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Orchid of the Newsletter:
Autumn Bird Orchid (Chiloglottis reflexa)
see page 10

Photo: Hans and Annie Wapstra

The Land for Wildlife Scheme in Tasmania is delivered through The Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment in partnership with Wildcare Inc.
From the Coordinator

Welcome to the eleventh edition of the Land for Wildlife newsletter. This year there will be two more newsletters with fixed deadlines of 31st July and 24th November, so if you wish to advertise an event or LFW activity just let me know before these dates.

There were over 76 new properties registered with the owners becoming members of the LFW scheme in 2005. Additionally, I have had quite a few requests from people wishing to join the scheme, however there is a minimum property size requirement of 2 ha for properties which can be accepted into the scheme. On occasion properties between 1-2 ha have been accepted where there is excellent native vegetation or community of high conservation value, the property is adjacent to a reserve/national park, or where adjoining properties effectively contribute to a much larger area under protection by jointly being in the scheme. The people who have contacted me have been keen to be in the scheme, but recognise that they may not meet the criteria for registration because they do not have enough land or the right type of vegetation. Nevertheless, they may very well be providing valuable habitat for wildlife and the reasoning for them wishing to be in the scheme should be recognised, encouraged and supported. In response to this I believe this could be achieved through a sub-program of the LFW scheme, or a separate scheme, which I call “Garden for Wildlife” which will largely suit urban and sub-urban properties. There has been strong support and interest in this scheme with the planning and development of the “Garden for Wildlife” scheme in progress in collaboration with relevant partners. The “Garden for Wildlife” scheme would also provide a means of educating people about ways to move away from wastefulness and over-consumption and for people to consider and become more aware of our natural resources and the environment. In this way it will become an avenue for other environmental initiatives such as, water conservation, chemical reduction, waste management, recycling etc. Individuals all contributing can collectively provide greater environmental benefits far beyond the boundaries of their properties. When this scheme be implemented is unknown at this stage (I am keen to get it going as soon as possible), but I will keep you informed of progress.

In early December, Peter Riggall held a bird walk, lead by Sarah Lloyd on his 42 ha property ‘Dunbarton’ at Nabowla. There were heavy rains in the morning, but the rain largely held off during the walks. The overcast conditions actually provided a better opportunity to see, or listen to the many species of birds as they stayed out and about for longer. There were a considerable variety of native birds, with Sarah listing 28 species, six of which were endemic. There were also quite a number of various types of fungi attached to fallen logs, litter, tree trunks or at the base of trees. The colours and textures of the top as well as underside of these fungi were quite amazing. Sarah and Ron Nagorcka explained the names and key characteristic features which was most interesting. Many were Fungimap target species (see LFW newsletter Vol. 8, page 4-5) – in fact I brought a copy of the ‘Fungi down under’ book from Sarah so I could remember the names and features of the fungi we saw. Peter has had considerable problems with holly becoming an invasive species throughout his bush, riparian and native grassland area. Largely spread by birds eating the berries and releasing the seeds in their droppings. Peter has done a fantastic job eradicating this species on his property, but seedlings continue to appear – as the group walked round whenever a holly seedling was spied it was pulled out (an added benefit to Peter). There are key places Peter knows to keep an eye out for seedlings from his observations of where seedlings appear, such as along fence lines where birds rest on the wires. It was a most interesting and enjoyable day with great diversity of vegetation, birds and fungi observed – Peter and his wife Lorraine have a lovely property, and it was most rewarding to those who took up his invitation to attend.

Sarah will be leading another bird walk on Sunday 2nd April at a property in Railton – see the members’ page for more information. In this newsletter, Sarah has written an interesting article on noisy miners, which explains why they dominate and the value of maintaining understorey vegetation. Bob Holderness-Roddam, who is a member of a group who look after the Glenorchy City Councils LFW registered Poimen Reserve, gives a history and description of this valuable reserve. Therese has been busy writing a number of articles which will provide members with useful advice for good books on reptiles, frogs and mammals in Tasmania. Therese has also done a review of the ‘Little book of common names for Tasmanian plants’ and ‘From forest to fjaeldmark – descriptions of Tasmania’s vegetation’, which describes the vegetation communities used in the TASVEG maps of the state. Recently, the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment have created on their web site an ‘Information for Private Landholders’ page. This provides a wealth of useful information and advice – details on what and where to access the web page are given.

Karen Johnson, from the Non-Forest Vegetation program has written an informative and delightful account of native grasslands, describing activities that go on in native grasslands and some of the history. Therese has written a fascinating article about Autumn Bird orchids and how they fool wasps. Last year was an excellent year for orchids – hopefully it will be the same this year, so keep a watchful eye out. The Launceston Field Naturalists Club held an open day in February at their property ‘Skemps’ at Myrtle Banks – this was well attended, and I would recommend anyone travelling in that area to visit ‘Skemps’, you can even stay for a day or more. Refer to the article about the ‘Skemps’ open day.

I hope you enjoy this volume of the newsletter. Feedback on its contents, or suggestion for information you would like to see included would be most welcome. I would also encourage you to use the members’ page for any notes or events that other LFWers would be interested in. Please feel free to contribute any articles to the newsletter.

Iona Mitchell
Poimena Reserve is located in Austins Ferry. The main access is via Wakehurst Road from Main Road – turn off at the Austins Ferry Store. There is a car park and BBQ shelters at the top of Wakehurst Road. This is a good starting point to explore this important but threatened area of Land for Wildlife.

