)

Whale rock, on Mount Cameron's south-west peak, is a spectacular boulder resembling a breaching whale emerging from the granite slab. A fine sight, and much photographed, this was the destination of our March outing, led by Lloyd Reeves.

From the Field Studies Centre Road we walked through open woodland of bracken, dotted with large stringybark (*Eucalyptus obliqua*) and black peppermints (*E. amygdalina*), their trunks blackened by bush fires. Also common were caterpillar wattle (*Acacia mucronata*), bulloak (*Allocasuarina littoralis*), *Banksia marginata*, *Kunzea ambigua* and tea tree (*Leptospermum* sp.).



The rock orchid *Dockrillia*, clinging for dear life to a rock wall – CFE

*Lycopodium* is more closely related to spore-bearing ferns. Its ancestors grew as high as 30 metres in the Carboniferous, creating vast coal reserves, particularly in what is now our Northern Hemisphere.

As the track steepened, we passed between massive sculptural boulders with drifts of the rock orchid *Dockrillia* clinging to the vertical dry rock walls. The flying duck orchid (*Caleana major*) was seen as we approached the rock.

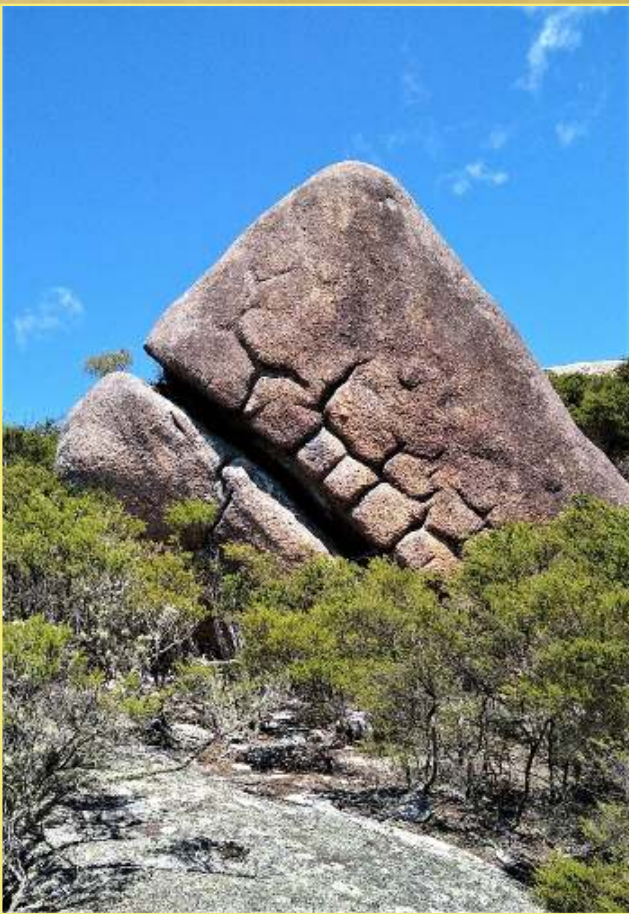
*Lycopodium deuterodensum*, the bushy clubmoss—which has an ancestry dating back to the Carboniferous period, 350–300 million years ago—was growing alongside the track in places. It is a vascular plant, having small leaves and only a single vein of xylem down the middle. But this clubmoss is not a moss, a true moss being non-vascular.



Flying duck orchid (*Caleana major*) – JW



Bushy clubmoss (*Lycopodium deuterodensum*) – CFE



**Whale Rock – bearing a strong resemblance to a breaching sperm whale – LR**

### Some geology and mining history of the area

Mount Cameron is part of the Blue Tier Batholith (a large dome-shaped mass of igneous intrusive rock extending to an unknown depth) which formed in the Devonian period 420–360 million years ago). Molten rock, or magma, pushed its way upwards from deep within the earth's crust, absorbing and pushing aside the overlaying strata, like a huge emerging boil, and coming to rest 1–5 kilometres below the surface of the earth.

