



Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc.

BULLETIN

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Quarterly Bulletin

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The Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club encourages the study of natural history and supports conservation. People of any age and background are welcome as members.

For more information, visit website <http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/>; email info@tasfieldnats.org.au; write to GPO Box 68, Hobart, 7001; or phone our secretary on mobile 0418 942 781.

We welcome articles and interesting photos for the Bulletin. If you would like to contribute to the next edition, please email the editor with your article or photos.

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Program

General Meetings start at **7.15 pm** for 7.30 pm on the first Thursday of the month, in the Life Science Building at the University of Tasmania.

Excursions are usually held the following Saturday or Sunday, meeting at 9.00 am outside the Museum in Macquarie St, Hobart. Bring lunch and all-weather outdoor gear.

If you are planning to attend an outing, but have not been to the prior meeting, please confirm the details as late changes are sometimes made.

Thurs 7 July	Meeting 7.15pm in Life Sciences building, University of Tasmania. Meeting 7.15pm in Life Sciences building, University of Tasmania. Our guest will be entomologist Cathy Young who will give us some background on the Museum Collection and her research on moths.
Sun 10 July	Excursion with Cathy Young to the Tasmanian Museum's <i>Research and Collections Facility</i> at Rosny. Details to be announced.
Thurs 4 Aug	Meeting 7.15pm in Life Sciences building, University of Tasmania. Kris Carlyon , a wildlife biologist with DPIPW, will present <i>Koala: an icon with issues</i> .
Sat 6 Aug	Excursion to <i>Mt Direction</i> led by Qug McKendrick.
Thurs 1 Sept	Meeting 7.15pm in Life Sciences building, University of Tasmania. Malcolm Downing , a forecaster at the Bureau of Meteorology, will talk to us on <i>Clouds</i> .

For details of talks and excursions beyond this date, please check the website at <http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/>

Coningham Foreshore Track–10th April 2011

Andrew Hingston

A large group of adults and children explored the Coningham Foreshore Track in cool, cloudy conditions on Sunday 10th April. Those who arrived at Coningham Beach earlier than I did were rewarded with a sighting of a grey goshawk. Although I was running late, I did time my drive to Coningham well enough to chance upon an Australian hobby flying near Peter Murrell Reserve, and arrive just at the moment the group was deciding who should write this report!

So, with pen and used envelope in hand for note-taking, I wandered down the beach with the others admiring the burrows and footprints of crabs in the sand. Tarn later excavated one of these; a beautiful blue crab with a spherical body of around 1 cm in diameter.

At the eastern end of the beach, we headed onto the Foreshore Track that led through dry forest along the top of the sandstone cliffs that border North West Bay. A large part of this vegetation was dominated by drooping sheoak *Allocasuarina verticillata*, with many of the sparse emergent eucalypts in poor health or dead.

There were many species flowering in the understorey, including *Epacris impressa*, *Astroloma humifusum* (correctly identified by Tarn, who first identified this and mumbled the Latin binomial as a toddler), *Leucopogon ericoides*, *L. virgata*, *Correa relexa*, *C. alba*, *Banksia marginata*, and *Cassytha glabella*.



Crab tracks. Photo Andrew Hingston



Blue crab. Photo Andrew Hingston



Meandering along the beach. Photo Andrew Hingston

Apart from one area of stormwater runoff, there were few weeds present. The stormwater outlet was infested with watsonia *Watsonia meriana*, and also supported agapanthus *Agapanthus*



Banksia larvae. Photo Andrew Hingston

praecox subsp. *orientalis* and the daisy *Euryops* sp. The only weeds that I saw outside the stormwater area were all Australian species: bluebell creeper *Sollya heterophylla* (from WA);

Grevillea sp.; and *Acacia* sp. There was also one specimen of *Leptospermum grandiflorum*, which was probably outside its natural range of Tasmania's east coast.

As we walked along we passed a small constructed pond in a gully, where I heard a brown tree frog *Litoria ewingii*. On the track I noted scratchings in the ground, which looked like those made by bandicoots, and scats of wallabies, possums and dogs. The cool, cloudy conditions



A starfish. Photo Andrew Hingston

were ideal for bird activity. The species identified included eastern spinebill, crescent honeyeater, yellow-throated honeyeater, silvereye, spotted pardalote, scarlet robin, brown thornbill, grey fantail, grey shrike-thrush, grey butcherbird, pied oystercatcher, white-faced heron, black-faced cormorant, Pacific gull, and a white-breasted sea eagle spotted by Geoff and Janet after most people had left.



Fish swimming in water. Photo Andrew Hingston



"They found a cave..." Photo Andrew Hingston



The weed *Solya* very out of place on the foreshore. Photo Andrew Hingston

There were plenty of insects around. Mike identified a disappearing grasshopper *Schizobothrus flavovittatus*, to a chorus of "Where is it? Where is it?" from bystanders, and a common macrotona *Macrotona australis*.

