



Disjunct eNEWS

Information and news from **Central North Field Naturalists Inc.**
email: disjunctnaturalists@gmail.com Web Page: www.disjunctnaturalists.com

Late September 2023 Committee

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Editorial

Spring is here, etc. Actually it has been threatening to arrive for a while now. Orchids have flower spikes, reptiles are out sunning themselves, birds and beasts are courting, and grass is growing. We are seeing insects out and about. Nature taking control. This time of the year is inspiring: we saw three eagles together, one a juvenile, as well as two white goshawks – all in a single day, from our windows.

Trying hard this month to be positive, but with skates, more threatened species, “acceptable” levels of mortality in near extinct species, and dire climate conditions, it is difficult. However, activity this month shows that some people are out there doing things to try to make difference. We can only try. Read on...

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NEXT WALK: 1/10/2023 Rubicon Reserve, near Squeaking Point, Pt Sorell. Leader: Robin Garnett.

NOTE: Previously listed as 7th but definitely happening on SUNDAY 1st OCTOBER

Starts 10AM. An informative stroll through this limited-access conservation hot-spot owned by Tas Land Conservancy . For a little background, see <https://tasland.org.au/reserves/rubicon-sanctuary/> . Location as per map; limited parking, so a roadside spot is good. Note that boots will need to be cleaned of all mud and dirt before you arrive, and will be sterilised against Phytophthora as you enter this property.



Heading north, entry point is the on right, through he wooden gateway. Parking on roadside. **Importantly,** Squeaking Point Rd will be closed, so for those from the west, go all the way to Frankford Rd, then left onto Woodbury Lane. Those from the east will not be effected.

WALKS AFTER THAT

EAST COAST – Scamander area

Date: Weekend of Saturday Nov 4th and Sunday Nov 5th

Leader: Mary McConnell (0409 900 476)

Saturday Nov 4th: For those who arrive by lunchtime on the Saturday there will be short walk (location to be determined closer to the time)

Sunday Nov 5th: Visit to the **Winifred Curtis Reserve**. This is a 75 hectare private nature reserve on the coast just south of Scamander.

<https://www.discovertasmania.com.au/things-to-do/nature-and-wildlife/winifred-curtis-reserve/>

Wildflowers, birds and lots of interest.

Accommodation: You will need to book your own. There is a wide range of accommodation in the area of Scamander and St Helens. **Early bookings are recommended; do it NOW.**

NOTE: An alternative more local walk may be provided for Sunday Nov 5th for those who cannot or do not want to travel to Scamander.

Future walks:

- Eugenana Arboretum; the bits you might not have seen, with Philip Milner
- Launceston: a Special Tour with a special tour guide.

The bit nobody reads, but do read this:

Walk Talk: Monthly walks are an important component of field naturalist activities. We aim to cater for all levels of fitness and have outings that are (generally) within reasonable distance for all local members.

Bring lunch, water, suitable clothes for the weather, etc. Visitors are welcome to attend but should inform the walk leader of their intentions.

Unless otherwise stated, all walks begin at 10.00 a.m. at the designated meeting place. Please plan to arrive 15 minutes earlier.

The e-News editor encourages walkers to submit any photos of interest – flora, fauna or human interest – for possible inclusion in the e-news. Pics <1 Mb in size are ideal.

Walks Leaders are needed. No special skills are needed, Guru standard not necessary. All you need is to know the walk – where to go, how long it takes, and how hard it is to walk.

Walk Reports: Often the walk leader will do a report, or find someone else to do it. Reports can be long or short, technical or simple - no need to be an expert on anything, as there are usually others who know stuff you might not.

Just so we know where went, and what we saw, to record the finds, so we can protect that place for the future.

Field trip to Black Sugarloaf, Birrallee: Sarah Lloyd

About 15 field naturalists and one guest were greeted at the bottom of our track by Peter Lawrence and Simon Van Der Veen who had spent Saturday night in our scattered abodes. While we walked up the track, some of us discussed the semi-parasitic nature of the native cherry (*Exocarpus cupressiformis*) and we all got good views of the large endemic land snail (*Caryodes dufresnii*) that crossed our path.