Poimena was established as a Glenorchy City Council reserve in the early 1970s, the result of hard work by a group of local citizens. It was designated as Land for Wildlife about four years ago, as a result of a suggestion from the Austins Ferry / Granton precinct committee of Glenorchy City Council. The reserve area is just over 27 hectares (about 68 acres).

Poimena is basically a low hill, grading from eight metres at Roseneath Park on Main Road, to 119 metres at the top. The southern slope is basically regrowth bush, with some mature eucalypts. Understorey consists of casuarinas, wattles and a lot of weeds – notably cotoneaster, blackberry, and a small quantity of gorse. Council has cut down a lot of introduced pine trees in recent years. At about the 80 metre contour, this bush gives way to open parkland, which is dotted with eucalypts and wattle trees. This continues to the top, where there are two council reservoirs and a lookout. The area where the bush meets the parkland is serviced by a car park, toilets and several wood-fired BBQs. The eastern slope starts at the bushland meets the parkland is serviced by a car park, toilets and several wood-fired BBQs. The eastern slope starts at Roseneath Park on Main Road, and continues as grassland up along Wakehurst Road (where a small residential development intrudes) to the car park area. Roseneath Creek runs along the southern boundary.

Poimena Reserve is the only existing remnant bushland in the City of Glenorchy. It is a mixture of natural bushland and improved grassland and is a site of high nature significance, particularly for Beetle species, with some found only in Poimena. The Stag Beetle (Basilaris), known only to exist in the lower foothills of the Derwent Valley, is found here. The Looper or Geometer Moth, listed as rare on the Threatened Species list is also known to live here.

Some seventy two bird species, bandicoots (both species) and bettongs have been observed in the reserve. Tasmania’s three snake species, three of the eleven lizard species found around Hobart (metallic skink, blotched bluetongue and delicate skink) are also present. [Info. taken from work by the late David Cowie (publication) and Sacha Jellink (talk to precinct committee 21 Feb. 2002).]

As a regular visitor to Poimena for several years, I have to admit that I haven’t seen any Bettongs, but both Bandicoot species seem to be reasonably plentiful. Since September 2005 I have kept a regular list of bird sightings. Current count is 48. This includes residents, such as the introduced Europeans (Starling, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Blackbird and House Sparrow), Grey Butcherbird, Common Bronzewing, Noisy Mynah and both Wattlebird species. Summer visitors include the Dusky Wood Swallow, Black Faced Cuckoo Shrike and Pallid Cuckoo.

About 12 of the recorded bird species require tree holes for nesting. Sadly, my recent survey of trees with holes could only find 23, and most of these are near the perimeters where existing and planned residential developments pose a threat – through increased cat and dog numbers, illegal trail bikes and more weeds ‘escaping’ from gardens. [Info. taken from work by the late David Cowie (publication) and Sacha Jellink (talk to precinct committee 21 Feb. 2002).]

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TWO NEW BOTANICAL BOOKS

1. Little Book of Common Names for Tasmanian Plants

   by Hans and Annie Wapstra, Mark Wapstra, Louise Gilfedder.

   This book was written on the premise that all plants deserve a common name. Learning scientific names is a long and dedicated journey but has been necessary because there are always problems with common names. More than one species can be given the same common name and one common name can be used for multiple species. It can result in a lot of communication confusion. This book allows for consistency and provides common name for every plant species in Tasmania.

   It costs $10.00 (payable in cash or by cheque made out to the Department of Primary Industries, Water & Environment).

2. From Forest to Fjaeldmark - Descriptions of Tasmania’s Vegetation

   by Steve Harris and Anne Kitchener (2005)

   If you didn’t know, the whole state has now been mapped in terms of 158 vegetation communities. This quite technical book mainly comprises vegetation descriptions for the ecological vegetation communities on the TASVEG map.

   It costs $55.00 (payable in cash or by cheque made out to the Department of Primary Industries, Water & Environment).

   Both books are available from:
   Biodiversity Conservation Branch
   Department of Primary Industries; Water and Environment
   134 Macquarie Street; GPO Box 44
   HOBART TAS 7000
   Phone: 03 6233 6556
   Fax: 03 6233 3477
   Email: Biodiversity.Enquiries@dpiwe.tas.gov.au

   But they are also available free of charge online at http://www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au; then click on Natural Environment Plants and Animals of Tasmania Vegetation of Tasmania then either: From Forest to Fjaeldmark - Descriptions of Tasmania's Vegetation or: Little Book of Common Names for Tasmanian Plants
A miner concern - Birdwatching on the East Coast
Sarah Lloyd

Following my offer to lead bird walks at Land for Wildlife properties, I was delighted to receive an invitation to visit "Windsong", Tom and Jane Tenniswood's property at Little Swanport. While on the east coast I also surveyed the birds at two other Land for Wildlife properties nearby.

The Tenniswood's property has a mix of cleared sheep grazing country and dry eucalypt forest. The forest has a covenant through the Private Forest Reserve scheme to protect the rare Choastola skipper Antipodia choastola, a butterfly whose occurrence in Tasmania reflects the restricted distribution of its larval food plant, the swordedge Gaemia radula.

On Saturday morning we walked across the open paddocks to the large area of protected forest. Noisy Miners dominated the farmland, but we also watched several of the state's summer migrants including Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes, Dusky Woodswallows, Richard's Pipit and one Striated Pardalote calling from an isolated paddock eucalypt.

The forest has a variety of eucalypts including white and blue gums and black and white peppermints and, growing in the nutrient-poor, sandy soils characteristic of coastal regions throughout much of Tasmania, a wonderful diversity of ground cover and understorey plants. During our late spring visit, the subtle beauty of the Tasmanian bush was evident in the colourful display of pimeleas, peas and several orchids including leopard orchids (Diuris pardinia), potato orchids (Gastrodia sp.) and sun orchids (Thelymitra spp.).

