

VALE LORNA LONG



Club members were shocked and saddened to learn that Lorna Long had passed away in Latrobe Regional Hospital on 16th June 2014, aged 84 years. At the celebration of her life held in Moe on Monday 23rd June, we heard that, in the earlier part of her adult life, her work as a registered nurse had taken her to Geelong and other hospitals. She later travelled widely, visiting family in Scotland and exploring continental Europe.

Lorna was an absolute stalwart of our club, much loved by many members, and she could always be relied on to help with club projects or activities in her ever practical way.

She was a member from the early 1960's and had a keen interest in both natural history and environmental management.

Lorna represented the club on a number of consultative committees. These include:

Wellington Wetlands Consultative Committee from 1991 – with a focus on rehabilitation of Lake Coleman after the

opening of the LV Ocean Outfall into Bass Strait.

Morwell River Wetlands Committee from 1999 – it oversaw the development of Brodribb Road Wetland and the wetlands adjoining the Princes Freeway west of Morwell.

More recently she was a keen contributor to the work of the committee for the Ollerton Avenue Reserve in Moe.

Lorna was editor of the *Latrobe Valley Naturalist* for an amazing 18 years from 1970 through to 1988, having taken over from Jim Peterson, a key founding member of our club.

Lorna was Vice-president for many years through until the present, not infrequently taking the chair as our current President is a keen birdwatcher prone to journeying in far-away places when the opportunity arises! On top of that, she frequently looked after finances when our equally keen birdo Treasurer was away.

Lorna hosted many annual program planning meetings at her home in Newborough, and also various committee meetings when our regular venue was not available. Her tasty soups and especially her famous Welsh cakes were always much appreciated.

Her many contributions were fittingly recognised when she was made a Life Member of the LVFNC in 2003.

Lorna's many friends in the LVFNC offer their condolences to her family as we honour her commitment to the local natural environment and the work of our club.

ABERFELDY EXCURSION

Led by Geoff Pike, DEPI, March 29 2014

The last time we stood on top of the wall at the Thomson Reservoir, some five years ago, much of its contents had been drained away during the drought and the carcass of brown banks surrounding it, dropping down to its remnant of water, took away most of the pleasure in the view. When we gathered there before the drive to Aberfeldy, to see the damage from and recovery after last year's bushfires, the vast expanse of blue

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water was a much more pleasing and reassuring sight.

Following Geoff's description of the fire, its starting point, speed of movement and ferocity, he spoke of their experiments with starting a fire with a lighted cigarette butt. For it to light a fire in their experiments, humidity had to be lower than 7%, the burning butt had to fall on very fine dry material such as poa grass, and it needed to have a breeze blowing at ground level.

On the other side of the Thomson dam wall, the road north followed the ridge high above the reservoir and for some distance glimpses of the water could be had through the trees, with occasional tracks running down spurs to the water's edge. On the east side of the road, there was a deep drop down to the Aberfeldy River which flows into the Thomson River south of the reservoir but north of Walhalla. Across the river, several very steep gravel tracks up the spurs had been carved out of the forest and we wondered if they were made for fire control or burning off as they looked far too steep for timber getting.

The Aberfeldy town area came as a surprise to me. Because it was once a thriving gold-mining town, as was Walhalla, I had presumed that it would also be down in a valley along a creek bed. However, the remnants of the town are up on the top of the hill with what looked like steep drops down into valleys on either side, though as the town was once called Mt Lookout its whereabouts should have been obvious. The site of the cemetery was still there, a few homes were scattered around and an old building looked as if it could have once been a shop or pub. Although the area has a high rainfall, we wondered where the town's original people obtained or stored their water as there did not seem to be any natural sources around. On our map, Simpson Gully flows westwards down to the northern reaches of Thomson Reservoir and a couple of creeks to the east are tributaries of Aberfeldy River. The area now seems isolated and lonely, but with many small gold-mining hamlets dotted about it might not have been so at the height of the gold rush.

At our first stop as we drove eastwards into the fire area, Geoff pointed out areas of differing fire intensity. The underlying rock was of interest. This was shale, a fine-grained sedimentary rock formed from particles of clay minerals and compressed by overlying rocks. Its layers were obvious and easily broke apart. A great deal of earth movement must have occurred to raise the rocks to this height (close to 1000m) above the sea floor where they would have originated. However, the evidence was in the embankment along the roadside where the folds in the rock strata revealed the tilting which created these hills. Jackie had mentioned earlier that fossils had been found in the area, so we had a quick look but were unable to find anything in the short time we were there. East of the Aberfeldy River, some rock layers had been uplifted to form vertical columns. At the stop along the road beside Donnelly Creek, amongst the rocks were pieces of slate, a harder dark-grey metamorphic rock which is derived from shales or mudstones subjected to pressure by earth movements.