Other insects found included a bright green caterpillar of a helena gum moth *Antheraea helena*, a female common brown butterfly *Heteronymphe merope*, a fleeting glimpse of another species of Nymphalidae (possibly a meadow argus *Junonia villida*), jewel bug *Choerocoris paganus*, honeybrown beetle *Ecnolagria grandis*, a braconid wasp, inchman

Myrmecia forficata, jackjumpers *M. pilosula*, and (of course) European or English wasps *Vespula* sp. and bumble bees *Bombus terrestris*.

One particularly interesting find was of large numbers of larvae in the cores of developing inflorescences of a *Banksia marginata*. Lynne thought they looked like those of beetles in the family Tenebrionidae, possibly of an *Atoichus* species. We didn't find many spiders, just a black and red spider (formerly *Nicodamus bicolor*) crossing the track and a 'huntsman-like' spider (probably a shield spider *Olios diana*).

Geoff led the group off the main track downhill to a sandstone cave by the coast, which featured some amazing eroded patterns.

Among the sandstone in the water, there was a somewhat depauperate invertebrate community of snails, limpets, mussels, barnacles, a crab, and a biscuit star. The crab found by Abbey and Kevin was not a 'true crab'. Upon turning it upside-down, it flapped its abdomen at us. Thus, although the abdomen was curled beneath the carapace, it was not fused to the carapace as in 'true crabs' but was free as in crayfish.

The highlight of the excursion for me occurred on the walk back, thanks to the sharp eyes of Kevin. No, it wasn't a snail! It wasn't even under a log or rock! It was a large fish, which we watched for several minutes from atop the cliff. This grey-brown fish, with about six vertical pale orange stripes, was darting in and out from beside rocks. Kevin and Abbey estimated its length at 30-50 cm but I'm sure it was about a metre long, and when I tell the story next year it will be at least two metres!

Blackmans Bay Shell Excursion—May 2011

Michael Driessen

This excursion to Blackmans Bay beach was an opportunity to use Simon Grove's new shell book which was launched the previous Sunday at Fullers bookshop. The launch was well attended with ABC news reader Peter Gee providing an entertaining launch.



Exploring the Blackman's Bay foreshore. Photo Amanda Thompson

A total of twenty-eight members turned up for the outing despite the cool weather and the possibility of rain. We were pleasantly surprised to be bathed in sunshine.

The first part of the excursion involved walking along the southern end of the beach collecting and identifying shells using the shell books. I brought a 1 x 1 metre quadrat which I 'randomly' through onto the shell line and then, along with other members, collected all the shells in the quadrat, and identified and counted them (see results below).

We then headed around the rocks to Flowerpot Point collecting and identifying shells as we went. It took a little practice to get our identifications

Simon joined us at Blackmans Bay beach, which also happened to be his birthday (31 again), and was able to help us with the identification of some of the trickier shells.



*crevice filled with *Nodilittorina unifasciata*. Photo Amanda Thompson*

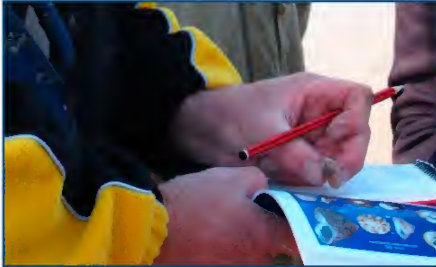
right and we had to allow for variations due to colour and wear.

To quote Simon "Three hours of shelling was completed before getting 'mollusced out' shows a lot of staying power". Over one hundred shell species were recorded (see list) which according to Simon was not a bad haul considering how little distance was covered. Simon says there are records of 250 shell species in his database from the area.

Simon found a fragment of what he thought was *Bullina lineata* (lined bubble-shell) on the sandy part of the beach. If confirmed, it would be only the second record he is aware of from Tasmania. The other unconfirmed record was from Pirates

Bay in the early 20th Century. It's a widespread species in tropical waters, extending right down the coast of NSW, so wouldn't be unexpected in, say Flinders Island. But Blackmans Bay is certainly an odd part of Tasmania to have found it.

Kevin Bonham proved again to be the master of finding cowrie shells; he collected a brown cowrie, Compton's cowrie and a freckled cowrie. Thanks to Simon for a lovely morning collecting shells and for answering our numerous queries about them.



First find the shell..... Photo Amanda Thompson



... then consult the comprehensive guide. Photo Amanda Thompson

Number of shell species recorded in four 1x1m quadrats on Blackmans Bay Beach and in a 25 x 25 cm quadrat in a shell wash at Flower Pot Point.

Common Name	Blackmans Bay Beach				Flowerpot Pt
	1	2	3	4	1
flea mussel	3		1	1	23
blue mussel	3	1	1	3	12
doughboy scallop		1			
king scallop				3	
elongate wedge-shell	1				
purple sunset-shell			1	1	
feathered venus			4	1	
tall-ribbed limpet					2
Maltese-cross limpet					3
ribbed top-shell					4
keeled top-shell		1			
people's top-shell					1
rainbow kelp-shell					2
golden star-shell		1			
wavy turban					1
grainy creeper					2
New Zealand screw-shell	1	4	1	1	5
common shelf-limpet	1				
southern wentletrap					1

Common Name	Blackmans Bay Beach	Flowerpot Pt
black-mouth conniwink		1
lined whelk		7
white-mouthed dove-shell		1
knobbly rock-shell		1
Brazier's trophon		1
common siphon-shell		3
corded siphon-shell		8
sinum zonale	1	
amalda marginata	1	
semicassis	Several broken	

A Tale of Two Cowries—May 2011

Kevin Bonham

The cowry (or cowrie for those who prefer that spelling) on the right was collected on the May excursion to Blackmans Bay. The one on the left was collected at exactly the same spot (to within a few metres) four years earlier. Those who have Simon's excellent book may notice that the one on the right is a dead ringer for his photo of *Notocypraea comptoni*. The one on the left is chubbier, paler, with wider-spaced bands, sparser spotting and a paler base.



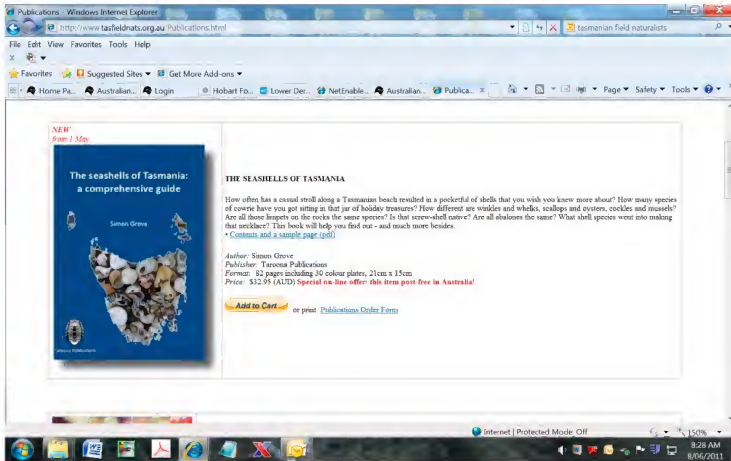
Photo Kevin Bonham

N. comptoni is an extremely variable cowry. Plump pale forms are often called *N. comptoni mayi*, but most authors consider this just a variant while others think *N. mayi* is a different species (the live animal can also look quite different). Genetic tests on mainland *mayi* showed no differences, but not enough Tasmanian *mayi* have been tested.

Although these two dead shells were found in the same spot on the shore, they may have lived in very different conditions, and just happened to wash up in the same place.

Field Nats Go Global!

Yes it's true! The Tasmanian Field Naturalists has recently extended its outreach on a global scale with online book sales. Thanks to the hard work of Neil Klaer, Geoff Fenton and Anna McEldowney, our website now has the PayPal facility enabling online purchase of a range of publications, such as Simon Grove's new Tasmanian seashell book. You don't need a PayPal account as the system will also allow you to pay using a credit card.



So next time you are online, check out the website, peruse the publications. You can also renew your subscription online using the PayPal system as well.

Vale Margaret Aves

It is with sadness that the Tasmanian Field Nats say farewell to longstanding member Margaret Aves, who died recently aged 102. From the time they first joined in the early 1950s, Margaret and husband Kelsey made Field Nat membership a family affair. They attended many talks and excursions with their family of three daughters, inculcating in them a love of the natural world. Daughter Liz Turner, a retired invertebrate zoologist at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, carries on the family membership tradition. Many will remember Margaret with fondness, and although sad at her departure, will celebrate memories of her involvement over very many years.

Subscriptions Reminder

Have you paid your 2011 subs yet? A reminder that membership subs are due on 1 Jan each year. Please send a cheque payable to Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc, addressed to the Treasurer TFNC, GPO Box 68, Hobart, 7001; **or** pay by EFT to BSB 067102 Account number 28000476 in the name of Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc. PLEASE put your surname AND initials in the transfer so Anna can identify the payments. **Or** visit www.tasfieldnats.org.au and pay online using Paypal.

If you have a large red cross on your envelope you are not financial for 2011. If you have two red crosses then you are behind for 2010 and 2011 and will shortly be struck off the mailing list!

Membership rates are: Adult—\$30, Family—\$35, Concession—\$25.