Did you know that Lycopodium powder, the dried spores of *Lycopodium*, was used as fingerprint powder, stabilizers for ice cream, flash powders in fireworks and as a lubricant on skin-contacting latex, such as condoms? See the entertaining article here:

<http://cortland.edu/waldbauer-trail/10-plant-evolution-l.html>

From the huge steep granite slab beside Whale Rock, where we stopped for lunch, there are breathtaking views to the west across the Mt Cameron Regional Reserve, and north to the coast and the mouth of the Ringarooma River at Boobyalla. This slab is the beginning of the “skywalk”, extending past Whale Rock towards the summit of Southwest Peak, (477 metres) where there is a 360-degree view of the North East.

After the descent from Whale Rock some of us drove to an old mine hole, now known as Shallamar Lagoon.



**View from Whale Rock – CFE**

It slowly cooled and crystallised to form bodies of tin-bearing alkali-feldspar granite.

The erosion of the overlying strata has uncovered the upper parts of these granite bodies. These are the granite peaks that we see today, e.g. Mt Cameron, Mt Paris, Mt Stronach, Little Mt Horror and the Blue Tier.

The erosion of these granite peaks is the source of the rich alluvial deposits that exist around Mt Cameron, comprising feldspar, quartz, mica, spinel (blackjack), the occasional sapphire for the lucky fossicker, and cassiterite (tin). These days we can see old tin mine workings and large mine holes such as the Little Blue Lake, Pioneer Lake, the Dorset Dredge near Gladstone (which we visited in April 2018—there is an article about this in the June 2018 issue of the North Eastern Naturalist), and of course Shallamar Lagoon.

The Monarch Tin Mine on the banks of nearby Vicarys Creek was not an El Dorado. It did have extensive deposits of tin, but they were ill-defined, being associated with old stream beds that had been covered by subsequent erosion, making them difficult to locate.



**Shallamar Lagoon at dawn – JW**

Hydraulic machines—pumps and high-pressure hoses—were used to remove the overburden as a slurry, which was pumped out. These machines were powered by water from a network of water races which dissected the area. Mike Douglas’s terrific publication “Mt. Cameron Walks” recommends a water race walk of 2–3 hours.

These deposits were exploited from the 1870s to the 1970s, leaving a moonscape of massive tailings, with discarded cables, machinery and mine holes.

Revegetation has softened this scarring, and the mine holes are now water-filled lakes, such as the beautiful Shallamar Lagoon.

## APRIL 2021: WALK THROUGH PARADISE PLAINS

Text by Lou Brooker; photos by Lou Brooker (LB) and Garry Richardson (GR)

**Editorial Note:** This article was first published in the North-Eastern Advertiser on 28 April, 2021. It is reproduced here with minor revisions to the wording.

Our April activity was a walk across a high-altitude flat plain at Paradise Plains, which is south of Ringarooma. A total of 32 members and guests attended the walk.

NE Field Nats had a stark reminder about the importance of understanding and respecting weather predictions—first we experienced sunny, windy weather, and later, towards the end of the outing, it snowed!

The snow had been predicted—after all, we were at an altitude of 800 metres. Everyone was very excited; it was the first snow of the season.

Because of its altitude the area supports an interesting sub-alpine flora. There is also a small arboretum set up by Forestry Tasmania in the 1940s to experiment with growing high-altitude Northern Hemisphere tree species. Views across to Ben Nevis, Mt Victoria and Mt Saddleback can be enjoyed from here.



**Looking at Ben Nevis from Paradise Plains – LB**



**Tranquil forest scene at Paradise Plains – LB**

The main object of the outing was to try to find a couple of huge old myrtles which had been discovered and visited many times by respected, and now deceased Ringarooma resident and explorer, Norm Brown.