Where the valley widened out and we could see further, evidence of the fire's ferocity could be seen on the hillsides facing west and north. Apart from the ranks of tree 'sentinels' spaced at intervals across the hillsides like soldiers dressed in frills of green on guard duty, much of the ground seemed to be bare of vegetation still, though a film of green was appearing between the trees on some of the lower slopes. Sadly, some of the trees didn't make a recovery. Standing out in strong contrast to the green leaves and black bark of the surviving trees was the brilliant tan and black of trees that had made an attempt to regrow before finding the struggle too hard.

The study of the effect of fire on the Australian landscape was of great interest once again and we would like to thank Geoff for leading us through this interesting area.

Estelle Adams

BEECH GULLY FUNGI FORAY

31st May 2014

For our May botany excursion, we joined the Friends of Baw Baw for a fungus foray along the Beech Gully Walk (at the Mt. Erica Car Park). It was advertised to the public, but only attracted three people, who may become Field Nats members! There were only two from the Friends of Baw Baw, but the Field Nats were well represented and two Parks Rangers accompanied us.

It was nice to see that the Mountain Correa – *Correa lawrenciana* was flowering profusely. We don't expect to see much in flower in late May! Walking round the Beech Gully Walk, we were surprised at how few fungi were visible. The walk is delightful and the ferns are particularly common. We found the Common Filmy-fern – *Hymenophyllum cupressiforme* growing on granite rocks, but looking at more filmy-ferns, I spotted one I felt was new to me. I took its photograph and was pleased to find



that it was the Alpine Filmy-fern – *Hymenophyllum peltatum*. This tiny fern is

recognised by the secondary pinnae being only on the upper side of the primary pinnae. It is mainly alpine and apparently often grows with the Common Filmy Fern.

We recorded what fungi we could and also looked at the rainforest fauna along the walk. Myrtle Beech – *Nothofagus cunninghami* were numerous, but we were half way round the walk by the time we found any Southern Sassafras – *Atherosperma moschatum*.

It was on the base of a Southern Sassafras that we found the most interesting (and beautiful) fungus of the day. It covered large



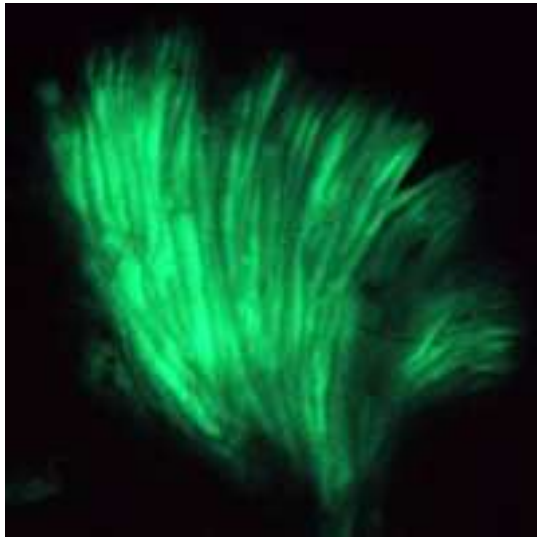
patches of the Sassafras tree with bright orange shelves on a whitish background. The spore bearing surface was a crowd of buff spikes on the underside of each shelf. We looked in Bruce Fuhrer's book. But couldn't find it. I then sent my images to Pat Grey and she came back with the answer, it is



Antrodiella zonata.

Pat says it is species 381 in Fuhrer, page 247.

One other fungus of interest was the Ghost Fungus – *Omphalotus nidiformis*. We found this at the foot of a couple of trees. It is called Ghost Fungus, because it is luminous, but one must view it at night to see its greenish glow. I took this photograph by its own light (30 minutes exposure) of one I



found in Morwell National Park.

We lunched at the picnic table in the car park and then drove 1km to the Mountain Monarchs Walk and walked along the track to view a group of enormous Mountain Ash – *Eucalyptus regnans*. The trees are impressive, but sadly 4 of the 5 trees have lost their tops and no longer qualify as monarchs! We found a few more fungi and plants that we had not seen on the earlier walk.

I have complete lists of the fungi, plants and lichens that we found on this walk.

Ken Harris

(The late appearance of the following article is due to its disappearance last year when my computer died, not because Margaret was tardy in producing it! Ed.)