Apart from the mid-layer understorey that is still virtually absent, most of the vegetation is regenerating well after the cessation of grazing and firewood collection that had been the main land use in the area until being fenced ten years ago. But there was an unusual stillness as we entered the reserve and I was concerned to see that, as well as being widespread throughout the open farmland, Noisy Miners were also well established in the bush. This provoked much discussion: was it the prolonged drought that was causing the deteriorating health of many of the eucalypts, especially the white gums, or was it the absence of insectivorous birds?

For me, being greeted by the incessant calling of Noisy Miners doesn't bode well for a good weekend of birdwatching. Quite the contrary; Noisy Miners are indicative of the ecological imbalance brought about by farming practices largely unsuited to this country and where a limited and predictable array of bird species will be present.

Noisy Miners Manorina melanocephala (not to be confused with the introduced Common or Indian Myna, Acridotheres tristis that is now well established on the mainland) are native honeyeaters that live colonially in family groups. They prefer open country with scattered eucalypts or areas of bush with little or no understorey and have been favoured by management regimes that involve the clearing and fragmentation of the bush and/or the burning and grazing that eliminates the understorey. They constantly bicker amongst themselves and will aggressively exclude (and sometimes even kill) smaller birds such as pardalotes and honeyeaters from their territory. The birds they either tolerate or that can withstand their pugnacious nature include larger species such as Grey Butcherbirds, Laughing Kookaburras, Australian Magpies, Forest Ravens and Eastern Rosellas. Striated Pardalotes occasionally survive in miner-infested areas, probably because they are a cavity nesting species that are able to retreat to their nesting hollow to avoid the miners' onslaughts.

Noisy Miners are unlike most other bush birds in that they are generalist rather than specialist feeders. They forage on the ground, trunks and branches and in the shrub layer or canopy. By contrast, the birds they exclude are the smaller species; insect eaters with very specific feeding niches that consume numerous leaf eating invertebrates that, left unchecked, can sometimes defoliate the trees. Not only do Miners colonise degraded farmland, but they cause further deterioration in the health of trees by excluding these insectivorous birds.

As we continued our walk through the bush we encountered more understorey shrubs and a dramatic change in the bird fauna. Instead of the Miners' persistent calls I began to hear some of the birds I'd been expecting including Grey Fantails, Brown Thornbills, Eastern Spinebills, Black-headed Honeyeaters and Shining Bronze-cuckoos. Whether because of the different aspect, microclimate, or because it was too steep for grazing or firewood collection, this area had had a different management regime and the dense shrubby understorey layer was still intact. The corresponding increase in bird species was a stark reminder of the value and importance of structurally diverse vegetation in maintaining healthy bird populations. Structurally diverse vegetation gives a variety of bird species more opportunities for foraging and it also provides them with safe sheltering, roosting and nesting sites. Noisy Miners keep well clear of areas with dense mid and ground layer vegetation because it interrupts their characteristic low straight flight path.

It is now well documented that in eastern Australia Noisy Miners are associated with areas where eucalypts are showing signs of dieback and where there is an absence of other insectivorous birds. It is likely that in the absence of these birds, there is an increase in the abundance of insects that leads to the declining health of trees. Mainland studies have also shown that when Noisy Miners are removed from remnant woodland patches other honeyeaters quickly colonise the sites, small insectivorous species return within weeks and the health of the eucalypts eventually improves.

The large bush block at Little Swanport has had various management regimes that over the years have had an adverse impact on the bird fauna. Given the chance to regenerate naturally, it is likely that the structural diversity of the area will improve, Noisy Miners will no longer be favoured and small insectivorous birds will get a chance to re-establish – only time will tell.

References:
Bryant, S L & Jackson, J (1999) Tasmania's threatened fauna handbook: what, where and how to protect Tasmania's threatened animal,
Threatened Species Unit, Parks and Wildlife Service, Hobart.


A: seed eaters e.g. Beautiful Firetail, Black Currawong

B: nectar feeders e.g. Eastern Spinebill, Crescent Honeyeater

C: hawks e.g. Dusky Woodswallow, Welcome Swallow

D: small foliage gleaners e.g. pardalotes, Black-headed Honeyeater

E: large foliage gleaners e.g. Golden Whistler, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike

F: gleaners of prey from trunks and branches e.g. Grey Shrike-thrush, Yellow-throated Honeyeater, Strong-billed Honeyeater

G: flitter e.g. Superb Fairy-wren, Grey Fantail

H: pouncer e.g. Flame, Dusky, Scarlet and Pink Robins

I: Bird of prey e.g. Brown Falcon, Brown Goshawk

J: ground forager e.g. Bassian Thrush, Tasmanian Scrubwren

Different species of birds forage at different levels. To maintain healthy bird populations both in the home garden and the bush it is important to have structurally diverse vegetation with tall trees, smaller trees, understorey shrubs and grasses, herbs and litter. These provide a variety of birds with foraging opportunities and places to nest, shelter and roost.


Recently the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment have created on their website an “Information for Private Landholders” page. This includes information about the Land for Wildlife scheme and an ‘Expression of Interest’ form for people wishing to join. Click on the “Private Land Conservation Programs”. Information on other conservation programs for private landholders, such as the Non-Forest Vegetation Program, or Protected Areas on Private Land is available and options, such as covenants, vegetation management agreements or incentives are explained.

