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 Secretary: Too often it's only at the AGM that we acknowledge all those who lead outings for the club.

So I'd like to mention all those who've stepped up in the last year:

Claudia Bohme, Mike Douglas, Penny and Lloyd Reeves, Liese and Paul Fearman, Pam Bretz, Len Gillett and Alex Buchanan.

In the next few months Ian Cameron and Anne Witherden, and Susan and Shane McClenaghan will share their passions of bird watching and fungi, respectively.

I'd like to also mention Dig Probert, whom I think we could call an 'honorary member' for leading (or co-leading) multiple visits to the Musselroe Wind Farm.

On behalf of all our members, many thanks to all the activity leaders for enriching our club.

Members' photos of NE Tasmania

Caladenia cracens (Elegant caladenia) – Ross Coad

Sun's Flat Creek, Blue Tier – Lou Brooker

Pleurotus purpureo-olivaceus – Chris Forbes-Ewan

Partial Program for 2022

NB The program is still being developed. In particular, we need suggestions on an appropriate activity for Saturday April 9th. If you have a suggestion, please let Lou know by phone or email.

MARCH 12th: Birds of the Tamar River

Leaders are Ian Cameron and Anne Witherden. Be at the southern end of Native Point Track, Native Point Nature Reserve at 10.00 am. See the map on the NEFN website:
http://www.netasfieldnats.com.au/uncategorized/excursion-program/
Snakes may be encountered on the walk, so please wear rubber boots or hiking boots and gaiters. Also, bring binoculars if you have them.
From the Tamar Islands Wetlands Centre website:

> Located in the Tamar Conservation Area, the wetlands are a superb site to see bird life in Tasmania with around 60 species being identified in the area. There are several species of duck, black swans, egrets, cormorants and swamp harriers, as well as occasional visitors such as the white-bellied sea eagle, and northern hemisphere migrants such as the common greenshank.

APRIL 9th: TBA – Suggestions needed; please contact Lou Brooker if you have a suggestion

MAY 14th: Fungi at Diddleum Plains; leader Susan McClenaghan

Other dates locked in:

AUGUST 13th: AGM

NOVEMBER 12th: Walking at Cape Portland; leader Dig Probert – Annual Camp

DECEMBER 10th: Bare Rock, Fingal Valley; leader Roy Skabo.

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

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Native birds have vanished across the continent since colonisation. Now we know just how much we've lost.
https://theconversation.com/native-birds-have-vanished-across-the-continent-since-colonisation-now-we-know-just-how-much-weve-lost-176239

Get to know blackwood better: a magnificent timber and a tough, towering wattle that can survive landslides.
https://theconversation.com/get-to-know-blackwood-better-a-magnificent-timber-and-a-tough-towering-wattle-that-can survive-landslides-172401

Australia-first research reveals staggering loss of threatened plants over 20 years.
https://theconversation.com/australia-first-research-reveals-staggering-loss-of-threatened-plants-over-20-years-151408

Australian fires in 2019–2020 had even more global reach than previously thought.
https://www.sciencenews.org/article/australia-wildfires-climate-change-carbon-dioxide-ocean-algae

Altruism in birds? Magpies have outwitted scientists by helping each other remove tracking devices
https://theconversation.com/altruism-in-birds-magpies-have-outwitted-scientists-by-helping-each-other-remove-tracking-devices-175246

DECEMBER 2021: CAPE PORTLAND AND PETAL POINT

Article by Claudia Bohme and Lou Brooker, with Chris Forbes-Ewan

Photos by Penny Reeves (PR) and Chris Forbes-Ewan (CFE)

With Claudia Bohme and Lou Brooker as leaders, our final outing for 2021 involved exploring Cape Portland, including Petal Point and the Musselroe Wind Farm, with a focus on finding endangered or threatened species.

A total of 23 members and guests met at Petal Point, where Lou explained how the Land Information System Tasmania (LIST) map website was very useful in giving us an indication of which endangered or threatened species we would be looking for.

All the vegetation at Petal Point is less than one metre tall. Species such as the common boobyalla (*Myoporum insulare*) which, only a little further inland reaches three to four metres in height, are stunted here because of the constant harsh winds.

