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## General meetings

Held at 7:30 pm on the  
fourth Friday of each month  
at the Newborough Uniting  
Church, Old Sale Road  
Newborough VIC 3825



Salt Lawrenca *Lawrenca spicata* observed on the Screw Creek Nature Walk at Inverloch during the Club's summer camp in February 2020 (Photo: Tamara Leitch).

## **Upcoming events**

*Due to government restrictions imposed to control the spread of the Covid-19 coronavirus, all LVFNC general meetings have been cancelled until further notice, and the Spring Camp has been postponed. The following outdoor excursions are currently proposed to be run in accordance with social gathering limits – leaders will cap numbers at the maximum allowed, so bookings are essential.*

- Botany Group:** Sat 1<sup>st</sup> August – Mullungdung State Park (contact Phil 0499028477)
- Bird Group:** Tues 4<sup>th</sup> August – Warragul & Drouin area (contact Joelle 0459504305)
- August general excursion:** Sat 29<sup>th</sup> August – Horseshoe Bend (contact Joelle)
- Bird Group:** Tues 1<sup>st</sup> September – Sale Wetlands (contact Joelle)
- Botany Group:** Sat 5<sup>th</sup> September – Holey Plains (contact Wendy 0428422461)
- Bird Group:** Mon 14<sup>th</sup> September – EA Wetlands (contact Joelle)
- September general excursion:** Sat 26<sup>th</sup> September – Wilsons Promontory Whale Cruise (contact Wendy)
- Bird Group:** Tues 6<sup>th</sup> October – Wirilda Environment Park (contact Joelle)
- Botany Group:** Sat 31<sup>st</sup> October – Yarragon South (contact Wendy)

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## President's Report 2019

Australia has recently been overwhelmed by a number of successive crises – the drought, bushfires, floods and the coronavirus pandemic. In West Gippsland we have escaped most of these, but have been unable to escape the effects of the virus, which have followed one of our most successful, enjoyable and interesting years that I can remember.

Our topics this year were diverse, including reptiles, botany, entomology, mammals and a travelogue to Papua New Guinea, focusing on the birds, which I presented in June.

The topic for April was 'Reptiles in West Gippsland' which was followed by a related excursion to Witts Gully. Although Denis had set up a number of tiles for the reptiles, the morning turned out to be quite cold for skinks to come out.

Plant topics were well-represented this year. The topic for May was the Fungimap conservation project, where we were introduced to a number of websites to which we could upload our sightings including iNaturalist, Fungimap and Biocollect. In October we had a very specific talk on leek orchids and the effort that is going on to prevent their extinction. A month later, our topic was the diverse range of pea plants. Both presentations were followed by related excursions, but our search for pea plants was more successful than our search for leek orchids.

We were introduced to leaf beetles by Martin Lagerwey in September with some colourful photographs of beetles. Martin led the excursion the following day to Mathison Park and Billys Creek where, armed with a homemade cloth, he managed to catch a number of leaf beetles. Our one and only presenter so far in 2020 was Max Campbell who spoke to us in February with an intriguing title 'Invertebrates, biodiversity and the plague ape'. Max is the president of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria and his theme was the impact our species is having on biodiversity.

Mammals were discussed in August, by Louise Durkin who spoke about Greater Glider and Leadbeater's Possum surveys. This was followed by a spotlighting walk in some of the Mirboo North coupes threatened by logging. The weather was not ideal for spotlighting so many convened in the Mirboo North brewery, but those of us who persevered saw a number of Greater Gliders and some of the nest boxes installed for them by Greening Australia. Our April speaker was Peter Homan who spoke on the advancements in survey techniques for wildlife.

We had two very successful camps this year. Our spring camp was held in a part of Victoria we had never visited before and was popular, with 33 members attending. We were able to visit Terrick Terrick National Park, Gunbower Island and several of the Kerang lakes. Our summer camp was held at Cape Paterson where a number of our members had beach houses and were able to accommodate us. This decision turned out to be very timely because Australia was experiencing our worst bushfires on record at the time we were there. We also had several members who knew the area well and were able to lead many of the excursions. These camps are becoming increasingly popular as we had a record number of members (45+) attending. I would like to thank the hosts, leaders and organisers of these very successful camps.

In spite of many of our native species declining, largely due to logging, global warming and feral animals, we did have some successes. Following the establishment of the Brataualung Forest Park last year, we were able to assist the Mirboo North community in their efforts to save three coupes

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designated for logging, by undertaking plant, bird and nocturnal mammal surveys. Following a lengthy and wide-ranging campaign by the Preserve our Forests Steering Committee, the three coupes were left off the Timber Release Plan and later all reserves with populations of Greater Gliders were preserved by the Victorian State Government. The Club received a Certificate of Appreciation for our support.

Our Club has representatives on the Strzelecki-Alpine Biolink working group, which is designed to strengthen the links between native vegetation patches extending from the Strzelecki Ranges to the Alpine region to the north. We also supported a campaign to ban the use of opera house yabby nets that can trap and drown platypuses, which resulted in the Victorian State Government banning the sale and use of these nets on public and private land.

Following a talk by Ken Harris on his 50 years of nature study in November 2018, we submitted an application nominating him for the 2019 Le Souef Memorial Award. The award recognises the very substantial role played by amateurs in the development of knowledge of our insect fauna. Ken was a very worthy applicant and, I am happy to say, the successful applicant. The award was presented by Peter Marriott at our January meeting.

We were saddened to hear that Ken Smith had passed away in August 2019. Ken was a committed and valued member of our Club for many years. Botany was his main interest, particularly orchids, and he was willing to share his knowledge with other members. He left a very generous legacy to the Club and we have set up a sub-committee to determine how his legacy can be spent to serve our community in a way that Ken would have wished.

The Club held a business meeting on 23 March 2020 and your committee decided to suspend our general meetings and excursions due to the coronavirus until the Chief Health Officer has decided it is safe for us to resume normal activities. This decision follows extensive consultation among our members to ensure your safety and wellbeing during this period. It is also disappointing because 2020 marks the Club's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary and your committee was intending to plan a celebration later this year. We will be closely monitoring the development of the pandemic and inform you when there will be a resumption of our activities. I hope you will see this suspension as an opportunity to carry out your own activities to learn more about our local parks and reserves.

The committee also held its AGM during the business meeting because of the suspension of the March general meeting. The requirement for the Club's AGM is that there is a quorum of 10% of our membership (currently 96 paid-up subscribers). We had 10 members present at our business meeting which complies with this requirement. The two motions that were passed were the annual Financial Statements for 2019 and the election of the office bearers.

Having conducted our AGM prematurely, we asked members who had any concerns or questions about these resolutions to contact me or our secretary before 7 April 2020. None were received so the minutes were ratified and submitted to Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV). If any concerns had been raised the Club would have held its AGM during the first general meeting when we reconvened. It is also appropriate to reveal that David Mules has announced he wishes to step down as our treasurer at the next AGM in 2021. David has served as our treasurer for 12 years and has also been a very active contributor to the Club's activities in many other areas. I hope he continues to be an active member, but we will be looking for a new treasurer next year.



Finally, I would like to thank those members who have accepted nominations for a further two-year term on our committee. I would also like to thank all our committee and members for your contribution to the Club and hope that you all stay well.

David Stickney

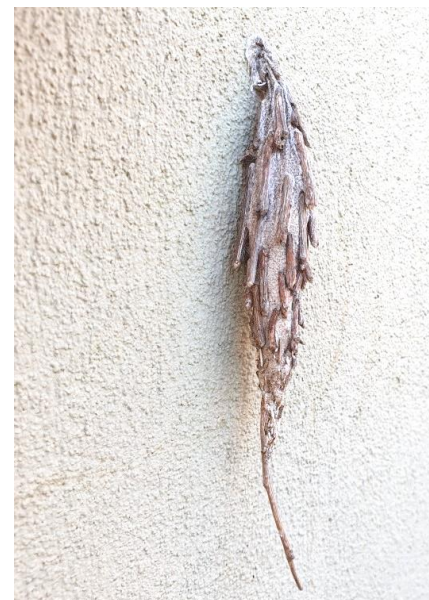
### The secret lives of case-moths

Like me, you probably recognise their cases but know little about the actual moth that makes them. We always have a few case-moths on plants and the front wall, but last year there was an invasion. They moved, mostly from the garden or from across the driveway via the garden, climbing up the walls and windows, with at least 18 settling on the house. Curiosity sent me to various books and websites and I want to share what I have found out.

Case-moths belong to the bagworm family Psychidae, members of which have portable homes made of silk, usually with plant material, detritus or sand grains attached to the outside. In Australia there are 350 species, differentiated by the shape, size and coverings of their case. Even within a single species, there is considerable variation in the appearance of their cases, depending on their food plants. They feed on a wide variety of plants including eucalypts, tea-trees, paperbarks and garden ornamentals; some also feed on lichens.

Our invasion was by the large bagworm Saunders' Case Moth *Metura elongatus*, which is common in eastern Australia, from Victoria to south-east Queensland.

The life cycle of a case-moth from eggs to adult takes 2-3 years, most of this spent in the larval (caterpillar) stage. The eggs are laid inside the case and develop into tiny, first-stage caterpillars that escape through a hole in the bottom of the case and lower themselves by a thread to a plant or the ground. When a caterpillar reaches a suitable plant, it uses its mouthparts to peel off the skin of the leaf or bark, and after an hour or two it has woven its first case of silk covered by bits of the material.



Case of *Metura elongatus* (Photo: Tamara Leitch)



Head and thorax of *Metura elongatus* (Photo: Tamara Leitch)

With a small portable home, it can move around while feeding, initially with the case sticking straight up. It pulls itself along with its front legs protruding from the case, exposing only its hard chitinous head and thorax but not the soft abdomen. If threatened, it can draw back into the case, close the top and wait for the danger to pass.

As a case-moth grows, it needs to keep enlarging its case. To do this, the caterpillar chooses a leaf or leaf stalk of suitable length and diameter that it can cut with its mouthparts, cuts it and places the chosen piece near

to the mouth of the case. It withdraws into the case and makes a slit in the side, then pulls the leaf stalk into the slit and proceeds to attach it at the base, weaving it firmly into place. Hence the case enlarges to fit the caterpillar's body. Saunders' Case Moth cases can reach a length of 12-15 cm, the females' being larger than the males'.

As the case gets heavier, the caterpillar drags it along and stops whenever it gets tired, fastening the case to a suitable surface by a thread of silk. There is a small hole at the bottom of the case where droppings are ejected. The larva can remain without food for a long time; when food is scarce, it often stays in the same spot for months.

About 18 months after it was born, the fully-grown caterpillar enters its pupation period. It anchors its case to a twig and closes the end from which the head has been protruding. Before pupating, the caterpillar turns itself in the case so that its head faces the bottom hole. It weaves a dense cocoon, filling up the loose parts of the case with silk, and becomes a pupa. The pupation period lasts from a few weeks to several months depending on the season and the weather, after which the adult emerges from the cocoon.

The adult female, a long grub-like creature, is wingless and never leaves the old case. She remains there until a male copulates with her, then lays a large number of eggs in the case and dies soon afterwards. The adult male Saunders' Case Moth is approximately 2-2.5cm long, has black wings with pale veins, spanning about 3 cm, and an orange, hairy head with an orange and black banded abdomen. The male emerges from the lower end of the old case and flies away for a day or two, in search of females to mate with, before he dies. The elongate, telescopic, prehensile abdomen (hence the species name *elongata*) facilitates the male's entry through the bottom of the case for copulation.

Some of the cases that you see may contain a resting caterpillar, living pupa, unhatched eggs, or be 'empty' and left in place after adult males have departed, or adult females, caterpillars or pupae have died in their case.

Case-moths are sometimes parasitised by Ichneumon wasps who inject their eggs into the case-moth caterpillars. When the eggs hatch, the Ichneumon larvae eat out the case-moth caterpillars. After their pupation in the case, the adult wasps leave the case in search of new caterpillars to parasitise. The caterpillars and adult males may also be killed by birds like Silvereyes.

Alix Williams

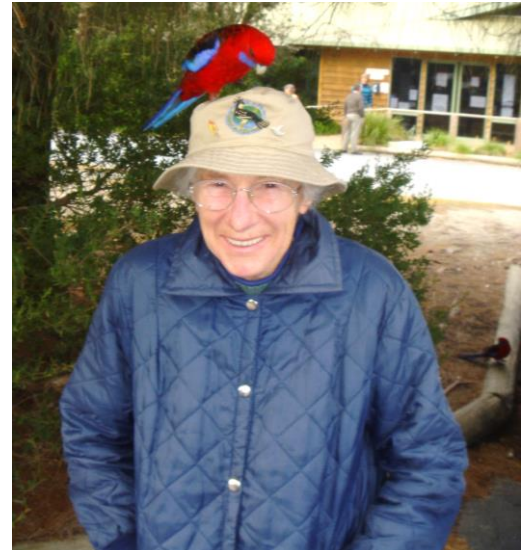


Leaf Case-moth *Hyalarcta huebneri* and Stick Case-moth *Clania lewinii* (Photos: Tamara Leitch)



## Eulalie Brewster OAM

Club members were delighted to learn that Eulalie Brewster had been awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the 2020 Australia Day Honours. The citation refers to her service to the community of Inverloch, particularly in the spheres of history, conservation and the environment. However, Eulalie's contributions to studying and protecting our natural environment have extended well beyond the Inverloch area. She is a foundation member of our Club, established in 1960, and led one of its very first excursions, to Cape Paterson (the location of our 2020 Summer Camp) in February 1961. Eulalie has been a member of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria (FNCV) since 1944, and is a foundation and life member of the South Gippsland Conservation Society (SGCS). She has been an active member of many other conservation groups, including the Victorian National Parks Association, the Friends of Morwell National Park, the Friends of Wonthaggi Heathlands (FOWH) and Birdlife Australia.



Eulalie and friend at Tidal River (Photo: Gary Wallis)

After growing up in Melbourne and completing teacher training, one of Eulalie's early regional postings was as head teacher at Yinnar South State School back in the mid-1940s. Whilst there, she met Os, her husband-to-be, and they heard about a rare orchid in the area. Eulalie and Os found the Butterfly Orchid *Sarcochilus australis* in December 1946, in Fosters Gully, on private property owned by the Quigley family. This was one of the first steps that led to the LVFNC's advocacy for the species' protection as part of Morwell National Park, which was declared in 1967. Eulalie and Os then had a long association with West and South Gippsland as dairy farmers in the Leongatha area from 1947 through until the 1970s.

In more recent times, since moving to Inverloch, Eulalie joined other LVFNC members in forming a group called the Prom'n'aides, undertaking plant surveys at Wilsons Promontory following the 2005 bushfire; this group also involved SGCS and FOWH members.

In Terri Allen's book *Gippsland Lady Botanists*, published by the SGCS in 2007, Terri wrote that Eulalie "is a true lady botanist: caring, repairing, sharing..." These three words well sum up Eulalie's approach to her many conservation efforts. Her love of our natural environment has surely played a major part in her enjoyment of a long and rewarding life.

We were very pleased that Eulalie's daughter, Alison, could bring her to the briefing session on the Friday evening of our summer camp so that we might celebrate her award and offer our warm congratulations.

Philip Rayment



Eulalie viewing South East Point at Wilson Promontory (Photo: Gary Wallis)

## CLUB SUMMER CAMP 2020 – Part 1

*This year's summer camp, held from 31<sup>st</sup> January to 4<sup>th</sup> February, explored the Cape Paterson area. Despite the weather being less than ideal, the camp was so popular that there were enough attendees and knowledgeable leaders for two excursions to be run simultaneously every morning and afternoon. Many of our members who had holiday houses at Cape Paterson or Inverloch generously hosted those who didn't, and the conveniently short travelling distances enabled us to return to base for lunch and, on multiple occasions, to change out of wet clothes in between excursions, which made for a comfortable and very enjoyable few days.*

### **Maher's Landing and Bald Hills Wetland Reserve – Birds**

One of the Saturday morning excursions took in Mahers Landing on Anderson Inlet, east of Inverloch, and later Bald Hills Wetland Reserve, off the Tarwin Lower-Walkerville Road.

At Mahers Landing, the high tide had left a thin strip of beach exposed, on which were 21 Pacific Gulls at various stages of development. This provided us with an excellent opportunity to observe the features of the moults through which the bird goes to reach maturity.

The Pacific Gull, Australia's largest gull (50-60 cm) is commonly seen on the southern and western coasts. The juvenile is dark brown with buff scaling on the wings and breast. The face and tail are paler, the bill pinkish at the base with a black tip, and the eye and legs are brown.

Passing through 3-4 stages, or moults, over the next four years, the immature birds progressively change. The wings turn brown and black, and then become uniformly black with a white trailing edge, whilst the body and head pass from mottled brown to white. The brown rump and tail becomes white with a black band. The massive bill goes from pinkish with a black band and cream tip, to being bright yellow with a scarlet red tip on both the upper and lower mandible. The legs become lighter grey-brown, then yellowish and finally orange. The eye colour becomes paler brown until reaching the full breeding adult stage with a white eye and red orbital ring.



Immature and adult Pacific Gulls (Photo: David Stickney)

Our second stop was at the Bald Hills Wetland Reserve, a top spot for seeing bush birds and viewing waterbirds from an excellent hide. We saw 34 species, the most exciting of which were 38 Freckled Duck. None of us had ever before seen that many together in Victoria, where they are considered 'Endangered'. They are a rare vagrant in the Valley, and are considered Australia's rarest waterfowl. Their main stronghold is the Murray-Darling Basin; they breed in inland swamps and when the swamps dry out they disperse towards coastal swamps – Bald Hills, with its open water, fallen timber, reeds and densely-vegetated edges was suiting these ducks in a time of inland drought. They feed on algae, aquatic vegetation and small invertebrates by filtering, upending and wading.

From a distance they appear quite large (similar to Pacific Black Duck), very darkly coloured with no



obvious markings, floating high in the water, with a short neck and large head with a slight but distinctive peak at the rear. The narrow, grey bill is scooped. In flight they look very dark, but distinctively paler underneath, with pale wing linings compared to other large ducks.



Freckled Duck immature (left) and breeding male (right)  
(Photos: Ken Harris)

Looking closer, the plumage is dark brown to black and finely freckled in white or buff. The females are a slightly paler, dull grey colour with bolder freckles and the immature birds are also paler and browner with deep buff freckles. The bill of the male changes to bright red near the base when breeding.

Thank you to David Mules and Lorraine Norden for taking us to such interesting birding sites.

Alix Williams

### Bald Hills Wetland Reserve – Plants

The walk along the track of the Bald Hills Reserve to the bird hide was mainly an adventure for the bird enthusiasts of the group. However, there were a few stalwart botanists who ambled along at their usual snail pace, mainly looking, as usual, towards ground level. This morning's botanising became a theme of the colour purple.



Alix and David testing out the Club's new scope (Photo: Baiba Stevens)



Angled Lobelia (Photo: Baiba Stevens)

Along the track there were many examples of the Blue Bottle-daisy *Lagenophora stipitata*, identified by its basal rosettes of soft, hairy leaves. In several more swampy places along the track, Angled Lobelia *Lobelia anceps* grew quite lushly, with its tiny mauve five-petalled flowers. The flowers have a white throat, and the middle three lobes of the flowers are almost fan-shaped, so that at first glance the plant could be mistaken for a *Scaevola*.

Long Purple-Flag *Patersonia occidentalis*, a tufted flat-leaved perennial, occurs in clumps, but there were no flowers to be seen today as this plant usually flowers in spring, not at the end of summer.

Approaching the bog on the way to the bird hide, we passed a clump of Swamp Mazus *Mazus pumilio*. This plant also forms basal rosettes of spoon-shaped leaves with wavy margins, and slender stems have two lipped purple flowers. Further towards the bird hide, we came across another patch of Mazus, but this mat of specimens was growing up to 20 cm high, perhaps due to the drier aspect and less light in the undergrowth.



On a slight rise, trailing stems of Trailing Speedwell *Veronica plebeia* could barely be seen in the grasses covering the embankment. However, the pretty, four-petalled lavender flowers gave away their hiding place; the darker purple veins could easily be seen on the petals.



Trailing Speedwell (Photo: Baiba Stevens)

When we finally reached the bird hide, we had to raise our heads from ground level to inspect the Kangaroo Apple shrubs growing nearby with their bright orange fruit and star-shaped purple flowers. With all of us having difficulty identifying which of the two Kangaroo Apples the plants could be, Wendy turned to VicFlora on her mobile phone to obtain the descriptions of each species. Reading through the



*Solanum aviculare* (Photo: Baiba Stevens)

descriptions, it was decided that the Kangaroo Apple shrubs were *Solanum aviculare*, not *S. laciniatum*. *Solanum aviculare* has blue-violet flowers that are deeply lobed, and fruit that becomes an orange-red. This description seemed to fit what we were seeing (well, the fruit wasn't quite red today! Obviously not quite ripe yet). *Solanum laciniatum* has larger deep-purple flowers that are not lobed and have a frilly edge. The fruit develops to a yellow colour. The reason why these shrubs are called Kangaroo Apples is not because kangaroos might eat the fruit, but because the leaves are the shape of a kangaroo's foot – similar to the Kangaroo Fern.

Baiba Stevens

## Dinosaur Discovery

We gathered at the Bunurong Environment Centre in Inverloch at 10 am on Saturday morning for a brief introduction by Mike Cleeland, a geologist and member of the South Gippsland Conservation Society. Mike was an engaging presenter, speaking enthusiastically about internationally-significant discoveries in the area and the fossils that had been found at the Inverloch Dinosaur Dig Site, including bones and teeth of small herbivorous and carnivorous dinosaurs, pterosaurs, ankylosaurs, plesiosaurs, fish, short-necked turtles, mouse-sized mammals and birds. A species called *Qantassaurus intrepidus* was the first dinosaur to be discovered at the site in 1996, *Galleonosaurus dorisae* was only described in March 2019, and it is likely that more species will be identified during analysis of the approximately 15,000 bones collected by Museum Victoria and Monash University between 1992 and 2012. Mike himself discovered the jawbone of a giant, predatory amphibian at Inverloch in 1990 that was subsequently named *Koolasuchus cleelandi*.

We then headed down to a marine rock platform known as Flat Rocks, near The Caves, west of Inverloch. Mike advised us to keep away from the cliffs as lumps of rock are constantly breaking off, and then led us along the beach to the east, pointing out the different rock types and various interesting features. There were four types of rock at the site: sandstone, mudstone, conglomerate and dolerite. The sandstone is the dominant rock, having been created by sand deposited by

freshwater rivers that flowed to this point, which, 125 million years ago, was a rift valley opening up as Australia was separating from Antarctica. The sand was then compressed under the weight of subsequent deposits. The mudstone was formed through a similar process, but from finer sediments and vegetation such as leaves (of which some fossils have been found) that accumulated in quiet lakes within the rift valley. The conglomerate rock originated from large particles of clay, rock, mud, wood and bones that washed into the valley when the rivers flooded and was buried; it is within this layer that most of the fossils have been found. The seam of dolerite was formed when lava from a volcano pushed up through a crack in the rock that existed around 99 million years ago, and this has since been eroding with the other rock types on the platform at a rate of around 2 mm per year (2 km every 1 million years), exposing the layers that we can see today.



Dolerite intrusion (Photo: Tamara Leitch)



The Dinosaur Dig site (Photo: Tamara Leitch)

Mike showed us the specific site of the Dinosaur Dig, a relatively inconspicuous, roughly rectangular pool cut into the rock platform within the intertidal zone. He said that there are likely to still be fossils located within the rock there, but as they dug deeper it became too difficult to clear the excavation areas of water, sand and other debris deposited during every high tide.

During intermittent showers of light rain, we observed the three-toed footprint of a carnivorous dinosaur, about 30 cm in diameter, created when the dinosaur walked through mud 115 million years ago, the surface hardened, and then sediment settled within the hole and the surrounding rock eroded away. The popular tourist attraction was damaged in 2017 by vandals and we had a discussion about whether it should be restored, removed, or left in its current state, with the general consensus being the latter.

Another highlight was two petrified tree stumps, one that had undergone a process known technically as 'lateral sinistral strike-slip displacement', where the tree was located along a fault line and movement had caused part of it to fracture and move horizontally to the left.

The morning ended with a visit to the end of Wallace Avenue in Inverloch, where there is a fantastic life-size concrete statue of *K. cleelandi*. The plan here was to have a go at cracking open some rocks gathered from the Wonthaggi Coal



Petrified tree stump (Photo: Tamara Leitch)





Mine to look for fossils, using techniques employed by palaeontologists at the Dinosaur Dig, however the rain became very heavy at this point and Mike said we wouldn't have been able to see the fossils if the rocks were wet, so he gave us a quick summary to conclude the activity and we headed home to dry off.

Tamara Leitch

Sandstone rock at the base of the cliffs at Flat Rocks  
(Photo: Tamara Leitch)

## Cape Paterson beach and cliff walk

Ignoring the showers, 12 hardy souls set off from the tennis courts at Cape Paterson for our beach and cliff walk. We started towards Undertow Bay with a small detour to see the waterfall at Pea Creek, which was not flowing. Wendy told us the story of Jean Meltzer (the first female Labor senator in Victoria and previous owner of Wendy and Ken's house) being knocked into the waterfall by a dog and having to be airlifted by helicopter after breaking bones and suffering serious injury.

We headed along the cliff path through scented, flowering Sweet Bursaria *Bursaria spinosa*, Sea Box *Alyxia buxifolia*, White Correa *Correa alba* and the expected coastal species. As we descended to Undertow Bay, we came to a fenced-off area where a Hooded Plover was protecting a sand scrape nest containing two eggs. Listed as a vulnerable species in Victoria, this is a significant event, although the chances of the eggs hatching and reaching fledgling stage are very poor, especially so close to the access path.

On reaching the beach, we turned left passing cliffs vegetated with Bower Spinach *Tetragonia implexicoma*, Cushion Bush *Leucophyta brownii*, Coast Spear-grass *Austrostipa stipoides*, Karkalla *Carpobrotus rossii*, Boobialla *Myoporum insulare* and Rounded Noon-flower *Disphyma crassifolium* until we came to a sandstone outcrop with several areas of petrified wood.

From there we returned and headed west through Undertow Bay. At the mouth of Pea Creek we saw the male and female flowers of Hairy Spinifex *Spinifex sericeus*, along with the introduced Sea Wheat-grass *Thinopyrum junceiforme* that was planted to stabilise the dunes and is now a serious weed.



Vegetation along the cliffs (Photo: Lorraine Norden)

Rounding the headland, we came to Bay Beach where, in the 1960s, the rocks were blasted by the coal miners to make an ocean swimming pool for their children. What a magic, safe spot, cleaned by the tide twice a day. Wonthaggi Life Saving Club had the red and yellow flags flying optimistically on the beach, with not a swimmer in sight.



The walk continued around the next rocky headland to Channel Beach, named for the natural channel in the rocks, a popular sheltered snorkelling spot. On the rocks Wendy pointed out many rounded black shells known as Black Crows *Nerita atramentosa*. Then it was over more rocks to Surf Beach No.1, home of the Cape Paterson Surf Life Saving Club, the clubrooms in the process of being renewed. We left the beach there, heading up some stairs, in anticipation of a warming cup of coffee. However, the shop was closed so we headed back along the cliff top path through planted coastal vegetation.

Lorraine Norden

### **Mouth of the Powlett River**



De-ticking of the bluetongue (Photo: Baiba Stevens)

It was a very grey and drizzly Saturday afternoon, but some of us braved the weather to walk along the west side of the Powlett River from the Echidna Carpark to the sand dunes. While ambling along, distracted by the plants, I looked up at one point and was very surprised to see that Rohan was holding a Blotched Blue-tongue that had been attempting to bask on the grassy track. The poor creature was riddled with ticks and, as we were pondering what to do about them, David S suddenly whipped out a pair of tweezers and presented them to Alix, who, accompanied by several restrainers and photographers, diligently proceeded to remove the worst of the parasites. The rest of us continued

walking to the dunes, enjoying lovely views across the river and a nice flock of Blue-winged Parrots. On our way back, we found the de-ticking operation was still going, and I waited until it was complete so I could get a photo of the lizard gratefully bidding the Good Samaritans farewell, no longer burdened by the weight of all its passengers. After returning to the carpark, some of our group wandered a short way along a track to the north, which traversed some very pretty mature coastal forest, but it wasn't long before we all got a little too wet and cold and decided to call it a day.

Tamara Leitch

*Latrobe Valley Naturalist* is the official publication of the Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists Club Inc. The Club subscription includes the "Naturalist".

Brief contributions and short articles on any aspect of natural history are invited from members of all clubs. Articles, including those covering Club speakers and excursions, would typically be around one A4 side in length, should not exceed 1,000 words, and may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Photos should be sent as an attachment and be a maximum of 1 megabyte in size.

Responsibility for the accuracy of information and opinions expressed in this magazine rests with the author of the article.

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