This website provides a wealth of information on bush management, types of bush, bush condition, threatened species, weed management, rivers and wetlands. Much of this information is also available for downloading from the “Publications, Resources, Useful Links”. This includes being able to obtain electronic copies of recent books, such as the “From Forest to Fjaeldmark: Descriptions of Tasmania’s Vegetation” which describes the vegetation communities in Tasmania used in TASVEG mapping. It is also possible to download the now out-of-print book “Tasmania’s Threatened Fauna Handbook” and the now limited hard copy edition of the “Tasmanian Bushcare Toolkit”. Other useful publications originally produced on CD which can be accessed are “Plants and Animals of Tasmania” and “Threatened flora of Tasmania”. The latter two provide excellent photographs, descriptions and details of distribution, habitat, characteristic features etc which may help you identify many plants or animals. There are also links to information on managing weeds with note sheets on weed management and control of most of the prevalent and recognised weed species.

Also provided is “Other useful links” which includes access to other Australian state Land for Wildlife schemes. Many of these Land for Wildlife schemes have very useful and interesting note sheets and information which you may find useful. From this one page providing information to private landowners, a lot of very useful information, advice and guidance can be readily sought. The website address is www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au > Natural Environment > Information for Private Landholders. Any queries, problems or suggestions just let me know and I will pass them on to the web manager.

Iona Mitchell

www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au
A QUICK GUIDE TO
Reptiles, frogs and mammals in Tasmania

Reptiles
Tasmania has no turtles (Order Chelonia) or crocodiles (Order Crocodilia) so all our reptiles are squamates (Order Squamata): snakes and lizards. Australia has an incredible diversity of this order, but Tasmania only hosts a modest eighteen species of lizard and three species of snake. However, we have a high degree of endemism with seven species found nowhere else but here.

Reptiles in cold climates are usually viviparous (giving birth to fully developed young) and that trend continues in Tasmanian reptile fauna, with only three typically oviparous (egg laying) species, the mountain dragon, delicate skink and eastern thrrelined skink.

Checklist of Snakes and Lizards in Tasmania
Family ELAPIDAE
   White-lipped snake
   Drysdalia coronoides
   Tiger snake
   Notechis ater
   Lowland Copperhead
   Austrelaps superbus
Family AGAMIDAE:
   Mountain Dragon
   Rankinia diemensis
Family SCINCIDAE:
   Three-lined skink
   Acritoscincus duperreyi
   She-oak skink*
   Cyclolemorphus casuarinae
   White's skink
   Egernia whitii
   Delicate skink
   Lampropholis delicata
   Bougainville's skink
   Lerista bougainvillii
   Mountain skink*
   Niveoscincus ocellatus
   Northern Snow skink*
   Niveoscincus greeni
   Southern Snow skink*
   Niveoscincus microlepidotus
   Spotted skink*
   Niveoscincus ocellatus
   Pedra Branca skink*
   Niveoscincus palfreymani
   Mountain skink*
   Niveoscincus palfreymani
   Southern Snow skink*
   Niveoscincus pretiosus
   Spotted skink*
   Niveoscincus metallicus
   Pedra Branca skink*
   Pseudemoia entrecasteauxii
   Tasmanian Tree skink*
   Pseudemoia pagenstecheri
   Metallic skink
   Pseudemoia rawlinsoni
   Southern Grass skink
   Pseudephedron nigrolutea
   Tussock skink
   Eulamprus tyrannus
   Glossy Grass skink
   Blotched Blue-tongued lizard
   * endemic

For Tasmania’s reptiles you need only one book: Snakes and Lizards of Tasmania (2001) by Mark Hutchinson, Roy Swain and Michael Driessen. (Fauna of Tasmania Handbook no. 9). It has a key for each species, distribution maps and colour photographs of each species. It is available from most good bookshops for around $17.00.

Frogs
It is amazing that the moss froglet was not found until 1993. It’s preference for soggy areas in the moorlands of the south west probably helped keep it hidden from scientific view. The discovery of the moss froglet brought the total frog fauna of Tasmania to a modest 11 species, with two sub-species of the Banjo frog.

Checklist of Frogs in Tasmania
ORDER ANURA
Family HYLIDAE
   Tasmanian Tree Frog* Litoria burrowsae
   Brown Tree Frog Litoria ewingii
   Green and Gold Frog Litoria raniformis
Family MYOBATRACHIDAE
   Subfamily LIMNODYNASTES
   Southern Banjo Frog Limnodynastes dumerilii insularis
   Mottled Banjo Frog Limnodynastes dumerilii variegatus
   Striped Marsh Frog Limnodynastes peronii
   Spotted Marsh Frog Limnodynastes tasmaniensis
   Subfamily MYOBATRACHINAE
   Moss Froglet* Bryobatrachus nimbus
   Common Froglet Crinia signifera
   Tasmanian Froglet* Crinia tasmaniensis
   Tasmanian Smooth Froglet Geocrinia laevis
   Southern Toadlet Pseudophryne semiarmorata
   * endemic

1. Again for frogs we are lucky in Tasmania to need only one book, another of the Fauna of Tasmania Handbooks - no. 6. Frogs of Tasmania (2003) by Murray Littlejohn, describes Tasmania’s 11 species of frogs with colour photos, distribution maps and keys to adult frogs, to male calls, to eggs and to tadpoles. Available in most good bookshops for around $20.00.

