Central North Field Naturalists

CNFN

the

NATURAL NEWS

03-04 Spring-Summer

Patron - Dennis Morris

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Program and Events

Oct 4 & 5, Weekend at Skemps - Mt Barrow local excursions on Skemps property on Saturday and overnight stay at Field Centre. Bring bedding and food. Take A3 East from Ulverstone, and look for turn to the left just beyond Nunamara - follow signs.
On Sunday meet 10 am at the turn-off to Mt Barrow from A3 onto C404. Vegetation and fauna.

Oct 18, AGM at Weegena Hall 4pm. The AGM will be followed by a feast and entertainment. See accompanying message opposite.

Oct 19, Leven Canyon Open Day 11am to 3pm The main site will be at the Leven Canyon car park, with a second site at the Leven River, at the start of the Brookes Track (Near the Doherty's place).

Nov 2, Orchid Search Meet at Henry Somerset Orchid Reserve parking lot at **9:30 am**, to travel to Colin Morse's land at Caroline Creek. Hopefully, we will meet up with the National Orchid Society people with Peter Tonelli guiding them, and checking out Colin's land.

Nov 22, Birds Tasmania Outing at Black Sugarloaf (Ron & Sarah's). Meet at Birralee **9 am** at the end of Dennans Rd at letterboxes.

Dec 11, Birds Tasmania Outing at Georgetown mudflats. Meet **10 am** at waders sign on the road to Low Head.

Dec 7, Phillip Milner's property 10am. A spectacular range of natural values with Phillip as our guide. Travel the B14 road between Spreyton and Sheffield. 1 k on the Sheffield side of Lower Barrington, turn eastward onto Allisons Rd. Follow 1 1/2 k to the end. Turn up drive with Land For Wildlife signs and drive 200m to the house.

Jan 4, Arboretum 10am. Travel to Eugenana from Spreyton coming from East or Forth coming from West. Lots of interesting areas. Bring a picnic.

A Red check mark indicates you are unfinancial for 2003

CNFN AGM & Social Night Oct 18

Our AGM meeting will commence at 4 pm. All positions are open, and anyone wishing to nominate themselves or others should do so in writing before the start of the meeting. Nominations will be taken at the meeting only if written nominations for an office are not received. Offices open: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Committee Members.

An AGM Feast

CNFN member, Marriama Hunter will be displaying her legendary culinary talents and will treat us once again to a fantastic Indian meal.

Cost will be a very reasonable $10.00 per head - the remainder generously subsidized by the field nats. We need to know numbers, so please let Sarah know if you wish to attend. (See phone & email this page)

AGM Guest Speaker

Sapphire McMullan-Fisher, the Tasmanian regional coordinator for Fungimap, will be the guest speaker at the AGM. Sapphire has surveyed macro fungi in some Alpine areas of Tasmania including Mt Wellington, Mt Field and the Central Plateau. She will give a slide presentation, talk about her recent work and speak about the ecology of fungi.

Blight of the Bumble Bee

by Jim Hunter

Bumble bees were introduced to Tasmania about 10 years ago, illegally, probably by commercial green house operators seeking increased pollination within their enclosures. They are a European variety and were brought from N.Z. where they are already established.

The first reports known to me of their arrival in the Sheffield area were 4 years ago. We first noticed an occasional individual on our property 3 year ago and 2 year ago there were usually 1 or 2 in sight around the yard. But by the spring of 2002/03, the numbers had exploded. We live completely within native forest on Mt. Roland, but have quite a few non-native plants around the house. Rhododendrons were the first to flower in late winter/spring and large numbers of bumble bees could always be seen (and heard) coming and going. In fact, they soon became a hazard to navigation, and my wife saw about 70 of them out of this world by grabbing them from behind with a gloved hand while they were inside the flower. She finally got stung, and it didn't make much difference to the numbers anyway. The flowering finished and the bumble bees became less concentrated and conspicuous for a while.