MARINE LIFE OFF THE EAST GIPPSLAND COAST

Don Love 27.9.2013

Don shared with us his passion for diving on reefs and shipwrecks, illustrating his talk with colourful photos. Don has been diving in East Gippsland for over 40 years, and

during recent years, he and two mates have been involved as volunteers with the Reef Life Survey run by the University of Tasmania and Parks Victoria and Coastcare run by the Australian Government. With other volunteers, they survey fish and invertebrates on reefs and shipwrecks off the coast of east Gippsland. Fish are surveyed at the three Marine National Parks east of Lakes Entrance: Beware Reef, Point Hicks and Cape Howe as well as at Cape Conran, Pearl Point and Lakes Entrance.

Surveys are carried out using a 50 metre tape, noting all fish species within 2.5 metres each side of the tape and all invertebrates within 1.5 metres each side of the tape. Two divers, one each side of the tape go along the tape three times, taking photographic records and counts of every species they see. Reef Life Surveys involve repeated surveys at permanent sites. Over the past decade, 4 mammals (2 species of seal, Hump-back and Right Whales), 1 reptile (turtle), 90 species of fish, over 180 species of invertebrates, 40 sponges and 28 seaweeds have been recorded.

Conditions are not always ideal. The group often encounters very rough seas, and on one occasion they had to find their way ashore in fog. During floods, foam and mud is washed into the ocean from river systems causing darkened diving conditions. Certain weather conditions resulting in nutrient-rich water from the depths being forced inshore, cause algal blooms. These reduce visibility making conditions unsuitable for diving. White Pointer sharks sometimes visit. Divers are alerted to their presence when all fish suddenly disappear.

Much of Don's work has been done at Beware Reef, 5 km south east of Cape Conran. The reef is a rock the size of a large house sitting in about 100 metre of water. Part is visible above the surface except in the roughest of weather. Three shipwrecks – S.S. Ridge Park (1871), S.S. Auckland (1881) and S.S. Brolga (1926) - provide additional habitat for the huge variety of species. Sponge gardens form rich communities of invertebrates and fish. The Butterfly Sea Perch are often very abundant in summer.

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Don showed photos of an amazing variety of colourful fish. Their names give some indication of the variety within each family: Seven species of the Wrasse family – Blue-throated, Purple, Rosy, Crimson-banded, Luculentus, Senator and Snakeskin; five species of Morwong – Banded, Red, Magpie, Jackass and Blue; six species of Leather Jackets, including – Six-spined, Horseshoe, Mosaic, Velvet and Yellow-striped.

Sometimes in autumn, warmer currents from the north bring animals as far south as East Gippsland. Several species of fish have arrived this way: Gunther's Butterflyfish, Yellow-crested Weedfish, the Girdled Scalyfin, Roundbelly Cowfish, and the Blue-lined Philinopsis (a nudibrach *Philinopsis cyanea*). The Giant Cuttle was recorded in large numbers one year. The Tasselled Kelpfish is an example of a fish from the cooler waters of Tasmania moving into East Gippsland waters.

With the help of scientists who participate in the Reef Life Surveys, Don and his diving friends are learning to identify invertebrates and include them in the surveys. Don showed photos of several species of each group: sponges, anemones, hydroids, jellyfish, corals, seastars, bryozoans (Lace Corals), nudibranchs (Sea Slugs), pycnogonids (Sea Spiders), and ascidians – all of these beautiful and many of them brightly coloured. Don pointed out that the brilliant colours of many nudibranchs act as a warning to would-be predators that they are poisonous.

In addition to the possible threats from human activities, two invasive pest species are now causing concern. The Long-spined Sea Urchin, *Centrostephanus rodgersii* has moved in from the north over the past decade. They can eat 75% of the biomass on the bottom, creating barren areas. A trial of removing these and monitoring the situation is planned. The largest of crayfish, the Blue Groper and a triton mollusc are predators of the urchin. The Seven-armed Seastar, *Astrostele scabra*, was introduced to Tasmania from New Zealand (perhaps brought in with oysters) and has now been found at Mallacoota, Beware Reef and Point

Hicks. A large seastar, it feeds on molluscs and crustaceans.

Margaret Rowe

REPORT ON BUSINESS MEETING HELD 23.6.2014

With sadness the Chair noted the passing of Lorna Long who, in many and varied ways, contributed to our Club for nearly 50 years.

General Meetings & Excursions

Friday 25 July: Winter Members' Night – various club members to speak.