2. For more in-depth information, the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment website has a fantastic herpetology bibliography. Go to www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au and follow the links as follows Natural Environment → Plants and Animals of Tasmania → Wildlife and Game → Mammals or Reptiles and Frogs. Under the Reptiles and Frogs heading there is a Bibliography of Tasmanian Herpetology. This has an amazing list of references that should keep any keen herpetologist happy.
Mammals
Lack of foxes, hopefully an ongoing phenomenon, has meant that Tasmania has kept the smaller marsupial species that are either extinct or on the verge of extinction on the mainland of Australia. This includes the tiger and eastern quolls, the bettong, potoroo and Eastern barred bandicoot. All these species have stable populations in Tasmania, a fact we tend to take for granted. And also in our favour we still have relatively large amounts of intact habitat on the island, despite our high rate of clearfelling. This should also not be taken for granted. I’m sure I’m not alone in being able to see the huge decrease in remnant vegetation that has occurred over the last couple of decades. It is very interesting to speak to the older residents in your area to find out what species they notice are not around anymore.

Checklist of Native Terrestrial Mammals in Tasmania

ORDER MONOTREMATA
Family ORNITHORHYCHIDAE
Platypus
Ornithorhynchus anatinus

Family TACHYGLOSSIDAE
Short-beaked echidna
Tachyglossus aculeatus

ORDER POLYPROTODONTA
(Carnivorous Marsupials and Bandicoots)
Family DASYURIDAE
Tasmanian devil*
Sarcophilus harrisii
Spotted-tail quoll
Dasyurus maculatus
Eastern quoll
Dasyurus viverrinus
Dusky antechinus
Antechinus swainsonii
Swamp antechinus
Antechinus minimus
White-footed dunnart
Sminthopsis leucopus

Family THYLACINIDAE
Thylacine (extinct)
Thylacinus cynocephalus

Family PERAMELIDAE
Eastern barred bandicoot
Perameles gunni
Southern brown bandicoot
Isodon obesulus

ORDER DIPROTODONTA
(Possums, Kangaroos and Wombats)
Superfamily MACROPODOIDEA (Macropods)
Tasmanian bettong*
Bettongia gaimardi
Long-nosed potoroo
Potorous tridactylus
Forester (Eastern grey) kangaroo
Macropus giganteus
Bennets (Red-necked) wallaby
Macropus rufogriseus
Tasmanian pademelon*
Thylogale billardieri

Family PETAURIDAE
Common ringtail possum
Pseudocheirus peregrinus
Sugar glider
Petaurus breviceps

FAMILY PHALANGERIDAE
Common brushtail possum
Trichosurus vulpecula

Family BURRAMYIDAE
Eastern pygmy possum
Cercartetus nanus
Little pygmy possum
Cercartetus lepidus

Family VOMBATIDAE
Wombat
Vombatus ursinus

ORDER CHIROPTERA (Bats)
Little forest bat
Vespertilio murinus
Southern forest bat
Vespertilio murinus
Large forest bat
Vespertilio murinus
Chocolate wattled bat
Chalinolobus morio
Goulds wattled bat
Chalinolobus gouldii
Lesser long-eared bat
Nyctophilus geoffroyi
Tasmanian long-eared bat
Nyctophilus sp

ORDER RODENTIA (Rats and Mice)
Family MURIDAE
Water rat
Hydromys chrysogaster
Long-tailed mouse*
Pseudomys higginsi
New Holland mouse
Pseudomys novaehollandiae
Broad-toothed mouse
Mastacomys fuscus
Swamp rat
Rattus lutreolus

1. Once again we are fortunate to have a great photographic field guide in *Tasmanian Mammals: a field guide*. by Dave Watts, that gives you all you need in one book.

2. However, most mammals tend to be tricky to actually see. They tend to be nocturnal and secretive but sometimes you can find other signs of their presence. *Tracks, scats and other traces: a field guide to Australian mammals,* by Barbara Triggs 1996, gives details on skulls, paw prints, scats, diggings and other marks such as distinctive scratchings on trees. It will change the way you look at the bush. Barbara is ‘the’ expert in identifying Australian mammals by their hair. This often requires looking at a hair in cross section. She has been an invaluable resource for researchers throughout Australia who use hair traps to determine whether a species still occurs in a particular area. Hair traps consist of some sort of tube with a delicious smeling something at one end (often with pistachio essence included) and double-sided sticky tape attached for the animal to hopefully rub against. Hairs are also collected via predator scats and regurgitations. Now there’s a job!

*endemic

Therese Smith
Native bees gather in kangaroo grass; tiny ground-hugging buttercups turn bright yellow flowers to the sky; balls of billy-buttons dance on the breeze; white rice-flowers nod together in clusters; and fat skinks laze in the sun. It is summer in native grasslands. But not all is innocent . . .

Ravenous sundews trap and consume unsuspecting insects; grass seeds and buzzies become uninvited passengers on animal fur and socks; bushpeas dressed in loud orange court pollinators; and leek orchids conduct indiscriminant liaisons luring, native bees, wasps and beetles with irresistible perfume and sweet, sweet nectar. A spider binds and gags its victim; a bloated tiger snake has a mouse tail hanging from its mouth; and the narrow rock fern feigns death . . . until the next rain. These tales of promiscuity, thuggery and intrigue are the tales of diversity in native grasslands and these tales have been acted out over millions of years.

Native grass has come from being an insignificant part of the vegetation of Australia, many millions of years ago, to forming the amazing assemblages of species that we currently know as native grasslands. More recently, over many thousands of years, it is likely that people have aided the maintenance of these grasslands.

When gathering and hunting people crossed the Bass Strait land bridge and arrived in Tasmania they managed the landscape using fire to promote game and access. In small bands they moved about the island hunting and collecting plant foods and materials for tools, twine and basket making. At this time, the diverse vegetation of Tasmania included grasslands dominated by silver tussock grass, kangaroo grass and velvet tussock grass. Along with the grazing of kangaroos, wallabies and other animals, the first arrivals maintained the open grasslands and woodlands that greeted the first colonists and their sheep: the landscape so famously and romantically depicted by the artist John Glover.