By mid January our fuchsias were really hitting their stride - we have six large bushes, (one about 9 ft. tall and 7 ft. across) of a very small red flowered variety which are particularly attractive to Eastern Spinebills, and the bumble bees soon discovered them. Soon the fuchsias were covered with bees, both honey and bumble, and the spinebills, of which there would normally be 6-9 present, were not feeding. On rare occasions a Spinebill would land on the plant inspect a few flowers, then leave. The bumble bees showed no aggression, but reduced the available nectar. They couldn't feed normally on such a tiny flower, and close inspection revealed punctures near the base of the flower - bees could often be seen feeding through these holes.

Walking around our yard was now becoming hazardous with bumble bees flying in our face every few steps. There was a constant roar in the air. I decided to try to remove them and see if I could get the spinebills back - also I wanted to get some idea of the numbers of bumble bees involved. At this point there were often 20-30 in view but they were coming and going so there obviously had to be many more. It wasn't going to be easy to get a significant number of them at these large bushes - besides they could easily see me coming as even when feeding they were outside these tiny flowers. I killed 220 by various means over a 2 week period (but the occasional miss resulted in a very angry bee and I wasn't making any dent in the population, so I gave this up. They are quite easy to approach and I found a vacuum cleaner was the most efficient and safe method to catch them. With this I took 103 off 1 plant on March 8, then 55 the next day. Spending only ½ hr. or so each day, I averaged about 25 a day for the next 3 weeks. At this point they became much less visible, although there were still always a few about. The plants recovered quickly and spinebills were soon feeding again. Honey bees were present in good numbers throughout but did not seem to be having the effect of their bigger cousins. This situation prevailed throughout April and except for knocking off a couple of bees a day I didn't much bother with them. In early May we had several hard frosts followed by several days of rain, but a few could still be seen every day, sometimes before the sun was up with frost still on the ground. Through these late periods they were feeding mainly on a second flowering of raspberries and some broad bean flowers. The last sighting noted was on May 14. Altogether I killed over 700 bees in a tiny area and certainly didn't eliminate them. I'm wondering what next year has in store?

Any insect that can build up its numbers so fast, and with its size and armoury, will probably have an effect on other nectar feeders like the spinebill. They can virtually monopolise a favoured food source. They preferred introduced plants, but they must have been living on something else while these were not flowering, and in fact I often encountered individuals hundreds of metres into the native bush.

Just a word of warning for anyone inclined to try my method of catching bumble bees with a vacuum cleaner - they contain a lot of liquid and you will want a vacuum with a cloth and paper bag inside, preferably half full of soot. And they will still need to be given a dose of insect spray or your vacuum will still be buzzing 2 days later.

During the course of this summer I contacted Dr. Andrew Hingston, a member of CNFN, who has been doing research on bumble bees for some time, and he passed on the following information that might be of interest to anyone else with a bumble bee problem:

* a nest contains up to 400 individuals. (This indicates I had 2 nests nearby and the usual flight paths also indicated this)
* nests are in cavities on or near the ground, under rocks and such, and are very hard to find (I

couldn't find them in spite of the flight paths being fairly clear)

- they have been recorded feeding on 127 species of native plants in the families MYRTACEAE, EPACRIDACEAE, FABACEAE, as well as on *Banksia*, *Bursaria* and *Eucryphia* (I was particularly concerned that they might be feeding on *Epacris impressa* (common heath) which is a much favoured plant of the spinebills, but I have not yet seen them doing so, and the (relatively few) plants I inspected showed no signs of punctures.

As a postscript, on June 24 I saw and heard a very large bumble bee out and about in spite of the cold weather.

Bumblebees: their invasion and impact

by Andrew Hingston (hingston@utas.edu.au)

The European bumblebee *(Bombus terrestris)* became established in Hobart in early 1992. It spread rapidly into surrounding native vegetation, and across the western half of the state. They appear to have spread from Hobart into the central north of the state via the World Heritage Area. Their spread eastwards has been slower, but they are now established on the Tasman Peninsula, the southern part of the east coast, in Campbell Town and the Tamar Valley.