The first myrtle was living in the shelter of a forest of tall mountain tea trees. It was in perfect condition, supporting a colony of finger ferns up and down its many trunks. Its age—estimated to be between 200 and 300 years—may be the reason it is protected in a Regional Reserve.

The second tree was in a more exposed position and prone to the effects of weather. Seeing this involved a trek across a moorland vegetated by knee-high daisy bushes and highland Poa grasses.

The group was in awe of these two magnificent trees.



**Magnificent Myrtle (*Nothofagus cunninghamii*) at Paradise Plains; estimated to be between 200 and 300 years old – GR**

## **MORE ABOUT FUNGI - REPRINTED FROM THE BRIDREPORT**

**Text and photos by Lou Brooker**

**Much of the time, you might not even notice fungi. They're small, they're often black or brown and unremarkable. Hidden in the undergrowth in the forest.**

**But wait, some of them are absolutely amazing. Like the fungus that looks like a sea anemone and attracts flies with its foul smell, or the ones that glow in the dark. There are some which only grow on animal faeces, and one which grows on the body of a dead caterpillar underground, its fruiting body looking like a fat leech above the ground.**

**And if you're not interested in the L.B.F's [little brown fungi] keep an eye open for the colourful ones. There's one that looks like bright purple coral, some that are like yellow jelly, others that are bright orange and look like orange peel. One that's easily identified is the beautiful sky blue pixie's parasol.**

**For help with identification of fungi, there is the Tasmanian Fungi facebook page and there's a fungi flip which can be bought in the book shop in Launceston or at the Museum in Wellington Street. Many times on the f.b. page, the question is asked about which fungi are edible and the answer is always "the ones you buy in the supermarket" – a sensible motto to adopt, because many are toxic.**

**It's been a good year for fungi so far. In all the wet, dark forests they spring up in autumn as soon as it rains; then each rain event brings a new flush and different species.**

In Bridport, we are lucky that the walking track goes through such forest. A particularly interesting area for seeing fungi is the eastern section, say from the Ada street entrance up as far as the Elizabeth Street entrance.

Here is a selection of fungi seen on the Bridport walking track recently:



**Coral fungus – also comes in yellow and pink**



**Golden tufts – this colour when young; gold later**



**Jelly bells**



**Golden curtain crust – grows on wood**

## **MAY 2021: VISIT TO TWO BUSH GARDENS**

**Text by Chris Forbes-Ewan with Susan McClenaghan; photos by Ross Coad (RC), Susan McClenaghan (SMC) and Chris Forbes-Ewan (CFE)**

Our May activity was a visit by 16 members and guests to two gardens on secluded properties off East Diddleum Road, near where the road crosses St Patricks River.

Organised by Ian Cameron, our first visit was to Chris Calverley's 100-hectare property, which he bought in 1976. Chris lives in Launceston, but spends as much of his spare time as possible at his home-away-from-home. In the 45 years since Chris bought the property he has established extensive gardens, with an emphasis on native plants. His aim is to maintain an area of bush that will never (or at least in his lifetime) be affected by clear-felling of native forest and its replacement with tree plantations—activities that have changed the landscape of so much of NE Tasmania.



NE Field Nats had previously visited Chris's property 28 years ago. Lou Brooker is the only current member who attended both walks, and Lou was keen to see the changes that have occurred in the nearly three decades since the last visit.

The property is in a 'subalpine' region, so it can be very cold in winter. Chris spoke of night-time temperatures dropping to -10 °C and even to an Antarctic-like -15 °C in mid-winter.

Near his house, Chris's garden has dozens of native plants and several exotic ones. Among many others, his native plants include pandani (*Richea pandanifolia*), scoparia (*Richea scoparia*), myrtle (*Nothofagus cunninghamii*), deciduous beech (*Nothofagus gunnii*), Tasmanian waratah (*Telopea truncata*), common tea-tree (*Leptospermum scoparium*), mountain neinei (*Dracophyllum traversii*), juniper haircap (*Polytrichum juniperinum*), celery-top pine (*Phyllocladus aspleniifolius*) and hewardia (*Isophysis tasmanica*).