Fire and grazing, along with weed control, are still the main tools used to maintain the health, richness and diversity of native grasslands. They are used to maintain the gaps between grass tussocks which provide an opportunity for wildflowers to establish, flower and set seed. Today, native grassland remnants occur in a mosaic with forests, woodlands and wetlands in a landscape of agriculture. Many of these remnants maintain a high level of species diversity and provide examples of working grassland ecosystems.

**Grasslands: more than just pretty flowers**

Karen Johnson

**Non-forest Vegetation Program**

**Department of Primary Industries, water and Environment**

*Themeda triandra* (kangaroo grass) grassland
(Karen Johnson)

*Drosera sp* (Sundew)
(Karen Johnson)
Working native grasslands provide numerous advantages for production on farms. The native system is low maintenance; tolerant of low-nutrient, saline and acidic soils; drought resistant; and its year round ground cover assists in the prevention of topsoil loss. Indeed, native grasslands are more than just pretty flowers!

In Tasmania, the Non-forest Vegetation Program, provides information, support and financial assistance to landholders in managing native grasslands, wetlands and heathlands. Anyone interested in finding out more about the Non-forest Vegetation Program can contact Louise Gilfedder on 62338538.

Financial incentives to protect special native plants and wildlife on your land

The Midlands of Tasmania has been identified nationally as an important region for its special plants and animals. Some plants of the Midlands are found nowhere else in the world such as the Tunbridge buttercup and many species of orchid.

The Midlands Biodiversity Hotspot Project area covers lowland country (below 700 m) extending from just south of Launceston to just north of Hobart. Included are the foothills of the Great Western Tiers, Ben Lomond and the Eastern Tiers (including Lake Leake and Royal George).

The main aim of the project is to work with landholders across the Midlands to help them protect the long-term future of threatened species and other special values. Involvement in the project is entirely voluntary (refer to LFW newsletter Vol. 10, November 2003, page 11).

The project covers over 180 species. For example, if you have any of the following species on your property, then you qualify for funding:

- eastern barred bandicoot
- quolls
- bettong
- tussock skink
- green & gold frog
- ptunarra brown butterfly
- wedge-tailed eagle
- white goshawk
- masked owl
- black-tipped spider orchid
- midland greenhood orchid
- tunbridge buttencup
- south esk heath
- swamp everlasting daisy
- swan galaxias

Interested in finding out more?

Contact Graham Green (Midlands Biodiversity Hotspot Project), C/- Southern Midlands Council Municipal Offices, PO Box 21, Oatlands Tasmania 7120 Phone: (03) 6234 5047, Mobile: 0422 936 027 E-mail: ggreen@southernmidlands.tas.gov.au
Sexual deceit and empty promises. Is this a Land for Wildlife newsletter? Yes it’s not only humans that employ elaborate seduction techniques. Sexual deception is the reproductive strategy of the bird orchids. And they are not deceiving each other, but usually male wasps.

To sexually reproduce, plants often use wind or insects to spread pollen from one plant to the next. To attract a pollinating insect, plants typically supply nectar, a high energy food. It’s not altruism, but simple survival of the species. But some orchids save their energy and resources by not producing nectar, and instead specialise in producing something that cheats the pollinator, attracts them without rewarding them.

Pollination by sexual deception of male pollinators is known only in orchids from Australia and Europe. And of course, the Australians do it so much better. In Australia at least 100 species (perhaps as many as 300) in at least 9 orchid genera, are involved. Not only are male wasps of several species exploited, but also ants and sawflys. Although some orchids look remarkably like female wasps, it has been known for a long time that it is the floral odour (although not detectable to the human nose), rather than appearance is most important. The male wasps follow an odour trail to find the orchid flower and still find their way to the flower if it is covered.

Studies of the European orchids have shown they use quite common compounds that are found within the leaf and have other functions to attract wasps. What is surprising in the Australian system is that it’s a single compound that is quite unique, a class of compound previously unknown to science. This compound can attract the male wasp in minute quantities. It is the first known case in orchids (and probably plants generally) where the orchids have evolved and copied an identical compound to that used by their pollinator as a sex pheromone.

Our duped male wasp believes it is finding an available mate and pollination is achieved by the orchids during mating attempts by the male. This is sometimes known as “pseudocopulation” meaning false mating, but as attempted mating is not necessary for pollination in all species, the more general term of “sexual deception” is more appropriate.

So the wasps are deceived but do they actually lose out? Well, not really all that much. It seems that 95% of the time, the male wasps don’t even land on the flower, they work out that it is not what they were looking for and not much of their time is wasted. Maybe only as little as 1% of visiting wasps are actually sufficiently stimulated by the pheromone to attempt to copulate with the flower. And even more interestingly, they never ejaculate, so sperm is never wasted. This is probably important in terms of evolution, because the orchid’s pollinator could easily become extinct if all the males were kept diverted mating with flowers instead of female wasps.

The Australian orchid genus Chiloglottis, relies exclusively on sexual deception for pollination. There are eight species of Chiloglottis in Tasmania and the featured orchid for this issue of the newsletter is the Autumn Bird Orchid (Chiloglottis reflexa). It should be in flower from now until about May. It is pollinated by one particular species of wasp and no other - a male thynnine wasp, Neozoloboria proxima. Other Chiloglottis sp. have their own unique species of pollinating wasp.