Because bumblebees forage on an enormous variety of introduced and native plants, they have the potential to alter pollination services and seed production in many species. Of particular concern is the potential for bumblebees to enhance seed set in existing weeds, and other introduced plants that are specialised for bumblebee pollination. Many species of bumblebee-pollinated plants are serious weeds in temperate regions of the world where bumblebees occur, but have not become serious problems in Australia in the absence of bumblebees. These include *Impatiens glandulifera* (Himalayan balsam), *Rhododendron ponticum*, *Digitalis purpurea* (foxglove), *Cedronella canariensis* (balm of Gilead), *Acanthus mollis* (bears breeches), and numerous species of *Solanum* (nightshades). I have also noticed *Agapanthus* spreading via seeds into native vegetation around Hobart, which it hadn't done previously. This common garden plant produces large numbers of seeds and is very attractive to bumblebees, which make regular contact with the anthers and stigmas. The other major visitor to this plant's flowers, the honey bee, is too small to contact anthers and stigmas on a regular basis. This raises the possibility that bumblebees are enhancing seed set in *Agapanthus*, causing it to become invasive. In contrast, other introduced plants that are adapted to pollination by large bees, such as the Fabaceae (gorse, brooms, tree lupins, tree lucerne etc.) may not increase seed production because of bumblebee pollination because they are already pollinated effectively by honeybees.

The propensity for bumblebees to visit so many species of plants also raises the possibility that they are competing with other animals for nectar and pollen. Bumblebees are particularly attracted to bird-pollinated plants because of the large quantities of nectar they produce and, in response to Jim Hunter's enquiry (this issue), bumblebees bite holes in the tubular corollas of *Epacris impressa* as well as those of *Richea* species to obtain nectar. Jim Hunter's observations suggest that they displaced spinebills from fuchsias. We have also found that when the weather is too cold for honeybees to forage, bumblebees are capable of preventing nectar accumulating in the flowers of *Eucalyptus ovata*, reducing food availability for nectar-feeding birds including the endangered swift parrot. In addition, the capacity for bumblebees to forage earlier in the morning than honeybees, results in nectar of *E. ovata* being depleted earlier in the day. In another study, we also found evidence of bumblebees displacing native bees from the flowers of the native pea *Gompholobium huegelii*.

I would be very interested to hear of people's observations of bumblebees in the north of the state, in relation to their invasion and impact.

Further reading

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Predators and Prey - who do you barrack for?

By Sarah Lloyd

In the latest edition of the Estuary News (2003) a story entitled "The mighty Quoll" caught my eye: *"At their Iris farm property near Cradle Mountain, John (Wilson) and Peter (Sims) recently witnessed a young half grown tiger-quoll tackle a fully grown pademelon about 5 times its size. The pademelon escaped, but was immediately brought down to the ground again by the fearless little predator who clung fast as they tumbled about on the ground. Suddenly the victim struggled free once more and fled off into the scrub with the mighty little quoll in hot pursuit"*

The language used in the report strongly suggests that the author's sympathy was with the quoll. Was this because of its underdog (underquoll) status – at least in terms of size? Was it its sheer persistence? It was, after all, doing what a predatory carnivore is preprogrammed to do. Or was it simply that there is a surplus of pademelons and a declining quoll population? Whatever the reason, it prompted me to think about my own emotional responses when confronted with predator/prey interactions.

Take skinks, for example. Like many people in suburban or country Tasmania we share our home with many Tasmanian tree skinks (*Niveoscincus preticosus*). As spring approaches numerous skinks venture out from the cracks and crevices in the rock walls to resume their position on the window sill in readiness to capture the blowflies which are also stimulated by the warming temperatures and repeatedly collide with the glass. Some skinks adopt a "lie in wait" strategy and only jump when a fly comes close enough to strike, others adopt the "run fast and leap" approach racing back and forth below the window in hot pursuit of their prey. I am yet to determine which is the more successful tactic, however I invariably barrack for the skink and loud cheers are heard whenever there is a successful capture! I never barrack for the blowfly.

Is it simply a desire to back a winner that elicits this response? Well, not always.

There was the time when I witnessed a skink of the aforementioned species going headfirst down the throat of a white-lipped snake (*Drysdalia coronoides*). On that occasion my immediate inclination was to go and rescue the helpless skink. But this was a completely unreasonable reaction given that white-lipped snakes are specialist predators that feed exclusively on a diet of skinks. Fortunately good judgement got the better of me, and I let nature take its course and just thought about how privileged I am to live in a place where I can witness such natural events from the comfort of my kitchen.

And when a Dusky Robin devoured a skink I had no desire to interfere, but instead watched with detached interest as this mostly insectivorous bird demonstrated that it (like many other animals) has opportunistic tendencies when it comes to finding a meal.

I will admit to a soft spot for skinks, and confess to being far more tolerant of these endearing reptiles than I am of blowflies. For instance, when freshly made bread is placed on the bench to cool and the resident skink clambers atop the loaf to absorb its warmth, I simply brush it off with tolerant amusement. Blowflies are treated with neither tolerance nor amusement. Of course, I have probably been influenced to some extent by the propaganda of the household insecticide companies, and regard blowflies as dirty and disease carrying – but it's very unlikely that the skink wiped its feet before ascending the loaf.

I have witnessed other predatory acts, some of

which elicit an emotional response, while others just evoke quiet interest. Two incidents immediately spring to mind.

I once watched a Grey Shrike-thrush fly off with a bill full of Superb Fairy-wren. It had little chance of success as I ran with arms waving shouting "go away, you nasty bird" (or words to that effect - not printable here) until the fairy-wren was released. The other memorable occasion was when a very large tiger snake (*Notechis ater*) was heading towards the very exposed nest of a Dusky Robin. The snake was about as perturbed by my shouting and throwing stones as it was by the pathetic attempt to divert its attention by a parent bird with its "broken wing" act and distressed calling. The snake succeeded in snaffling the eggs.

A similar incident occurred shortly after, but this time Striated Pardalotes were the target. Rather than a futile attempt to divert the snake, I turned my attention to the sound the agitated pardalote was emitting as the large reptile approached its brood. The sound was a loud almost electronic noise, not unlike that emitted by the agitated Dusky Robin a few weeks earlier and clearly a distress call. Ron and I were both attracted to investigate, as was the resident dog, Luigi.

It's not only predator/prey relationships that are interesting to ponder. There are some animals with which I'm happy to share the house, and others that are quickly evicted.

I have a particular liking for ants – but not all ants! Small black smelly ones are not tolerated in the kitchen, but large black ones of the genus *Polyrachis* are. Slightly smaller than jack jumpers (*Myrmecia spp.*) but without the painful sting, these *Polyrachis* probably nest in our ceiling and during their nocturnal wanderings many are unfortunately drowned in the dregs of home-made tomato pickle, orange marmalade or other sweet liquids for which they have a particular fondness. If they are tardy in returning to their nest before sunrise, they adopt an interesting posture, curling their gaster under their body so that even without a magnifying glass their beautifully spiny petiole – a key feature of this genus – can be seen.

Frogs are also tolerated. Brown tree frogs (*Litoria ewingi*) are often found in our bathroom, and on one occasion recently I was accompanied in the shower by both a tree frog and a canary worm (*Geoplana sugdeni*). I was intrigued to see if the frog would eat the worm, or vice versa - neither happened. This was probably because most frogs locate their prey by sight with movement being a factor in determining whether an item is indeed food. The yellow flatworm's movement was so slow as to be almost imperceptible, and its bright colouring, like so many bright colours in the animal world, probably serves as a warning to potential predators that its body is possibly covered in a foul tasting and/or toxic substance. The diet of yellow flatworms, on the other hand, does not include frogs, but consists mainly of earthworms, slugs and occasionally carrion.

