Central North Field Naturalists

CNFN

the

NATURAL NEWS

Summer 2002-2003

Patron - Dennis Morris

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Program and Events

December 1, Bogan Gap Meet at 1284 Bogan Gap Rd. 10 am. Those coming from Lyton way can meet at Exton at 9:30 at the Exton Hall. Rod will lead from there. Turn towards Osmaston and Quamby Brook at Exton. Follow the road past the turn-off to Golden Valley. Once the road turns to dirt, it is another 4 k further on the right. Wetlands, Alpine veg., wet forest, frogs, lizards, etc. This is a very interesting area with something for everyone.

Jan 12, Black Bluff. Travel B15 turning right at Nietta to Leven Canyon. About 5k beyond Leven Canyon, take a left fork past Mountain Valley Cabins and cross the bridge. Just beyond the bridge will be a Land For Wildlife sign where you turn into Tony and Alison's drive and go past some poplars to the house. This is an amazing area with caves, springs, etc. The Mountain Valley Cabins proprietor is willing to come over and tell us about this special area. Its worth the drive! Arrive at 10 am. Tony and Alison are keen bird watchers.

Jan 25, Launceston Field Nats at Skemps Our members are invited to "A Combined Clubs Day" at their Skemps field Centre for a social gathering and viewing of works. BBQ and facilities available on the day. There are a number of trails through various habitats. Take A3 towards Scottsdale, and turn left at Skemps sign a ways past Myrtle Bank. Follow signs to the property.

February 23 Penguin. Tide Pools. Arrive at 10am, and follow tide out. Low tide is 12 noon, and is the lowest for the month at .26 m. Bring lunch which we will have after we finish. This is a spectacular spot for seeing all manner of creatures including blue-ringed octopuses, sudibranchs and sea hares.

March 2 Burnie area geology A guided walk with Bob Richardson. Bob has agreed to show us possible interesting sites are found in the general Burnie area, including trilobite-bearing formations. Meet at the rest area near the toilets on the north side of the divided highway along the straight on the east side of Burnie at 10:00 am. This is a great opportunity to learn more about geology from an enthusiast.

From lichens to London

by Sarah Lloyd

In May 2002 lichens were starting to accumulate on every available surface in the house! Ron was beginning to investigate these intriguing organisms, aided by the recently acquired Lichens of rainforest in Tasmania and southeastern Australia (Kantvilas & Jarman 1999). But despite my fascination, I was reluctant to get too involved as I had a few projects to complete before leaving for London in mid-June.

I'd had little time to think about my imminent trip, having just completed surveying birds in remnant patches of bush from Northdown near Port Sorell to Nahageena in the far northwest. I had also just surveyed another several sites along the Dasher River and had promised to write an article about that project.

The main reason for my visit was to see my son who has been living in the UK for two years. He and

his partner live in Holloway, a noisy, dirty, predominantly black suburb in one of the poorest areas in London. This is in stark contrast to one of the richest areas just a short distance away, Hampstead Heath, to which we walked on my first day in the city. Hampstead Heath is an undulating, extensive park, surrounded by mansions displaying incredible wealth. From its highest point you can get a good view of some famous London landmarks, such as St Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey.

One of my first outings in London was to the Natural History Museum. This vast impressive building is decorated inside and out with terracotta tiles featuring relief carvings of plants and animals. On the west wing are living species, while on the east wing, fossilised species are depicted. Just observing some very faded and now rare mammals. In each display case in the mammals' collection was a note apologising for the aging specimens, explaining that it is no longer acceptable to go plundering distant countries for rare specimens of Sumatran Tigers or Tasmanian Devils.

Impressive though it may be, the old building is not equipped with adequate air conditioning, and was hot, airless and full of tourists and noisy school children. I soon sought refuge in the deserted bookshop where I could indulge my weakness for natural history books.

Several books on lichens caught my eye. The Natural History Life Series features one by William Purvis that is well illustrated and gives an overview of the subject. Another was a really comprehensive field guide to the species of Britain and Ireland. A phone call to Ron was necessary to ascertain whether this expensive book would be of use to us here in Australia. As it turns out, it has proved very worthwhile. Although there are many species that are endemic to Tasmania, most of the families occur worldwide. The book is well illustrated, contains keys, brief descriptions of each family with the meanings of family names, a colour photo and description of each species and an extensive glossary.