Lots of slime moulds were observed in the field including *Oligonema verrucosum* (pic right) and *Lamproderma echinulatum* (pic below), whose holotypes were collected in Tasmania by William Archer in the 1850s, and *Tubifera vanderheuliae* and the new genus, *Tasmaniomyxa umbilicata*, whose holotypes were collected at Black Sugarloaf.



The link to the bird list includes birds seen and heard over a 24-hour period:

<http://birdata.birdlife.org.au/survey?id=9236741&h=05bee8e8> This was so that the Tawny Frogmouth, that was heard *ooming* repetitively on Saturday evening, could be included in the list. Rather unusually, it was heard *ooming* mid-morning several days later, and I was able to track it down and photograph it sitting on a branch close to the trunk of a nearby eucalypt.

While we were walking to our house to have lunch, Jo Lawrence worked on a painting of the 'nature room' – the first of our various buildings to be constructed.



Lamproderma echinulatum



Tubifera vanderheuliae

Leptostomum inclinans

(P Milner)



A second report, A WEEKEND AT BLACK SUGARLOAF. By Simon V.

A perk of being a CNFN member are the invitations to see some wonderful natural areas on private property. We were invited by Sarah and Ron to their property near Birralee called Black Sugarloaf. This was going to be my first visit there. An extra treat was to be invited to stay the Saturday night before the Sunday walk. Peter, Jo and myself took up this lovely offer.

Arriving mid afternoon we enjoyed a nice, slow and scenic drive down the 'road' to their property. Hidden amongst the bush were lots of stone, mud rendered buildings of various sizes. One was to be my accommodation for the night. Orchids growing around the buildings were a highlight for me. We had a lovely afternoon chatting, finding out the story behind the property and its changes over the decades.

Of course, the major topic was slime moulds. Finding out how Sarah and Ron got started on the journey to becoming experts in the field and finding new species on their property. Incredible work. I was hoping there

might be masked owls in the area but unfortunately they aren't in the area. I had to make do with a calling Tawny frogmouth instead.

The next morning Peter and I walked down to meet all the day trippers and a slow procession started to make its way through the bush tracks. Stunning areas of fungi and slime moulds covered fallen logs. The sight of a randomly placed saucepan, colander or umbrella was usually a great place to inspect for something interesting. Eventually everybody made it to the house for lunch in one of the numerous outside areas. After a lovely social gathering with usual Field Nats chat people heading back to the car via the 'road' for a different route.

Many thanks to Sarah and Ron for their welcoming hospitality and allowing our group to enjoy their property which is obviously so special to them.



PRESIDENTIAL WORDS

Greetings CNFN'ers

“The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it.” – Robert Swan

“Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.” – Albert Einstein

Unsurprisingly, we have already begun our “new year” with a bang. On 23 August 2023, Philip Milner led a “Working Bee Team” to continue our long-term efforts to protect the endangered *Spyridium obcordatum* located in the Hawley Nature Reserve. The WBTeam’s efforts continued to lay the ground work for the next steps in this long-term effort to protect this vulnerable species. Thanks to all the CNFN members who, continue to help/helped, make this effort viable and impactful. Parks and Wildlife Services are extremely supportive of our engagement!

At our recent AGM, we voted unanimously to participate in the 6 April 2024, EcoFest. As we have already shared, our participation last year was a real “hit” for CNFN and this year promises to bring more attention to our projects, walks and our interest in nature. Please volunteer to be one of our members at the booth – for which we will need staffing from 9 to 4 on the day. Even an hour is great – you can enjoy the festival and support CNFN.

Mark your calendars – our weekend away is 4-5 November in Scamander! It’s always a fun trip and great way to see other parts of Tassie. Please see details above.