Therese Smith
Land for Wildlife Open Day
~ “Skemps” at Myrtle Bank

On Saturday 18th February, I attended the LFW open day organised by the Launceston Field Naturalists Club at their property “Skemps” at Myrtle Bank. This was very well attended with many members of other Field Naturalist clubs present – a bus from Burnie had even been organised. It was extremely well organised with a choice of guided walks before and after lunch and excellent facilities provided for making hot drinks, cooking on a BBQ and either sitting in the shade on the grass or at tables. It was also a glorious summer day, with a lovely cool breeze which made it pleasant for walking. The property is quite spectacular with variable habitats and vegetation types as well as extensive areas that are being revegetated either naturally or with planting of species local to the area. “Skemps” is approximately 54 ha and has remnant wet and dry sclerophyll forest, fern gullies, ponds and wetland areas along Skemps Creek which flows through the property, or the many small springs found on the property. Indeed it is a treasure in the landscape as it is surrounded by plantation forest and thus not only provides representation and protection of remnant vegetation, but also is a valuable refuge and safe haven for wildlife. The members have been revegetating areas formerly cleared for paddocks to establish a wildlife link from one side of the property to the other.

There are a number of nature trails through the differing vegetation communities and habitats on the property, along which many plants have been marked with name tags – a perfect way to get to know plant names and what they look like. The walk I went on after lunch is known as the Zig Zag walk and was led by long term member of the Launceston Field Naturalists Club, John Simmons – an authority in the field of botany. I was also fortunate enough to be accompanied by Sarah Lloyd and Ron Nagorcka – so I had a wealth of expertise and knowledge in the field of plants, birds, insects, fungi and bush tucker to call on, which was great. Along this walk, a Green Corp group has made a small bridge over Skemps Creek and wooden walkways across wet areas or spring runoff. At one spot along one of these springs several chimneys, mounded deposits of soil, at the opening of the small Mt Arthur Burrowing crayfish (Engaeus orramukunna) tunnels were clearly visible. The Mt Arthur Burrowing crayfish is listed as a threatened species and has a very restricted distribution. Beyond this stream the walk continued in the shade of a
beautiful Dogwood (Pomaderris apetala) forest with largely leaf litter understory and large rocks covered all over in thick moss. Dogwood forest is listed as a high conservation vegetation community and the remnant stand on the property has been secured through a conservation covenant with the Private Forest Reserve Program. Also in the Dogwood forest stands a huge Giant ash (Eucalyptus regnans), unfortunately the crown had been blown out by lightning – nevertheless, it stands as a reminder of the size of trees which formerly occurred in the region, now extensively covered in monoculture plantations. Along the walk were numerous native pepper (Tasmannia lanceolata) trees heavily laden with pepper berries – Ron recommends adding them to mashed potato for a flavoursome, and colourful, dish. There are good signs of natural recruitment of silver wattles (Acacia dealbata) in areas formerly cleared. Exiting the forested part of the walk there is progressive increase and spread in Gunns Heath (Epacris gunnii), a threatened species, in the cleared paddock following cessation of livestock grazing.

Significant areas of weeds have been removed from the property over the years, however some are still a problem and challenge, especially dense patches of sycamores. On return to the club house, live specimens of a Mt Arthur Burrowing crayfish (Engaeus orramukunna) and a Freshwater lobster (Astacopsis franklinii) could be looked at closely – fascinating animals with very interesting life histories and habitats.

The history of “Skemps” is interesting with the property an extremely generous donation to the Launceston Field Naturalists Club from former member John Skemp approximately 35 years ago. Many members have volunteered considerable amounts of their time and effort working on the property, regular working bees are held each Tuesday. The John Skemp Field Centre was largely built with money raised from the Launceston Field Naturalists Club publication “Guide to Flowers and Plants of Tasmania”, now in its third edition (an excellent book). This centre provides well equipped accommodation for up to 20 people at minimal cost, with excellent kitchen facilities, two toilets and shower rooms, two bunkrooms, large furnished living area and wood heating. In recent times two bedrooms have been made, largely for teachers accompanying school groups. There is also lots of areas for tents and vans. Through John Skemps generous gift a wonderful area of native vegetation and wildlife habitat is being protected, maintained and enhanced. It has also provided a valuable teaching resource for schools in the area from groups visiting, to projects undertaken on the property with external funds gained, such as tree planting through the “Adopt-a-patch” program. It also provides a valuable retreat for those wishing to spend sometime walking the tracks or sitting quietly taking in the views, or watching wildlife in their natural habitat – the opportunity to do this has kindly been extended by the Launceston Field Naturalists Club to non-members. Requests to arrange accommodation bookings or to obtain the key for day visits can be arranged through the Booking Manager (Ph: 6344 3330).
Although my time was short, having travelled from Hobart for the day, it was a very enjoyable and interesting day and well worth the effort to attend. I was warmly received and looked after by members of the Launceston Field Naturalists Club and met and spoke to some very nice people. I thoroughly recommend if you are in the area, or even make it a special trip, to visit “Skemps” – it’s a beautiful property with so much to see, learn and enjoy. The efforts of the Launceston Field Naturalists Club members who have worked on and look after the property are to be highly commended – their enthusiasm and affection for the property is heartening to see.

**Plants and Animals of Tasmania CD**

This CD contains pictures and descriptions of many of Tasmania’s animal and plant species found in the east, south, north and north west, especially lowland areas. The CD can be used as a guide to their identification.

Written by Cassandra Strain, Alister Donnelly, Nicholas Fitzgerald, Josephine Kelman, Micah Visoiu and Leanne Sherriff.