Lichens are remarkable organisms; they are a symbiotic association between a fungus and either a green alga or a cyanobacteria. It's the alga or cyanobacteria that provides the food (sugars) by photosynthesis and the fungal component that allows these organisms, normally only found in wet environments, to survive in an amazing array of habitats and substrates. Thus they are found in arid deserts, they dominate the arctic tundra, are found on alpine peaks which are exposed to extreme temperature fluctuations and high UV levels, to the equally inhospitable rocky coasts where they are constantly subjected to salt-laden spray.

Their ecological role is as many and varied as the areas they inhabit. In some areas they cover the ground, preventing soil from drying out, they release nutrients required by trees, and are an important energy source for many animals. Both tiny invertebrates and large vertebrates, including reindeer, musk deer and wild turkeys, consume them. Many birds use them in the construction of their nests; some moths use them for camouflage and butterflies store lichen substances in their tissues for chemical defence.

Lichens are indiscriminate in their absorption of moisture and inadvertently take in pollutants such as toxic metals and radioactive elements. Thus they are an important indicator species. Some lichens are so sensitive to pollutants that they have become locally extinct in many places, some are less sensitive and occur almost anywhere.

London Wetland Centre.

On my first weekend in the UK, my son and his partner, both of whom have an interest in the natural world, accompanied me to the London Wetland Centre. Situated just a 25 minute drive from the city centre, it is the first created wetland in any capital city in the world and was built on the site of the old Barnes Elm reservoir where 43 hectares of concrete have been transformed into a wetland reserve. 30 different habitats have been created with the planting of 300,000 aquatic plants and 30,000 trees.

The centre has attempted to imitate environments as diverse as those of the Arctic Tundra, northern arboreal forests, Middle Eastern Reedbeds, African and South American Floodplains, tropical swamp forests, east Asian Rice fields, Australian Billabongs and oceanic islands. Despite being open for only two years, these habitats, along with the wildfowl indigenous to those areas, are starting to take shape, giving visitors the opportunity to see birds that would otherwise require a round the world journey. And it was perhaps the best opportunity I'll ever have to see some of Australia's rarest species – including the beautiful Freckled Duck and the Wandering Whistling Duck whose peculiar call would sound more at home in side show alley than in a wetland.

This centre is one of nine run by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) in Britain. Their aim is to conserve wetlands and their biodiversity and they have had considerable success in some of their captive breeding programmes. Combined with conservation projects in the species' country of origin, the captive breeding programmes have

lead to an increase in numbers of a variety of species including the New Zealand Blue Duck and the Ne-ne, Hawaii's national bird. This Goose-like bird declined from an estimated 25,000 birds to just 20 or 30 birds by 1949 as a result of predation from the introduced mongoose.

It would be interesting to return to this impressive site when the plants have become more established. However, already there has been success in creating suitable habitat to attract some of Britain's rarest birds. Imagine the excitement of the employees when arriving at work one morning to be greeted by the sight of three Bitterns -the first sightings of Bitterns in central London in over a century. With much of their reedbed habitat being destroyed for 'development', male Bitterns have declined in Britain and now number just 25-30 birds – ¼ of the population that existed in the 1950's.

Kew Gardens

Another must for any keen naturalist on a trip to London is a visit to the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. The glasshouses are architectural wonders in themselves, especially the tropical Palm house, a Victorian masterpiece that features rainforest plant communities from all over the world.

A new construction since my last visit to Kew over 15 years ago is the Evolution House, which traces the development of plants. At the entrance to the enclosure is a pool containing stromatolites, rock like structures that were formed by cyanobacteria during the Precambrian. (570 Million Years Ago) The Silurian period saw the development of green alga and the first upright plants such as Cooksonia, many of which are now extinct. In the Carboniferous period mosses, liverworts, clubmosses and ferns evolved and finally the cycads, conifers and early flowering plants, which appeared in the Cretaceous.

I was a bit disappointed that lichens and fungi weren't included in this impressive display. Perhaps this is because it is difficult to determine exactly when they first appeared, as they generally lack hard parts and are rarely found as fossils. However, it is thought that lichens or lichen-like associations were amongst the first living things that emerged from the primeval soup and enabled higher organisms to colonize the land. And possible thread like fungi have been found in Precambrian rocks, they probably left the sea 400 million years ago when the first plants became established on earth.

Wildlife at Kew

Although Kew Gardens are most famous for their botanical collections, which now numbers 6 million specimens of dried plants and fungi, it is evident since my last visit that there is a growing emphasis on wildlife. Signs with their motto, 'all life depends on plants' are displayed throughout the gardens, which are a refuge for wildlife in one of the most populous cities on the planet.

During my first visit, I vividly remember the many colourful butterflies in the gardens. Unfortunately these beautiful insects have declined in the intervening years with some species becoming extinct at Kew. This reflects national (and international) declines principally because of habitat destruction and changes in land management practices.

At least 23 species of butterfly belonging to five families have been recorded at Kew since 1980, an indication of the wide variety of habitats. In 1992 intensive studies of the Gardens were undertaken by the charity Butterfly Conservation leading to a change in the management regime for much of the gardens. The importance of nectar producing plants and larvae food plants - particularly grasses - is better understood and large areas are now left unmown to allow these plants to complete their cycle.

Birds were not in great numbers when I was there, especially in the more manicured section of the gardens. The large lake areas had a good population of waterfowl including swans, coots and ducks and I did venture to the conservation area that is managed as a native woodland where, after sitting quietly for a while, I saw a robin, a woodpecker, and a Kestrel.

Back home to the peace of Black Sugarloaf and the lichen collection!

The collection had grown somewhat during the month I'd been away, and some organisation of the specimens was desperately needed. Fortunately lichens dry quickly with dried specimens retaining most of the features necessary for identification.

I placed many species in plastic zip-lock bags complete with name – if known.

The newly purchased books from London have proven invaluable. Several books from the Flora of Australia Series have also been helpful. Book 54 gives an overview of the subject and a key to genera, and book 55 covers the Parmeliaceae, one of the largest families in Australia.

As with most natural history subjects, you can never have too many reference books. We are starting to make frustratingly slow progress, and we still have a great deal to learn!

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Purvis, William. (2000) Lichens. The Natural History Museum, London

HYPERLINK http://www.wetlandcentre.org.uk www.wetlandcentre.org.uk

HYPERLINK http://www.kew.org www.kew.org

HYPERLINK http://nature.ac.uk/ http://nature.ac.uk/ - a listing of quality evaluated internet resources in the natural world, coordinated by the Natural History Museum, London.

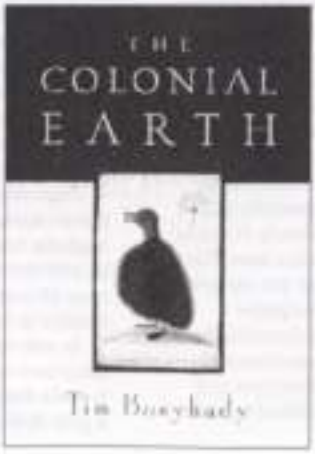
When will we ever learn?

Book Review: by Ron Nagorcka

THE COLONIAL EARTH , Tim Bonyhady (Melbourne University Press 2000)

I felt a bit like this book was written especially for me. It deals with a combination of my favourite subjects – – history, ecology, the arts and the law, and is centred around places I love and know well —Tasmania, Western Victoria and far west NSW.

In this sense, Bonyhady is somewhat of a "Renaissance" writer, dealing with many different subjects and drawing them together into a coherent argument about the history of environmentalism in Australia since 1788. As he notes in the acknowledgments, this was primarily the result of the opportunities provided by the multi-disciplinary "Urban Research Program" set up in 1966 by the ANU and unfortunately closed (like so many other good things were in the 90s) in 1999.



For those wallowing in despair about the European legacy in this country, (as represented in the work of Froude, Boyd, Bill Lines, Tim Flannery etc) that the invaders of this continent basically hated it, hated its trees, its landscape, its people, its unusual animals etc, this book is both an excellent tonic and a grim warning.

Bonyhady amply demonstrates that from the first fleet on there have been passionate environmentalists in our culture. Even the first governors in Sydney attempted to prevent the pollution of the tank stream. Some of the first laws in Hobart were about water pollution, the felling of trees and the killing of swans. When the Darling was to be dammed (drought-proofing the outback), warnings were made about salinisation. Every step of the way, it seems, the environmental consequences of development have been foreseen, and just as regularly ignored or sidestepped.

The chapters cover many fascinating examples of environmental battles, the decline of species, the loving of places to death, the attitude of artists to their subject (and their penchant for chopping down trees to get a better view). It ends with a close examination of the history of Tower Hill in Western Victoria where a painting provided the basis for environmental reconstruction which flourished under the sponsorship of sporting shooters as a "game reserve", but has been sadly neglected since bureaucratic changes under the Cain government in 1984. It is an appropriate last chapter - there is inspiration, a list of unfortunate mistakes (like the introduction of koalas), a history of conflicting interests and the final sad neglect by governments to whom the place is no longer politically useful.