Exotic plants include a very healthy-looking monkey puzzle tree (*Araucaria araucana*)—a native of the Andes region of South America—and rock cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster horizontalis*), which is native to eastern Asia.



**Hewardia (*Isophysis tasmanica*) – RC**



**Pandani (*Richea pandanifolia*) and scoparia (*Richea scoparia*) – RC**



**Monkey puzzle tree (*Araucaria araucana*) – SMC**

After showing us the garden near his house, Chris led a walk through some of his property. He told us that an extensive area near his house had been a myrtle forest until a severe fire destroyed much of the forest about a century ago. This left a large area of grassland, together with some pockets of myrtles mixed with eucalypts, and some of the original rainforest. In the rainforest we observed many impressive man ferns and some beautiful fungi. Chris also pointed out a Tasmanian Devil den in the rainforest; it appeared to be unoccupied at the time.

On the walk back to the house, Chris took us to see a large granite boulder that has an interesting characteristic—it split several decades ago, and the gap between the two parts of the boulder is now widening under the influence of gravity by approximately a centimetre per year.

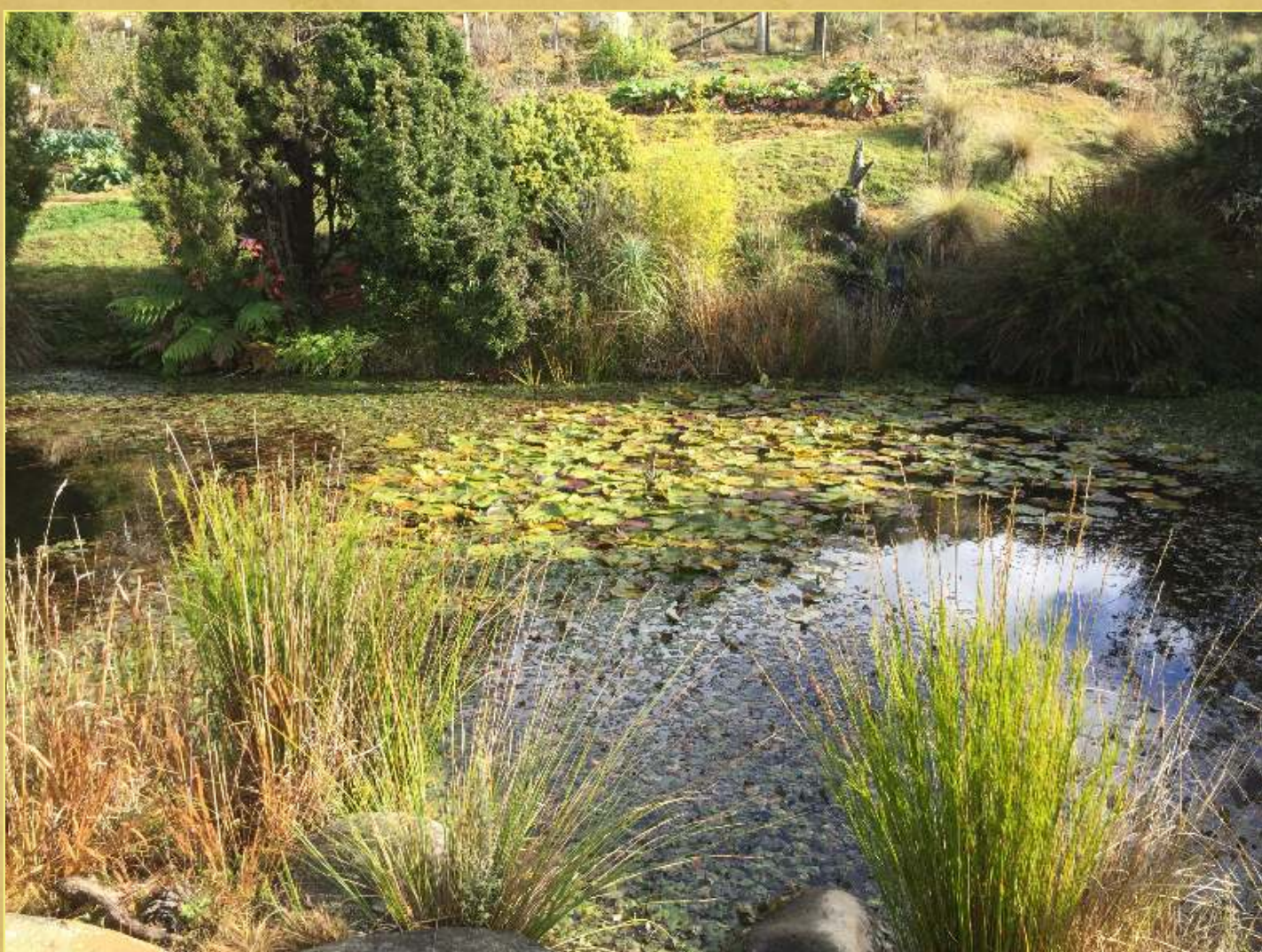
We had lunch in Chris's backyard, admiring the water lilies in his pond and the magnificent plants dotted around his house, and his very productive vegetable garden.