Saturday 26 July: Traralgon Railway Reservoir Conservation Reserve. Meet 10am at Hickox St carpark.

Friday 22 August: The National Herbarium of Victoria – David Cantrill

Saturday 23 August: Herbarium and Botanic Gardens excursion. Train and tram. 7.55am train from Traralgon meeting 10.30 at the Herbarium gate. Herbarium cost \$196 (max. 15 people).

Botany Group: Saturday 2 August: Holey Plains for orchids and other flowers. Meet 10am at carpark in Rosedale opposite the bakery. Contact: Jackie Tims ☎ 5634 2628

Bird Group: Rokeby Rail Trail. Meet by 10am at Rokeby Hall. Thurs 14th EA Wetlands survey. Meet 9.30am at Morwell River Bridge gate. Please contact Alix in advance if planning to go. Alix Williams ☎ 5127 3393, alixw@spin.net.au.

Finance – Cash Mgt Trading A/c \$2621.48. Term Deposit \$14,248.46.

Business Arising, Correspondence & General Business

Naturalist production – From surveys strong preference for bi-monthly editions. Editor happy to continue monthly until end of year. Look at completed survey results at August BM.

Data projector problems – John Poppins is preparing a brief summary of the most important functions. A form requesting what equipment speakers are bringing and need has been prepared. Decision to purchase a 4 switched power board with surge protector.

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Possible purchase of a spare bulb – consult John P.

Club mugs have been delivered to Jackie. Six to be stored in the cupboard.

Proposal to purchase, for Club library, the *Flora of Melbourne* book.

Morwell Recreation Reserve Precinct – signage enhancement and walking track at Eric Lubcke Reserve.

Trust For Nature ‘Spring into Nature’ event 2014 at Uralla - request for Club involvement. Suggested dates sent to John Hick. (*Will be held on Sunday 12 October.*)

Edward Hunter Reserve/Latrobe CC meeting re proposed development – unable to attend meeting. LCC has refused to grant permit for Subdivision and native vegetation removal in Coalville Rd. Developers may appeal to VCAT. We will request timely advice on date of hearing from LCC.

Discussed contract with Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network to deliver Red Gum Plains Project. Alix Williams has written a lengthy report.

Request from Max Thompson to use Club’s duck orchid image on plaque for Bon and Ollie – permission granted and support expressed.

Florence Blucher is moving and may retire from LVFNC. She has a stereomicroscope that the Club or a member may purchase at their nominated price. Ask members at GM.

Bushwalking Federation Walks Weekend 7-9 November at Rawson Village – Julie Parker is on the organizing committee. LVFNC display/brochures to be considered closer to the date.

Sale 50th Anniversary Dinner on August 1 – free invitation to President received. Reply that either David Stickney or an alternative nomination will attend.

Lichens of Morwell NP brochure – Ken Harris had draft of pamphlet and letter to go from Club to SEANA requesting a grant. Motion: That the Club wishes to give a grant of up to \$500 for the publication of a *Guide to Lichens of Morwell National Park* and will apply for a grant from SEANA for \$2286 for same. D Mules/G Bremner – carried.

Frog Project – Tamara Leitch has been asked to supply copies of information and questionnaire. No need to get info about koala scat genetics study.

Collect and keep radios, First Aid Kit and GPS (contact J Weerts) in cupboard.

Need to determine payment for Church Hall usage for this BM since key collected did not open the Railway Club.

Conservation Matters

Nothing to report.

GUEST SPEAKER FOR AUGUST

Professor David Cantrill is the Director of the National Herbarium of Victoria. After completing a degree in Botany and a PhD in Cretaceous fossil plants at the University of Melbourne, he joined the British Antarctic Survey to research plants of a similar age in Antarctica. Later he joined the Natural History Museum in Stockholm, Sweden. On returning to Melbourne a few years ago he took up the position of Director at the Herbarium. One of his current research interests is studying the Cretaceous plants of Chatham Island, about 1000km west of Christchurch, New Zealand.

FOR THE DIARY

BOOK LAUNCH AND EXHIBITION

Saturday 26 July, 1.30 for 2pm, at Latrobe Regional Gallery. See June Naturalist for full details.

SEANA SPRING CAMP PORTLAND

Friday 26 to Monday 29 September, hosted by Portland FNC.

ANN GET-TOGETHER HOBART

Saturday 18 to Sunday 26 October

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR - PHOTOS

Colour photos to accompany articles are most welcome, especially now that the Naturalist is appearing on the club website.

Please don’t embed them in the article – it is much easier for me to fit them in where I can as I go, at times a bit of a juggling act!