Speaking of walks – we are always on the look out for members willing to share their patch or their local “special” place in nature. Please volunteer to lead a walk and share your special part of Tassie.

“An understanding of the natural world and what’s in it is a source of not only a great curiosity but great fulfillment.” David Attenborough

Respectfully, Martha Howell mobile: 0474300323 email: martica9@aol.com

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← Westbury Backyard Bandicoots's post

Clearly, the bandicoot in the photo captured in a wildlife camera in Westbury is very happy with his habitat. We have started a program to capture bandicoots in backyards with this camera, which is generously on loan from the Central North Field Naturalists.



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FAUNA (Footage of Animals Using Natural Areas) CAMERA.

A community/environmental project run by the Central North Field Naturalists Inc.

The Enduro Swift camera has been put to good use and is assisting the Westbury Backyard Bandicoot project greatly.

The Field Nats were acknowledged on their Facebook page (on left) which was nice to see. Great work Sarah and the Westbury community.

Pat, myself and another member of the Turner's Beach Coast Care group were busy with the good Reconyx camera within reserves near the Forth River.

Our species list were: Tasmanian Pademelon, Brush tail possum, Long nosed potoroo, Southern brown bandicoot, Superb fairy-wren and the introduced Black bird.

If you are interested in using the camera please get in touch with Simon simmosays@hotmail.com. The camera is currently available.

As if there is not enough going on:

Nov 1 World Vegan Day: unsure if this is environmentally significant or not. Submission of opinions welcome.

Nov 5th World Tsunami Awareness Day: keep a close watch.

Nov 6th International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict: We can only try...

Nov 13-19 Pollinator Week: Birds and bees, but let's not forget the possums, and our essential friends, the wasps and moths. <https://www.australianpollinatorweek.org.au/>

Nov 6-12 National Recycling Week: Perhaps sometime there might be a Reduce and Reuse week as well because it might be better.

Nov 21 World Fisheries Day: We need to examine the word "sustainable". http://www.gdrc.org/doyourbit/21_11-fisheries-day.html



CONSERVING A THREATENED SPECIES
The Creeping Dusty Miller, *Spyridium obcordatum*
Philip Milner, Central North Field Naturalists

The Hawley Nature Reserve at Port Sorell is home to one of Tasmania's rarest endemic plants, the Creeping Dusty Miller *Spyridium obcordatum*. It is listed as a vulnerable species under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and also under the Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*.

Spyridium obcordatum occurs in just a few locations in the central north of Tasmania, from near Beaconsfield in the east and its western most occurrence in the Port Sorell area. In the Hawley Nature Reserve it is restricted to two dolerite rocky outcrops, where it has been in serious decline over recent years and at real risk of becoming locally extinct in the reserve.



The Central North Field Naturalists first became aware of the perilous state of the species in the Hawley Nature Reserve about 15 years ago and undertook an investigation and trial in order to determine the cause of this decline, suspected at the time to be either consecutive very dry summers, browsing by wildlife or a combination of both. This involved the use of wire netting guards to protect some of the plants from browsing, along with periodic plant counts and monitoring.

The clear conclusion was that increased browsing pressure from pademelons and possibly wallabies was the real cause of the decline. Pademelon numbers have increased substantially in the area over recent times in response to the on-going fragmentation of the remaining natural vegetation with the increased urbanization of the Port Sorell area with a corresponding increase in grassed areas, an additional food resource for the pademelons.



A favourable spring in 2013 resulted in a welcome germination of new plants from seed held in the soil seed bank on both rocky outcrops, but they all succumbed to browsing in a relatively short time.

A second germination event occurred in a following a favourable spring in 2016 and it was then clear that some intervention was required if those seedlings were going to establish and hopefully mature to be a new generation of seed producing plants. The soil seed bank was being progressively depleted with each germination that failed to establish new plants.

Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) manage the reserve from the Narawntapu National Park base. In collaboration with PWS, the Central North Field Naturalists developed a plan to cover the plants with dead branches to try and restrict and discourage access by pademelons to the plants. The group has undertaken a number of working bees since the spring of 2016, collecting dead branches from the vicinity of the two rocky outcrops in the reserve, placing them and interlocking them over the remnant plants.

This has worked remarkably well, as it seems that pademelons don't like pushing through entwined branches, and the plants under the branches remain and are growing relatively well, although still fewer in number than 10 to 15 years ago.

Our objective with the working bee in the Hawley Nature Reserve on the 23rd of August was to add fresh dead branches over the remnant *Spyridium obcordatum*, well overdue as we hadn't been into the reserve since before Covid. We removed some of the older underlying branch material that was turning into mulch and compost with a risk of it suppressing the plants which we then replaced with new dead branch material. This has ensured on-going protection from browsing but allowed additional sunlight through to the plants for growth.



It was very heartening to observe that the plants are still present and growing quite well although some browsing was evident, which demonstrates that our conservation strategy and methods are working.

The next stage of our conservation effort for the species in the reserve is to install a number of larger wire mesh guards around remnant plants to give them some additional protected area to spread outwards as they have a natural ground-covering habit, and also to provide some protected space for seed germination and hopefully further recruitment.

Our experience with the Creeping Dusty Miller in the Hawley Nature Reserve clearly demonstrates that environmental impacts, particularly the loss of natural vegetation, in areas surrounding but outside of our reserves can have unforeseen consequences for the flora and fauna that rely on such reserves for their ongoing existence. I would like to thank the 11 members who came and participated enthusiastically in the working bee on the day. We had finished what was needed to be done by lunch time.

An excellent outcome. The support for the conservation of one of our special endemic plants by the group is greatly appreciated.

Philip

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LINKS for those that follow Links

https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/sep/19/australians-are-always-told-dont-feed-the-birds-if-you-really-must-heres-how-to-do-it-properly?utm_term=.650c235efd87e95d42a3e0f4e00b868e&utm_campaign=DownToEarth&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=greenlight_email : Cruel to be kind.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-09-05/un-invasive-species-report-biodiversity-loss-australia/102815414>

<https://consult.dceew.gov.au/draft-updated-threat-abatement-plan-for-predation-by-feral-cats> Have your say about how your unfavourite moggie can be controlled.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/sep/10/tanya-plibersek-announced-swift-parrot-plan-without-showing-recovery-team-who-helped-develop-it>. Unusually, I am speechless – Ed.

A note from Philip Milner: “Herbert Staubmann came along to our working bee in the Hawley NR the other day... He was reciting this little poem to us on the walk back and I thought that it might be suitable for the E-news.”

Squinancy-Wort

WHAT have I done?—
I am a little flower,
Out of many a one
That twinkles forth after each passing shower.
White, with a blushful glow, In the sweet meadows I grow,
Or innocent over the hill tops sport and run.—
What have I done?

Many an age agone,
Before man walked on earth,
I was. In the sun I shone;
I shook in the wind with mirth;
And danced on the high tops looking out seaward-
where I had birth.

Web-footed monsters came
And into the darkness went
In ponderous tournament,
Many an age agone.
But on the high tops I dwelt ever the same,
With sisters many a one,
Guiltless of sin and shame!—
What have I done?

What have I done?— Man came,
Evolutional upstart one!
With the gift of giving a name
To everthing under the sun.
What have I done? — Man came
(They say nothing sticks like dirt),
Looked at me with eyes of blame,
And called me “Squinancy-wort”.

What have I done? I linger
(I cannot say that I live)
In the happy lands of my birth;
Passers-by point with the finger;
For me the light of the sun
Is darkened. Oh, what would I give
To creep away and hide my shame in the earth! —
What have I done?

Yet there is hope. I have seen
Many changes since I began.
The web-footed beasts have been
(Dear beasts! — and gone, being part of some wider plan).
Perhaps in his infinite mercy God will remove this Man!

Edward Carpenter 1844 – 1929
Towards Democracy, 1881-2.