The book is fantastically well researched, beautifully and fascinatingly illustrated, the notes documenting his research are thoroughly detailed, the select bibliography covers 15 pages and there is an excellent comprehensive index. Such academic rigour however does not mean a dry intellectual book — it's prose is inviting and entertaining.

I recommend it highly, in fact writing this review has made me determined to read it again.

Frog Groups

by Jim Nelson

The Frogman (sometimes known as Paul Swiatkowski) and I attended the 2nd National Conference Of Australian Frog Groups in Adelaide on Oct 25-27 (photo below). The conference was convened by Stan Orchard, the National Co-ordinator with the WWF/Rio Tinto FROGS! Program. The Conference had a varied three day program starting with the keynote address by Mike Tyler and ending with the election of a committee to set up an outline for the formation of a national frog groups organisation.

Tasmania is the only state that doesn't have a dedicated frog group, but the CNFN frog enthusiasts play a similar role of education, awareness and study of frogs. Almost from the beginning of our activities, there has been a strong interest in herpetology (study of frogs and reptiles) and an informal group going by the name of the Van Diemens Herpetological Study Group was formed in the early 90's.

The study group has been a very loose structure, without formal membership, operating under the umbrella of the CNFN. One aspect of this group is that it has attracted young people to the group because they tend to be interested in this fauna, and are often bored by plants, fungi and other stuff that doesn't move. Most of the adults in the group have been unable to ever accept being grown ups, so you could say it was a group for kids of all ages.

Several of the young people who have participated in the frog and reptile activities of the study group have gone on to university, where plants have sometimes been discovered to be interesting after all.

The interesting thing about ecology is that you can't understand animals unless you understand their habitat, including the role plants play. Unfortunately, the teaching of botany usually takes place in the classroom, where it is often about as exciting as learning to dance from diagrams in a book - it lacks a certain real element.

Last year I was invited to give a talk on frogs to the Creepy Crawly Club in Launceston at the Queen Victoria Museum. I was a bit overwhelmed when I arrived to find a packed auditorium full of young children and their parents. Can you imagine how many would have turned up to a talk on plants? So, frogs certainly have legs (sorry) when it comes to attracting young people to natural history.

As we wonder how to attract more young people to natural history, perhaps we are ignoring the obvious? While not completely ignoring our herpetofauna, it has been a long time since we had a dedicated activity for frogs and/or reptiles. Therefore, I suggest we try to reinvigorate the VD Study Group. Any comments?

With the possible setting up of a national frog group, perhaps we can start addressing some of the national and international issues connected with frog decline. We need to have young people educated and enthused to carry on the work. Frogs are disappearing from our lives and our planet (see following news articles), and thus the world is becoming a much changed and lonelier place.

What About Pesticides And Frogs?

Small doses of pesticides are enough to compromise frog immune systems. This might explain the mysterious disappearance of amphibians all around the planet. According to New Scientist Sept. 1997, pesticides break down to form poisons that cause deformities. Recent studies have shown the reason — pesticides damage their immune systems. Frogs are considered bio-indicators, but are we listening?

Scientists Find Herbicide Causes Frog Sex Change (media report)

One of the world's most popular herbicides, Atrazine, is now common in water and could be having a sex-change effect on amphibians. American scientists have discovered a strong link between Atrazine and hermaphrodite tendencies observed in wild leopard frogs across the U.S. Midwest.

A team from the University of California at Berkeley published the research in the science journal NATURE. The team took water samples at various locations and found that only one site had Atrazine levels below their detection limit. This site was the only locality where testicular oocytes were not observed in the local population of leopard frogs. Oocytes are egg mother cells.

The scientists said Atrazine was probably the most commonly used herbicide in the world and was found in high concentrations even in nonfarming areas. "The hermaphroditism was not evident in the absence of atrazine exposure. We conclude that Atrazine is responsible for these effects in wild populations even though other contaminants may be present that could produce similar effects."

The report also warned that the sex change effects might not be limited to leopard frogs but might be a threat to all amphibian species. "As its effects are not restricted to a single species, it is possible that this herbicide may pose a threat to amphibians in general," it said. "Most water sources in the United States, including rain, contain more Atrazine than the effective doses determined in laboratory studies," the report said. It concluded with a call for further investigations into the link between atrazine and sex organ abnormalities in amphibians.