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Displaying your Land For Wildlife sign

This information is provided to assist you with the display and care of your Land for Wildlife sign. The sign serves as a symbol to others of your concern for the management of your property and in the recognition of your commitment, through Land for Wildlife registration, to the integration of wildlife habitat with other uses of your property. The sign is displayed at your discretion. There is no obligation on members to display the sign. However, we encourage you to do so as it has been clearly demonstrated that this has influenced others to join the scheme.

Visibility:
Points to consider include:
• weight of the sign
• maximum visibility
• visibility at speed
• direct sunlight will cause faster fading

Safety:
• Place the sign where it will not be an obstruction.
• Fix the sign securely on a solid structure.

Theft/damage:
• Keep out of reach. Set the sign back 5 m from the property boundary where possible.
• Burr off any nuts or screws or use safety (one way) screws.
• Avoid creating a ‘target’.

Fixing options:
• Avoid attaching with metal that will rust and can damage the sign.

Attached to a post:
• Set back from fence on a treated pine post.

Attached to a fence:
• Place rubber spacers between the sign and fence.
• Fix at all corners.

Attached to a tree (not the best option):
• Avoid girdling the tree which can cause its death.
• Needs to account for growth and decortication (bark loss).

Care:
Commercial polishes, such as car polish and wax, can be used to rejuvenate an old sign or protect a new one.

Please note that the Land for Wildlife sign may not be used for any purpose without the written authorisation of the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment. Land for Wildlife signs remain the property of the Department and are provided free of charge to registered members of the Land for Wildlife scheme (Tasmania).
MEMBERS’ PAGE

Land for Sale near Bicheno - Price $119,000

Six and a half acres of coastal bushland.
Flat block in pristine condition, weed free and diverse flora. Five minutes to coastal town of Bicheno. Close to both Freycinet and Douglas Aspley National Parks. Bitumen road to front and gravel road to rear. Power runs on both nature strips.
Property requires new owner(s) who will sympathetically develop the block in keeping with its environmental values.
Contact: Russell Wadsworth - 0421 094 541 or 03 9789 0738 or email dinrusw@bigpond.net.au for further information - photos available.

Land for Wildlife property owners are invited to join the Central North Field Naturalists on Sunday April 2nd on a field trip to Railton
Joan Elliot has a wonderful property which includes cleared farmland, bush and several dams fringed with vegetation
It is a haven for birds and other fauna
Meet at 10am at the main intersection at Railton
Joan’s property is at 251 Newbed Road, which is a right turn as you head out of Railton on the road to Sheffield
For more details phone Joan - 6496 1333 or Sarah Lloyd - 6396 1380

Envirofund - Round 8 now inviting applications for funding
Community groups and individuals across Australia are invited to apply for grants up to $50,000 from the Australian Government Envirofund. The Envirofund provides an opportunity for individuals or community groups to undertake small on-ground projects aimed at conserving biodiversity and promoting sustainable resource use. Refer to guidelines available at www.nht.gov.au/envirofund/index.html for the types of activities for which funding assistance could be made - application forms are also available at this web address.

Your project may have a better chance of getting funding if it has been prepared in consultation with a Natural Resource Management Facilitator. Please discuss your project proposal with your nearest and most appropriate Facilitator before you apply for funding. A Facilitator will not write your application for you but will help with defining the project’s aim, work plan and how to measure your success, and may be able to provide technical assistance. For details of your nearest NRM Facilitator visit www.nrmtas.com.au/home.shtml.

Applications for Round 8 close at 5pm on Friday 28 April 2006. Your signed original application must be received at the Envirofund office in Canberra on or before that date. For further information or advice phone: 1800 303 863.

Land for Wildlife Newsletter deadlines for 2006
If you have items you would like posted on the members’ page, please note the deadlines for the next two newsletters
JULY 31st and NOVEMBER 24th 2006
Land for Wildlife Program: Vision, Mission and Goals

1. Vision
   • Land owners and land managers integrate the principles and practices of nature conservation into overall land management.

2. Mission
   Land for Wildlife encourages and facilitates voluntary nature conservation by:
   • building on existing community networks;
   • sharing information and learning;
   • supporting and recognising land owners and managers; and
   • having nature conservation principles put into practice on unreserved land.

3. Goals
   Long term and medium term
   1. Nature Conservation principles are applied and practices are integrated with overall land management.
   2. Land for Wildlife contributes to ecologically, economically and socially sustainable property management.
   3. Land for Wildlife contributes to a healthy and diverse ecosystem.
   4. Information is gathered and shared, learning about managing for nature conservation on unreserved land is facilitated.

   Immediate
   5. Existing community networks are involved and expanded.
   6. There is broad community participation in Land for Wildlife.
   7. Adequate resources are provided to the Land for Wildlife program.
   8. Land owners and land managers are given support and their voluntary contributions to nature conservation on unreserved land are recognised.
   9. The numbers of land owners and land managers participating in Land for Wildlife increase.
   10. There are adequate distribution of and connections between native habitats managed for nature conservation to ensure viability of populations of native plants and animals.
   11. A comprehensive, integrated database of information is established, maintained and is accessible.

Source: Land for Wildlife (Tasmania) Implementation Plan 1998

Thinking of selling, or have recently sold your property?
Please let the LFW Coordinator know so that we can collect the sign or register with the new owner. Transfer of registration does not occur with change of ownership and the new owners are invited to join the scheme. The Land for Wildlife sign(s) allocated for display on land which is registered in the scheme remain the property of the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment.

Please contact the authors before reproducing material from this newsletter.
The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Land for Wildlife Program or the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment.