

Latrobe Valley Naturalist

EXCURSION TO URALLA 28.6.2014

The Uralla nature reserve is a 45 hectare bushland reserve at the foothills of the Strzelecki Ranges. Our large group of field naturalists set off on the "Bullocky walking track" into the reserve, which was originally part of the early settlers Bullock track from Trafalgar to Thorpdale. The property is one of The Trust for Nature properties and has a diversity of indigenous wildlife and plant species. The Uralla nature reserve is made up of bioregions consisting of Strzelecki Warm Temperate Rainforest, Damp Forest and Shrubby Foothill Forest.

The Shrubby Foothill Forest is located under 500 metres with soil fertility which is moderately rich. This forest covers the ridges and exposed slopes and overlaps with the Damp Forest. The Shrubby Foothill Forest is considered endangered, with a canopy of Messmate, *Eucalyptus obliqua* and an understorey of broad leaved and narrow leaved shrubs including Prickly Moses, *Acacia verticillata*; Hop Goodenia, *Goodenia ovata* and Austral Bracken, *Pteridium esculentum* (amongst others) along with scattered ferns, graminoids and herbs. The plants from each bioregion also overlap, although there are more varieties of Eucalypts in the lower ranges and in the gullies. Within the Damp Forest are Mountain Grey Gum, *Eucalyptus cypellocarpa*; Snowy Daisy-bush, *Olearia lirata* and the Forest Wire-Grass, *Tetrarrhena juncea* (amongst many other species, as well).

A Strzelecki Warm Temperate Rainforest is classified as a closed forest to 25 metres tall which is restricted to the lowlands, growing on the protected slopes along streams and minor gullies. The range of non-eucalypt canopy species dominates above the understorey of trees and shrubs and in addition an array of ferns and climbers are in abundance. Unfortunately the Strzelecki Warm Temperate Rainforest is regarded as the "most depleted ecological vegetation class in the Strzelecki Ranges". This remnant of the Strzelecki Warm Temperate Rainforest has a canopy of Blackwood, *Acacia melanoxylon*; Muttonwood, *Myrsine howittiana*; Hazel Pomaderris, *Pomaderris aspera*; Sweet Pittosporum, *Pittosporum*

undulatum; Austral Mulberry, *Hedycarya angustifolia* with Musk Daisy bush, *Olearia argophylla*; *Bedfordia arborescens*; *Sambucus gaudichaudiana*; *Urtica incisa*; *Stellaria flaccida*; *Australina pusilla*; *Polystichum proliferum*; *Pellaea falcata*; *Austrocynoglossum latifolium*; *Eucalyptus cypellocarpa*; *Clematis aristata*; *Goodenia ovata* along with other vines and ferns. Most of these were evident on our walk.

Our resident birding expert Alix Williams, along with botanist Jackie Tims and all round nature expert Ken Harris whose knowledge of botany, fungi and ornithology is extensive, led our walk, accompanied by Sally Green who is also a keen fungi enthusiast and Peter Warne who has an extensive knowledge of birds and their calls as well. Peter was able to identify three birds from their calls - Eastern Yellow Robin; Golden Whistler and Lewin's Honeyeater. Either we were too slow on the day or the birds were too fast for any photographs. It is also likely we were all a bit too chatty and chirpy for the birds on the day too.



Dawsonia superba Photo: Jenine Plunkett

On entering the forest, the fungi *Clavulinopsis amoena*, alerted us with its strong yellow display. Some of the stick like fungi were standing alone upright, while others were massed together. This Yellow Coral Fungus was growing in soil along the forest track. Then we spotted a moss which was *Dawsonia superba*, which, in some areas, dependent on growing conditions, grows to be the largest moss in the world. Some of the plants had the fruiting bodies, the sporophytes. Then as we were passing under a massive overhead tree branch, we noticed a profusion of one of the filmy ferns which is in the Hymenophyllum species of

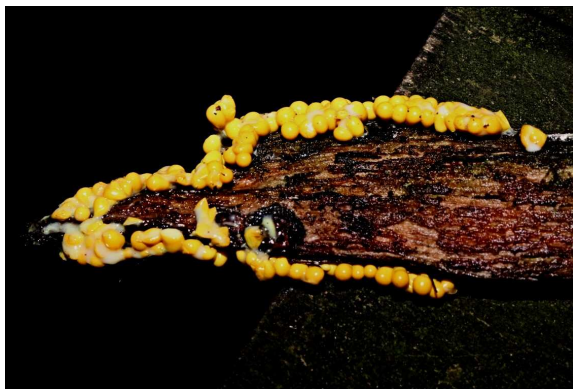
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which 4 species occur regularly in the West Gippsland area. This one was either *Hymenophyllum australe* or *Hymenophyllum cupressiforme*, but it is uncertain which one.



Tremulla fuciformis Photo: Jenine Plunkett

Then, next along the path we encountered the Jelly Fungus - *Tremulla fuciformis*, the English name - Snow Fungus and the Japanese name - Shirokikurage, which we observed growing on a fallen, decaying log. It was white and almost translucent in a rounded oozing shape. *Stereum illudens* was also noted, a common wood-rotting bracket fungus. In addition we spotted an Earth Star - *Geastrum triplex*, also *Stereum ostrea* which was an outstanding display and some pink-stainer mushrooms, which are an *Agaricus* species and are very closely related to field mushrooms but not necessarily edible.



Badhamoa utricularis Photo: Ken Harris

The walking path had been recently upgraded with a new board walk over a stream and steps leading up the track. Nestled along the damp path were the

Gristle Fern - *Blechnum cartilagineum* and the Strap Water-fern - *Blechnum pattersonii*. After passing through a gully of ferns the majority of walkers branched off taking the higher track which was steeper up the mountain and the remainder parted company on the lower track, each party observing the terrestrial orchid, the Greenhood Cobra, *Pterostylus Grandiflora*, which confirmed an earlier sighting that we were unsure of due to its immature form.



Amanita xanthocephala Photo: Ken Harris

Further on Sally was exceptionally pleased to photograph the *Amanita xanthocephala*, which is a relative of the *Amanita muscaria* but is smaller, has white gills and contrasting orange cap. This is her first sighting in ten years of fungi hunting; they are also found in Morwell National Park. Ken also photographed two groups of different Slime Moulds which he has tentatively named as *Metatrachia floriformus*, found growing all over the end of a log and the second one *Badhamoa utricularis*, was inhabiting a fallen splinter of wood. My thanks to Ken for identifying the fungi as well.

The Native Plants in the Strzeleckis

<http://members.dcsi.net.au/kimjulie/latest/bioregion/strzplantlist.html>

Trust for Nature www.trustfornature.org.au/.../fn-conservation-bulletin-issue-35-2006-12

Introduction to Bioregions, the Strzelecki

Bioregion ... - DCSI

members.dcsi.net.au/kimjulie/latest/bioregion/strzbio-region.html

Hancock Watch

<http://hancockwatch.nfshost.com/docs/12mar.htm>

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[Strzeleckis Warm Temperate Rainforest Community \[PDF\]](#)

www.depi.vic.gov.au/data/.../PRR0846-and-847-Strzeleckis-WTR.pdf

Jenine Plunkett

WHALE WATCHING

Talk by Geoff Glare

Geoff Glare spoke on the subject of whale watching at our meeting on Friday 27th June, drawing on some great photography by himself and his partner Anne Looney. We were grateful that, following a day or two of wild weather, power had been restored to our part of Newborough just prior to the start of the meeting!

Geoff began with a concise overview of whales to set the scene for his focus on whale watching in Australian waters. Descended from land-based hoofed mammals which returned to the sea 50 to 60 million years ago, there are now two major groups: toothed whales and baleen whales. Two whale species which frequent Australian waters, Southern Right Whales and Humpbacks, are both baleen whales which sieve out krill from the sea water as it passes over the baleen pleats.

Southern Right Whales tend to be rotund, have no dorsal fin, have a smooth trailing edge to the tail, have a brownish colour, barnacle growths and produce a V-shaped blow. Females grow to about 18 metres and breed at about 3 years old with a 12 month gestation. They shepherd their young and frequent waters less than 10 metres deep to mask their sound from killer whales (orca). They were the "right whale" to hunt, so from a population of 55 – 70 thousand numbers were decimated to maybe 300. The Australian population is now steady at 3,500, while the world population is 12,000 and increasing.

Humpback whales grow to 16 metres and 45 tonnes. They have flippers about 1/3 of the way along their length, a hump with a small dorsal fin, a tail which is white on the underside and has a serrated trailing edge which can provide individual identification, and produce a bushy blow. Females breed at 2 – 3 years. Humpbacks arrive at the Bunorong Coast and other Australian waters

in late April to early May, remaining here until late September. They tend to move west to east at about 7 kph about 100 metres offshore, breaching every 5 to 10 minutes to breathe. (Southern Right Whales arrive about 1 – 2 months later.)

Whale behaviour includes breaching, dislodgment of remoras, barnacles and skin fragments, spy bopping (looking above the surface), warnings and communication. Fluke slapping (or lobtailing) may be for warnings, communication and defence. There can be interaction between mothers, for example to bring calves together, and between a mother and her calf. For example, fins up means "milk bar closed".

The talk included many stunning photographs of both whales and pelagic birds linked with their presence, so offered much of interest to most club members. In closing, Geoff offered to provide the LVFNC with a list of good observing sites around our coasts.

Graeme Rowe with modifications by Phil Rayment

(This write-up is adapted from an article by Graeme which originally appeared in the *South Gippsland Conservation Society Newsletter*, and is published with the author's permission. The original was based on a similar talk presented on July 20, 2013 for the SGCS.)

VALE LORNA LONG

Lorna was a stalwart of the club, always present and reliable and ready to step into the breach to run a meeting. She liked a short meeting, so they were brief and to the point. She could be relied upon to take on a lot of roles. With our keen birdwatching Treasurer and President regularly going on trips, she would step into each of the roles two or three times a year and run things with no fuss. She also regularly collected the club mail from our post box in Morwell and would host our program planning meeting at her place as well as other meetings if our meeting room was not available.

She was an absolutely reliable attender of the monthly business meeting, and she never complained that it was too cold, or went too late, or used age as an excuse to retire - she

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just kept coming along and putting in. She was good at keeping things on track too, and would sharply bring recalcitrant birdwatchers back to the point (you know who you are!).

Lorna very ably took on the role of Treasurer of the VFNCA (now SEANA) camps we ran at Eden on the Pond and Rawson. She well deserved her Life Membership of the Club.

She had rather a naughty streak in her, which we discovered on a VFNCA camp to Marysville where we were accommodated in a dry guest house run by a religious group. There were strict instructions that no alcohol was to be consumed on the premises. Lorna was not to be repressed, and came down the corridor, port bottle and glasses chinking in her bag, inviting the willing into our room for a nightcap.

I especially have Lorna to thank for my copy of Jean Galbraith's book 'Wildflowers of South-east Australia'. Lorna had bought two copies when they were first published and offered one to me when she saw my interest in botany.

We will miss Lorna's hospitality, her common sense and sense of humour, and her Welsh cakes at the program planning meetings.

Wendy and Ken Savage

REPORT ON BUSINESS MEETING HELD 21.7.2014

General Meetings & Excursions

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).

Friday 19 September: Two Weeks in the Kimberley – Phil Rayment

Saturday 20 September: Wonthaggi Heathlands. Meet 10am at Guide Park, western end of Graham St, Wonthaggi (opposite the hospital).

Botany Group: Saturday 30 August: Stolls Rd, on the east side of Bunyip SP. Meet

10am at Nilma North Fire Station, corner Bloomfield & Old Sale Rds. Contact: Wendy Savage ☎ 5634 2246

Bird Group: Tuesday 2 September GDF Suez Morwell River Wetlands. Meet by 9.30am at carpark off Strzelecki Hwy, south of Morwell. Alix Williams ☎ 5127 3393, alixw@spin.net.au.

Finance – Cash Mgt Trading A/c \$2583.87. Term Deposit \$14,248.46.

Business Arising, Correspondence & General Business

Data projector problems – John Poppins has put labels on the data projector. A 4 switched power board with surge protector and tape to cover leads have been purchased. Possible purchase of a spare bulb – asked John P. to investigate. Phil has found the laser pointer.

Who is purchasing, for Club library, the *Flora of Melbourne* book? Ask Ken Harris. Also ask at GM for members who wish to purchase it. Cost is \$90.

Trust For Nature 'Spring into Nature' event on Sunday 12 October at Uralla Nature Reserve - John Hick to contact Club with further details later.

Contract with Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network to deliver Red Gum Plains Project. Discussion of a second report from Alix. The rewording of the contract was accepted. This decision goes to Megan Hughes who will alter the contract accordingly and send it for the President's signature. A report from Jenine Plunkett on the Project meeting of 17 July was discussed.

Guide to Lichens of Morwell National Park - SEANA has granted \$2286 for publication of 2000 copies. Also \$500 each from LVFNC and Friends of Morwell NP. The Club was requested to apply for an ISBN for the publication, and deposit copies with the national and state libraries. Copies to sell for \$2 where appropriate. Distribution, collection and distribution of money to be considered later.

Collect from David Stickney the radios and GPS, First Aid Kit from Wendy and leave in cupboard if practical or bring on GM nights for use on excursions.

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Payment for Church Hall usage for June BM, normally \$15/hour, amounts to \$30.

Sale FNC 50th Anniversary dinner – David S to confirm attendance.

Another signatory required. Motion: That VP Philip Rayment be made a signatory to the LVFNC Inc. accounts. D Mules/G Bremner – carried.

Sale FNC have invited LVFNC people to join a bus to Cape Liptrap for an excursion in mid-late November. Ask at GM then Phil will respond to Sale.

Friends of Edward Hunter HBR and others are keen that the LVFNC attends the VCAT hearings for the subdivision near the reserve. Date not known – have requested LCC to inform us.

SEANA Spring Camp in 2016 – meeting between Sale FNC and LVFNC postponed until the timing of the ANN Get-Together in 2016 decided.

Vi Harrison requested that we get a roving microphone for questions/responses. Phil to investigate.

Next BM to consider the Naturalist survey responses.

Conservation Matters

Nothing to report.

GUEST SPEAKER FOR AUGUST

LVFNC member **Philip Rayment** spent a fortnight in the Kimberley region in the north of Western Australia in the first half of September, 2012, travelling by a circuitous route from Broome to Halls Creek including much of the Gibb River Road and the Mitchell Plateau. The talk, titled “Two Weeks in the Kimberley”, will focus on the diversity of land forms and habitats of this vast region, roughly twice the size of Victoria.

Phil is currently Vice President of LVFNC and served as club president for the ten years to 2000. He is also the secretary of SEANA, the state-wide association of field naturalists clubs. When not exploring or bushwalking, he does some part-time teaching in the School of Applied and Biomedical Sciences

at Federation University Australia’s Gippsland campus.

FOR THE DIARY

SEANA SPRING CAMP PORTLAND

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

Information and registration forms have been sent out.

ANN GET-TOGETHER HOBART

Saturday 18 to Sunday 26 October

BOOK LAUNCH: JEAN GALBRAITH – WRITER IN A VALLEY

The very large crowd including many academics and field naturalists that gathered at the Latrobe Regional Gallery in Morwell on the afternoon of Saturday 26 July evidenced both the high regard for historian Meredith Fletcher and the esteem in which the late Jean Galbraith (1906-1999) is held. The occasion was the launch of Meredith’s much anticipated book *Jean Galbraith: Writer in a Valley* which tells the compelling story of one of Australia’s most influential botanists and writers on nature, plants and gardens – and of course a foundation member of our club and very much its guiding light and inspiration across nearly forty years.

Meredith Fletcher was director of the Centre for Gippsland Studies at Monash University Gippsland Campus for twenty years, and is now an adjunct research fellow in Monash’s School of Philosophical, Historical and International Studies. The writing of her new book was assisted by the award of a State Library of Victoria fellowship.

The book was launched by fellow social historian and writer Peter Cuffley who was able to draw on his own recollections of Jean Galbraith’s life. In responding, Meredith graciously acknowledged the willing assistance she had received from many folk including field naturalists from across Gippsland.

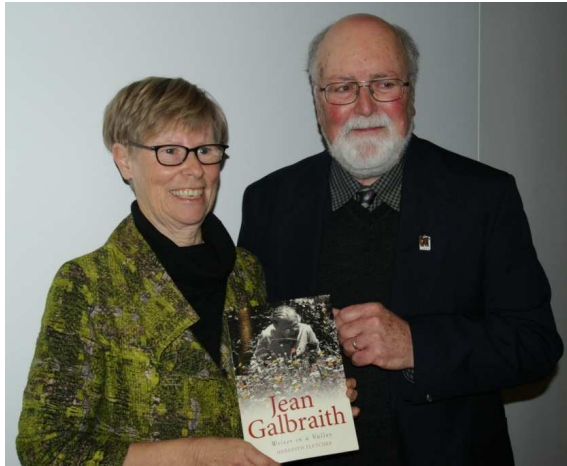
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Philip Rayment



Meredith Fletcher and Peter Cuffley

TRRCR EXCURSION IN JULY

A cool but only intermittently showery morning greeted participants in the club's 26 July winter 'local reserves' excursion to "The Res", to use the common affectionate abbreviation for the name of the Traralgon Railway Reservoir Conservation Reserve.

Long-active key Friends Group member John Lawson (also an LVFNC member) outlined recent developments; recent plantings include clusters of the Matted Flax-lily, *Dianella amoena*, as part of efforts to conserve this threatened Victorian endemic species. It appeared to be growing well. It was pleasing to learn from John that a new block of land of approximate area 5 Ha has been added to the reserve; it is former Crown land that abuts the southern end of the reserve on the opposite side of Hickox St. Being relatively elevated, it affords open views to the Traralgon Creek and the rest of the reserve.

At the Interpretive Centre, Sylvia Liebrecht mentioned that two possums had been spotted emerging from a cavity under its roof.

From there, we strolled up the track that follows the gully to the southern boundary,

enjoying the sight of six Wood Ducks perched on the branches of a dead tree near the bridge at the start of that track. As we followed the boundary track, John noted the variety of EVCs in the reserve, including Plains Grassy Forest near the southern boundary and Plains Grassy Red Gum Woodland near the central lake. It was good to see the maturing of the more recently developed wetland area at the north-east corner of the reserve.

The morning was rewarding on the birdwatching front, and David Mules' list appears below.

Philip Rayment

Australian Wood Duck	Brown Thornbill
Grey Teal	Spotted Pardalote
Chestnut Teal	White-eared Honeyeater
Pacific Black Duck	White-plumed Honeyeater
Hardhead	Noisy Miner
Spotted Dove	Red Wattlebird
Great Cormorant	Golden Whistler
White-faced Heron	Grey Shrike-thrush
Australian White Ibis	Australian Magpie
Purple Swamphen	Pied Currawong
Dusky Moorhen	Grey Fantail
Eurasian Coot	Willie Wagtail
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Little Raven
Rainbow Lorikeet	Magpie-lark
Musk Lorikeet	Scarlet Robin
Eastern Rosella	Little Grassbird
Laughing Kookaburra	Welcome Swallow
Satin Bowerbird	Common Blackbird
Superb Fairy-wren	Common Starling
Yellow Thornbill	Common Myna
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	

PLEASE NOTE

The September meeting and excursion dates are a week earlier than the normal fourth Friday due to the SEANA Spring Camp at Portland being held that weekend.

The October meeting and excursion dates are a week later than the normal fourth Friday due to the ANN Get-Together in Hobart, which runs from 18th to 26th October.