Atrazine has been commonly used in Tasmania, particularly by forestry as a pre-emergent herbicide in our water catchments. Again frogs may be considered bio-indicators, but are we even looking? (j.n.)

Land For Wildlife

You see the signs usually near the gate of a nice area of native vegetation, but what exactly is Land for Wildlife? It is a voluntary property registration for landholders who provide for native animals, primarily by conserving habitat on their property.

Since close to 40% of the land in Tassie is privately owned, a significant part of our biodiversity is in the hands of the people. Involving citizens in conservation projects is not the easiest task in the world, but Land for Wildlife can claim to be a success story. Off-reserve conservation is an extremely important concept, especially given that Tasmania is one of the world leaders in land clearance.

The scheme is open to all landholders to participate in conserving habitat, whether the area of land is as small as 1ha, or is a large property. Properties are assessed for suitability, and once registered they can display the Land for Wildlife sign which shows their commitment to nature conservation on their land.

An extension officer for Bushcare/Land for Wildlife walks over the property with the landholder and discusses the value of the habitat and any management issues. Problems such as erosion, weed infestations, fencing, etc. are observed and management goals are set to address them. Species of particular conservation significance are noted, and requirements for their continued existence are discussed and targeted as management priorities.

The scheme has been a terrific example of how information can be gathered and shared in the community for better nature conservation. It has also benefited many species through off reserve conservation. The idea behind the scheme has proven to be both economically and socially sustainable, and it sets a model for how we might deal with conservation on private land into the future.

If an area of private land is assessed as having significant habitat, then a simple Management Agreement is signed that is voluntary and can be revoked by either party. If the land does not have significant habitat, the landholder can receive advice for improving the area for future assessment.

This approach to conservation is simple, accessible and creates a socially acceptable and responsible way of conserving increasingly vital areas of private land. Our public forests are disappearing daily and being converted to tree farm monoculture. Private land is following this insane trend of wildlife alienation.

No one knows the future of Land For Wildlife, but we need to hold onto its concepts. If you want further information, contact your local DPIWE office. (j.n.)

Sperm whales *(Physeter macrocephalus)*

by Debbie Hill

Sperm Whales are the largest of the toothed whales with males averaging 15 m in length and weighing about 45 tonnes. Females average 11m in length and 20 tonnes. It has a body shape unlike that of any other whale. The massive rectangular head can, in adults, make up to 1/3 the total body length. They have a small, underslung jaw and huge, cone shaped teeth in the lower jaw only. This species acquired its name from the spermaceti oil in its head, which whalers likened to the fluid produced by the testes to carry sperm. Non English-speaking countries use the name cachalot meaning big teeth. The sperm whale is a most intriguing whale and dives to 3,000 meters to catch squid. They can stay submerged for over an hour. Giant squid can exceed 9 m and whales often swallow them intact. How sperm whales subdue and swallow such large prey is a mystery. The white pigment around their mouths may act as lure. They also eat fish, octopus and skate.

The spermaceti organ occupies most of the upper part of the head and many people have speculated on its possible function. It may serve as an acoustic lens, focusing echolocation signals and help to locate squid. Powerful acoustic clicks may help to stun prey. Another suggestion is that it may help buoyancy control. The spermaceti organ comprises a network of sinuses and nasal passages, and the suggestion is that as the sperm whale dives into cooler, deeper water, the flow of water in the head passages controls the temperature of the wax which solidifies (it has a constant melting point of 29.0 C whereas the normal body temperature is 33.5 C), shrinks and increases the density of the head, aiding the descent. When the whale starts to ascend the wax is warmed by increasing body flow in the capillaries of the head, this increases buoyancy. This may help to explain how these whales manage to make such fast descents (between 100 and 170 m per minute) and how they can make deep dives at relatively short intervals.

This species occurs in all oceans of the world and rarely enters semi-enclosed areas of seas, especially if they are shallow. Why they would enter Bass Strait is also a mystery. A distinguishing characteristic of sperm whales is that only the large males venture into latitudes higher than 450 in both hemispheres. Females remain in a group throughout their lives and calve only every 4 – 6 years. Whaling has reduced the population of adult males particularly and the estimated current population is more than 570,000. Life expectancy is over 70 years.

Sperm Whales At Waterhouse

by Jim Nelson

The recent stranding of a group of Sperm Whales at Waterhouse was both unusual in its occurrence, and upsetting in its consequences.

The whales were first spotted by a light plane, by which time they were unfortunately already dead. Bass Strait is not an area these enormous creatures usually stray into, as they prefer feeding in deeper water off the continental shelf. Sperm Whales are considered an endangered species, and are not all that common in Australian waters.

Why they were in Bass Strait and ended up stranded is a mystery. One possible clue was all the cuttlefish washed up on the beaches alongside them. Sperm whales are squid eaters, and they may have been attracted to large numbers of squid in the area, and perhaps in a feeding frenzy they may have chased their prey into shallow water. Once a whale is stranded, others often come to their distress signals, and then a tragedy can presumably unfold.

The Nature Conservation Agency biologists sprang into action with frequent reports in the media concerning their scientific enquiries. They managed to convey the message that the teeth from sperm whales are "very valuable". Part of their scientific enquiries turned out to involve removing the bottom jaws which contain the teeth from most of the animals, as well as taking chunks of flesh and organs for research. The bottom jaws contain the large conical teeth which were announced over the radio as being very valuable. Perhaps they reasoned that the teeth had to be souvineered by the biologists (presumably for museum collections) in order that the public didn't do so, but in fact someone later did remove the lower jaw from one of the remaining animals (this was eventually recovered).

It has to be asked if this perhaps becomes part of a self-fulfilling prophesy – by emphasizing their value, someone will then try to obtain the teeth. Australia is a signatory to the CITES Convention which prohibits the sale of parts of endangered species, so where is this value derived? Is there a thriving black market?

I paced off what I presume was a large female at a little more than 11m. Standing alongside these creatures on a beach, they somehow don't seem as big as you expected, but then as I look across the length of this 9m room where I am writing this, you begin to realise the scale.

On the Sunday there was a steady stream of people coming to see the dead whales. It was pretty solemn viewing of these magnificent, dead giants all hacked up with their organs spilling out and their distinctive jaws missing. There was a distinct feeling that these animals were deprived of the kind of dignity they deserved in death. Certainly, several who felt privileged to even stand near such incredible fellow creatures, also felt sickened by their undignified treatment. Of course it can all be defended in the name of science - can't it?

I feel the Nature Conservation Branch missed an opportunity to carry out some meaningful and useful interpretation. On the Sunday, I saw the head ranger and one of the other rangers loading their 4-wheeled motor bike on the road into the beaches where most of the whales were stranded. It would have been very useful for them to have been down on the beach helping people understand what had occurred both with the stranding and the scientific enquiries.

I never expect to stand next to such an awe inspiring creature again in my life. My dismay at their mutilation was voiced by everyone else I talked to. There was certainly a case for the agency to defend its actions while also assisting the public to learn about these amazing creatures and their unfortunate deaths.

Leech: No More Free Transfusions

by Peter Bamford

Silent.
Dot-and-carry-one.
Intent on your blood-lust
On my left bum.

Mindless.
but purposeful.
Computing your way along promontories
Of shin and thigh.
Scissor and suck.
Scissor and suck.

Wine-dark, you drop.
A blood-bag with a head.

Enjoy the moment, sucker.
Savour a good red while you can.
I'm more than ready, you bastard,
To crush you, and my blood,
Under my foot!

Okay, those with good memories will remember that we previously published Peter's leach poem. However, Peter has since modified the poem considerably, and his new version certainly struck a chord with me, and since I'm the editor.....

Well, maybe you deserve a fuller explanation. I recently was helping with crayfish survey work in some very swampy areas near Scottsdale trying to extend the range of the critically endangered Engaeus spinicaudatus. The leaches had been a pain all day, and we were constantly plucking them off either before or after they had partaken of our blood. Three particularly large ones managed to penetrate through my thick socks and drink their fill, but true to my code of ethics, I plucked them off and returned them to where they belong. I was in their environment.

By the time I reached Launceston where I needed to stop at the Environment Centre to meet Suzannah to go over our mapping, I was already suffering from blood filled shoes and itching bites. While in the Centre, I suddenly reached down and pulled yet another blood-filled leach from my ankle. Suzannah arrived just in time to see me plop the offender down on the Charles St. sidewalk and splatter it with an almighty stomp. (I don't think she was impressed.)

Upon reading Peter's poem, I felt it perfectly matched my feelings. I plead temporary insanity. (J.N.)