NE Field Nats looking for threatened and endangered species at Petal Point; note the stunted flora – PR

Some flowers and plants were hardly noticeable to the untrained eye, and several were so tiny that magnifying glasses were needed to identify them. Fortunately, we were in the company of Alex Buchanan, who is an expert at identifying Tasmanian flora in the field, following his long and outstanding career with the Tasmanian Herbarium.

A couple of examples of the Austral trefoil (*Lotus australis*) were found, one poking its head above a densely growing banksia that had almost smothered it, the other growing close to the sea just above the

splash zone, apparently just surviving in the adverse conditions. Among many other attractive plants here, we also saw the unfortunately-named native pigface (*Carpobrotus rossii*).

Native pigface (*Carpobrotus rossii*) – CFE

We also saw several milky beautyheads (*Calocephalus lacteus*), a perennial herb with silver-grey leaves and cream, globular-shaped flower heads. In addition to being native to North-Eastern Tasmania, it also grows on the lower parts of the Central Plateau.

A distribution map of these species shows that many of them grow in the Cape Portland area, and nowhere else on the mainland of Tasmania. But they also grow on Flinders Island and on the Victorian coast. These are the plants that were 'stranded' as the sea level rose in Bass Strait nearly 12 000 years ago, when the last ice age ended.

Then the search was on for a carnivorous plant called the Scarlet sundew, also known as the Pimpernel sundew (*Drosera glanduligera*), classified *rare in* Tasmania. This geophytic herb dies down to underground parts, i.e. bulbs or corms, during adverse conditions such as winter or a dry season. Although it wasn't found on the day, two members (Claudia Bohme and Dig Probert) later realised that it was growing prolifically on their nearby bush blocks!

After an enjoyable picnic lunch we drove to Musselroe Wind Farm under strict supervision and guidance from Lou and Claudia, who had been trained in how to safely move around the farm.

We started at the eastern end, crossing the Little Musselroe River into an area where revegetation efforts have resulted in a beautifully functioning ecosystem.

The grazing of livestock is limited here to the low-lying areas of river flats, leaving higher ground fenced off purely for native flora and fauna. Great effort has been made to eradicate foreign weed species such as African boxthorn, gorse and thistles.

As we passed through, large mobs of Forester kangaroos were making their way across the grassy plains to take cover in the dense shrubs ahead, which included the attractive swamp honey-myrtle (*Melaleuca squamea*).

Swamp honey-myrtle (*Melaleuca squamea*) – CFE

So, although many of the native plants here are classified as *rare* or *threatened*, the management of the Musselroe Wind Farm have put great effort into revegetating key areas. As a result, it would appear that these plants are much less threatened than previously.

It was also pleasing to see large lagoons and smaller billabongs filled with water, providing habitat for many birds, mammals and reptiles.

Having been warned about the large number of snakes in this area, most of the attendees wore knee-high boots, or sturdy shoes and gaiters as a precaution. However, as usually happens on our walks, no snakes were encountered. (Tasmanian snakes are shy and usually shun human company.)

Many people know the common dogwood (*Pomaderris apetala*)—a small tree (or large shrub) of the wet forests—but at Cape Portland it has a less-commonly-seen cousin *Pomaderris paniculosa* subsp. *paralia*. This is a fairly bushy shrub that grows to about two metres in height and is classified as *rare* In Tasmania, where it has been observed in small numbers in coastal sites in the northeast, the Furneaux Group and King Island. It also reputedly occurs in inland areas of Flinders Island, near Wingaroo.

We also observed the eye-catching clustered everlasting (*Chrysocephalum semipapposum*) and the dagger hakea (*Hakea teretifolia*).

Clustered everlasting (*Chrysocephalum semipapposum*) – CFE_

Dagger hakea (*Hakea teretifolia*) – CFE

The last destination on our discovery tour of endangered and threatened species was the north-west corner of the wind farm, towards the point of Cape Portland. Here we walked a loop, firstly inland and then back along the beach, where we were greeted by spectacularly beautiful coastal scenery.

And right in front of us, in the shallows of the pristine water, were many dark shapes, each about a metre in length. Gliding along—seemingly oblivious to our presence—these were skates (a kind of ray), 'on their honeymoon', we were told.

The other 'big find' here was the tiny triggerplant (*Stylidium despectum*). Those members particularly interested in finding it had mistakenly assumed it would just be a miniature version of *Stylidium gramminifolium*. Not so! Alex spotted the only example observed. According to the book *Tasmanian Plant Names Unravelled* by Mark, Annie and Hans Wapstra, the name *despectum* is from the Latin *despectus*, meaning insignificant, or looked down upon. As suggested by its name, it is a small, ephemeral plant up to 10 cm in height. However, the growing conditions here are so extreme, the specimen Alex pointed out was barely 1 cm tall!

Grass tree (*Xanthorrhoea australis*) – CFE

Taking a leisurely walk along the superb beach at Cape Portland – CFE

There were six threatened orchids on our list of plants to look for. Although we saw several with fruiting bodies, it may have been too late in the season to catch them in flower—during the Federation meeting in September 2012 (i.e. three months earlier in the year), rabbit ears (*Thelymitra antennifera*) were seen in flower.

We finished the day with a wonderful Christmas barbeque at the stone house. Following the barbecue, several members stayed the night, sleeping in the stone house, or camping in tents or vans.

The comfortable and spacious lounge room in the stone house – CFE

APPENDIX: List of Plants seen at Cape Portland and the Musselroe Wind Farm according to location. List compiled by Anne Witherden, Alex Buchanan and Lou Brooker

Scattered low woodland-shrubland patches

Eucalyptus amygdalina	Black peppermint
Allocasuarina verticillata	Sheoak
Dodonaea viscosa	Hopbush
Kunzea ambigua	Kunzea
Bursaria spinosa	Prickly box
Leptospermum laevigatum	Coast teatree
Xanthorrhoea australis	Grass tree
Acacia sophorae	Coast wattle
Melaleuca ericifolia	Coast paperbark
Banksia marginata	Common banksia
Leptospermum lanigerum	Woolly teatree
Melaleuca squarrosa	Scented paperbark
Pomaderris elliptica	Yellow dogwood
Pomaderris paniculosa	Shining dogwood
Astroloma humifusum	Native cranberry
Hibbertia riparia	Guinea flower
Calytrix tetragona	Common fringe-myrtle
Hakea teretifolia	Dagger hakea
Bossiaea cordigera	Wiry bossia
Bossiaea cinerea	Showy bossia
Lomandra longifolia	Sagg
Poa poiformis	Coastal Tussock-grass
Themeda triandra	Kangaroo grass

Shoreline shrubbery and saline herbfield

Myoporum insulare	Common boobyalla
Leucopogon parviflorus	Coast beard-heath
Correa alba	White correa
Pimelea glauca	Coast riceflower
Olearia axillaris	Coastal daisybush
Ozothamnus turbinatus	Coast everlasting
Rhagodia candolleana	Coastal saltbush
Alyxia buxifolia	Seabox
Leucophyta brownii	Cushion bush
Atriplex cinerea	Grey saltbush
Exocarpos syrticola	Coastal native cherry
Melaleuca squamea	Swamp honey-myrtle
Muehlenbeckia adpressa	Coastal lignum
Tetragonia implexicoma	Bower spinach
Dianella revoluta	Spreading flax lily
Lepidosperma gladiatum	Coast sword-sedge
Austrostipa stipoides	Coast spear-grass

Shoreline shrubbery and saline herbfield (cont'd)

Distichlis distichophylla	Australian saltgrass
Dichondra repens	Kidneyweed
Acaena novae-zelandiae	Buzzy
Pelargonium australe	Storksbill
Apium prostratum	Native parsley
Samolus repens	Creeping brookweed
Carpobrotus rossii	Native pigface
Disphyma crassifolium	Round-leaved pigface
Spinifex sericeus	Beach spinifex
Actites megalocarpus	Native Sour thistle
Gnaphalium indutum	Cud weed
Kennedia prostrata	Running postman
Lobelia anceps	Native lobelia
Stylidium armeria	Coastal trigger plant
Chenopodium glaucum	Pale goosefoot
Baumea juncea	Bare twigsedge
Selliera radicans	Shiny swampmat
Hemichroa pentandra	Training saltstar
Sarcocornia quinqueflora	Samphire
Sebaea albidiflora	White sebaea
Wilsonia humilis	Silky wilsonia
Euphorbia paralias	Sea spurge*
Vellereophyton dealbatum	Cud weed*

Open herbfield and low shrubby margins

Pimelea linifolia	Rice flower
Pultenaea stricta	Rigid peabush
Lasiopetalum baueri	Slender velvet bush
Comesperma volubile	Blue love creeper (pink)
Coronidium scorpioides	Curling everlasting daisy
Lotus australis	Australian trefoil
Gompholobium huegelii	Common wedgepea
Wahlenbergia sp.	Bluebell
Scleranthus biflorus	Knawel
Viola hederacea	Ivy leaf Violet
Microseris lanceolata	Yam daisy
Calocephalus lacteus	Milky beautyheads
Hypericum gramineum	Small St Johns-wort
Drosera pygmaea	Dwarf sundew
Xyris sp.	Yellow eye

*NB The two species in black are not native to Tasmania.

JANUARY 2022: DRAGONFLIES AT FOUR SPRINGS LAKE

Text by Chris Forbes-Ewan; photos by Ross Coad (RC) and Lou Brooker (LB)

Editorial note: This text of this article was first published in the North Eastern Advertiser on 19 January, 2022.

As our January activity, 13 members of the NE Field Naturalists Club spent several hours looking for dragonflies, and their close relatives damselflies, at Four Springs Lake, which is about 20 km north of Hagley.

The leader was Professor Nigel Forteath, who is well-known as the inaugural Professor of Aquaculture at UTAS and as a key contributor to the establishment of Sea Horse World.

Nigel is also an expert on dragonflies, a subject he developed an interest in when he took up fly fishing many years ago. He was involved in the formation of Four Springs Lake—an artificial lake that was established in the 1990s for recreational fishing.

Dragonflies and damselflies are prolific here, and they (or their larval forms, 'mudeyes') are used as bait for fishing for trout (rainbow and brown) and native fish that inhabit the lake.

NE Field Nats chasing dragonflies and damselflies at Four Springs Lake – LB

In this area Nigel has seen 16 species of dragonflies and damselflies (of a total of 27 species that have been identified in Tasmania); our aim was to find as many of these species as we could. To this end, he distributed several nets among members, while other members had brought their own nets.

To provide photo opportunities, Nigel had brought a small freezer. When caught, each dragonfly was chilled so it would remain still for about four minutes. This provided the photographers with ample time to take photos before the dragonfly awoke and flew away.

In warm, sunny weather we set off on our quest. But even before we had begun walking along the path that runs parallel to the shore we saw hundreds of dragonflies and damselflies, the most prolific of which was the Common Bluetail damselfly (*Ischnura heterosticta*).

Other dragonflies and damselflies seen on the day include the Red and Blue damselfly (*Xanthagrion erithoneurum*); Blue Ringtail damselfly (*Austrolestes annulosus*); Yellow-Striped Hunter dragonfly,

(*Austrogomphus guerini*); Australian Emperor (*Anax puapensis*)—the largest of the dragonflies in this region, with a wingspan of about 10 cm); Blue Skimmer dragonfly (*Orthetrum caledonicum*); and Eastern Swamp Emerald dragonfly (*Procordulia jacksoniensis*).

Ischnura heterosticta (Common bluetail damselfly) – RC

Austrolestes annulosus (Blue ringtail damselfly) – RC

Although everyone is familiar with the adult (flying) form of dragonflies, most of their life is actually spent living in the water as larval nymphs.

When their eggs have been fertilised, many female dragonflies drop the eggs in the water, where they hatch as nymphs. When it's time for the nymph to emerge as an adult, it crawls out of the water and up the first vertical object it finds, which is usually a reed or a rush.

The exoskeleton of the nymph splits and the dragonfly emerges, leaving the exuviae—the remains of the exoskeleton—looking like a ghostly apparition attached to the reed or rush.

Exuviae – remains of the exoskeleton of a dragonfly or damselfly nymph (larva) – LB

Procordulia jacksoniensis (Eastern swamp emerald) – LB

Xanthagrion erythroneurum (Red and blue damselfly) – RC

We also saw a magnificent sea eagle, which made 'lazy circles in the sky' over the lake, apparently looking for its dinner of fresh fish.

FEBRUARY 2022: VISIT TO BEN LOMOND

Text by Mike Douglas; photos by Mike Douglas (MD) and Ross Coad (RC)

Our February outing was to Ben Lomond. Under the leadership of Mike Douglas the 18 participants drove up Jacobs Ladder to the ski village, then walked around the 5-km Little Hell pole line circuit, a route orginally created for cross-country skiers.

It was a memorable day, walking across both scrubby and grassy tracts packed with alpine wild flowers and cushion plants, together with boulder-hopping over fields of bare rock.

Mike Douglas points out features of the view across the southern end of the plateau and beyond – RC

The weather was kind—rather cool at first, then settling to a mild day with sunny interludes.

Plants in flower included Tasmanian snow gentians (*Gentianella diemensis* subsp. *diemensis*) and possibly Ben Lomond snow gentians subsp. *plantaginea*, found only on northeastern mountains.

Others noted were yellow-flowered alpine groundsel (*Senecio pectinatus* var. *pectinatus*); frilly carpet heath (*Pentachondra pumila*); alpine billy buttons (*Craspedia alpina*); alpine heat myrtle (*Baeckea gunniana*); golden everlasting (*Xerochrysum subundulatum*); trigger plant (*Stylidium graminifolia*); mountain rocket (*Bellendena montana*) and two endemic species—alpine leek orchid (*Prasophyllum alpina*) and the beautiful snow daisy (*Celmisia asteliifolia*).

***Bellendena montana* (mountain rocket) – RC**

***Gentianella diemensis* (Tasmanian snow gentian) – RC**

Not in flower, but worthy of mention were two more endemic species—diamond cushion herb (*Ewartia catipes*) and alpine westringia (*Westringia rubiaefolia*)—and the non-endemic mountain cranesbill (*Geranium potentilloides*) and mountain current (*Coprosma nitida*).

The numerous pools contained alpine club sedge (*Isolepis crassiuscula*) and mat water milfoil (*Myriophyllum pedunculatum*).

Tadpoles seen were probably those of the Tasmanian froglet *Crinia tasmaniensis,* which is endemic.

Grasses that are enjoyed by the thriving wallabies of Ben Lomond include prickly snowgrass (*Poa costiniana*) and two endemic species—cushion wallaby grass (*Rytidosperma pauciflorum*) and Gunns snowgrass (*Poa gunnii*).

Alpine succulents – RC

Lunch was taken just below the highest point of the walk, a cairned, un-named eminence of altitude 1546 m (about the same height as Cradle Mountain).

The high point provided an excellent view of the southern part of the dolerite-capped Ben Lomond plateau, dominated by Stacks Bluff on the southern rim.

The distant Lake Baker and the somewhat nearer Lake Youl (source of the Nile River) were visible. These lakes were formed by a process known as *over-deepening*—the movement of glacial ice during the last ice age caused massive erosion to create deep valleys. When the ice age ended, these valleys filled with water to became the lakes we see there today.

Looking southwards to Lake Baker – MD

Rodway Valley in winter showing Stacks Bluff in the background – MD

Ice abraded dolerite columns in cross section – MD

The Ben Lomond horst (up faulted block) and the Tamar and Cressy grabens (down faulted blocks) were formed about 85 million years ago.

The story of the glaciation and periglaciation (frost shattering) on the plateau was told in the North Eastern Naturalist of June 2020 (No. 209), in an article about our visit to the Plains of Heaven.

From the high point we looked down into the nearby Rodway Valley, which was once a 'river of rock' consisting of dolerite blocks derived from the first shattering literally creeping downstream, lubricated by water and clayey erosional products. It is now immobile.

The Ben Lomond plateau is treeless, partly because the Tasmanian snowgum (*Eucalyptus coccifera*), which is endemic, is absent from the mountains of the Northeast. This tree would almost certainly survive on some sites, particularly on the lower southern half of the plateau.

View to the east of the walking track – RC