**Deciduous beech (*Nothofagus gunnii*) – RC**



**Tasmanian Devil's den – SMC**



**Chris Calverley's lily pond; If he were alive today, Claude Monet would surely be envious! – CFE**

After lunch we drove to Susan and Shane McClenaghan's bush retreat, which is a couple of kilometres from Chris's property.

Like Chris, Shane and Susan live in Launceston, but take every available opportunity to experience the peace and quiet of their second home. They have put a lot of work into making their bush retreat both liveable and spectacularly beautiful.

Susan's family has a long and intimate connection with this property. It was bought in 1917 by her great-grandfather, who ran a bakery business in Scottsdale. His family of nine children would visit and camp on it in the original hut (which is no longer in existence) during weekends and school holidays, where they would trap possums and rabbits for the furs (to make pocket money). They also started clearing some of the land by burning tussock grasses and ringbarking trees.

Susan's grandfather, Ron Sowter, ran some Angus beef cattle there and grew hay, swedes (sold at market) and cow turnips at various times until the late 1990s. (As an aside, Ron was a member of NE Field Nats when Susan was a child—she remembers going on some outings with her grandfather and other members in the early days of NE Field Nats.)

Although some areas were selectively logged in the 1940s, most of the 136 hectares is still original native bush and rainforest, which is why it is so good for fungi, bryophytes, and native flora and fauna. As applies to Chris Calverley, Susan and Shane aim to keep their property as natural as possible.



**Some of the beautiful natural bush on Susan and Shane McClenaghan's property – CFE**



**Mauve splitting wax-cap (*Porpolomopsis lewellinae*) – CFE**

Susan led a walk through what could perhaps best be described as an enchanted rainforest. One experienced NE Field Nats member was heard to say that this was probably the most beautiful forest she had ever seen.

Apart from the exquisite natural environment, a highlight of this walk was the wide range of fungi we observed, most of which were identified by Susan and other fungi enthusiasts (see photos below).

NE Field Nats is very grateful to Chris Calverley, and Susan and Shane McClenaghan, for taking the time to show us their magnificent properties.



**Autumn skullcap (*Galerina patagonica*) – RC**



**Slimy green wax-cap (*Hygrocybe graminicolor*) – RC**



**Pixie's parasol (*Mycena interrupta*) – RC**



**Southern bracket fungus *Ganoderma australe* – CFE**



**Orange-yellow coral fungus (*Clavaria* sp.) – CFE**



**Unidentified fungus (possibly *Crepitodes nephrodes*) – RC**