Rats and mice are unwelcome visitors, that is, unless they're native: swamp rats (*Rattus lutreolus*). Black rats (*Rattus rattus*) are almost indistinguishable in the field – the most useful identifying feature being the length of their tail, which is considerably shorter in the swamp rat. But despite their similar appearance, swamp rats are mostly tolerated (depending, of course, on what percentage of the carrot crop they have consumed in the current growing season, in which case their habitat is destroyed) while introduced rats are disposed of as quickly as possible.

As a naturalist it is perhaps desirable to be as objective as possible when observing nature. But even the pre-eminent and arguably most famous naturalist of all times, Charles Darwin, was not immune from emotional responses when observing predator/prey interactions, although it should be noted that he soon shifts his interest from observation to scientific experiment.

He recalls watching a large wasp caught in a web of a small spider, which "most perseveringly continued to entangle the body, and especially the wings, of its prey". He continues:

"Pitying the wasp, after allowing it to struggle for more than an hour, I killed it and put it back into the web. The spider soon returned, and an hour afterwards I was much surprised to find it with its jaws buried in the orifice, through which the sting is protruded by the living wasp. I drove the spider away two or three times, but for the next twenty-four hours I always found it again sucking at the same place."

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Blue Gum Survey - Dr Stephen Mallick

I am currently working on the swift parrot with the Nature Conservation Branch in Hobart. We are interested in the role played by blue gums in northeast Tasmania as a food source for swift parrots. Over the last ten years we have been following the flowering pattern of blue gums in southeast Tas. but have no information on flowering patterns in the northwest.

To gather this information, I am setting up a database of observers who spend time in the north-west and are likely to notice blue gums flowering. The idea is to get observers to apply a crude scale to describe NW blue-gum flowering. The scale that has been used for *E. globulus* in the SE over the years is a 5 score scale based around a comparison of flowering with the 'maximum' flowering possible. Question:

Was flowering of blue gum in the north west this spring?

0 very light <1%of maximum
1 light 1-10%of maximum
2 moderate 11-25%of maximum
3 heavy 25-50%of maximum
4 very heavy >50%of maximum

The idea is that the observer keeps in mind the blue-gum flowering as they drive or walk around the NW areas where blue-gums occur (mainly 5 km from coast, Launceston to Smithton). Obviously the flowering may vary from place to place, but what we are interested in is a general index for the whole NW area. If the observer can keep some notes about where they see flowering, even better. But in the end it is the single figure index we are after.

To be an observer, it helps to have a good idea of what a blue-gum looks like. This can be harder than it sounds, as *Eucalyptus nitens* looks very similar to a blue gum, but has minuscule flowers and almost no nectar. To provide a meaningful score for the blue gum flowering for a year, what is ideal are people who have spent some years in the NW area, have noticed the blue gum flowering over these years, and can give a relative value for flowering in a particular year.

I wonder any of the Field Naturalists may be able to assist me with this endeavour. I would very much appreciate anyone who may be interested in taking part to please contact me. My idea is to compile a list of willing observers, then in late October ring everyone and quiz them on flowering for the Spring. I have an information sheet which details all the above which I can send on to anyone interested.

In the hope that you may be able to assist

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Newhaven, a place for Dreams

by Jim Nelson

In August this year, CNFN members Tony, Allison, Deb and I visited Newhaven Reserve in the NT. The reserve is a former 650,000 ha cattle station, and Birds Australia bought the lease to conserve this sensitive area with its many significant natural values. For instance, there are five species of birds which are nationally threatened, and 19 bird species which are threatened in one or more mainland States.

Our visit was extremely fascinating, but also disturbing. I will highlight some of the wonderful values before commenting on the huge management problems facing Newhaven into the future.

First, it is necessary to understand why this former cattle station has many important natural values retained. In spite of a history of 40 years grazing cattle, the land was sensitively managed by the Coppock family, with low stocking rates and a low use of fire as a management tool. About 25 per cent of the property has never been grazed by cattle, and the other 75 per cent has only been lightly stocked, with a result that much of the habitat has received relatively low impact compared to surrounding land.

The Night Parrot (*Pezoporus occidentalis*) was thought extinct until a road-killed specimen was found in Queensland in 1990. Its preferred habitat is probably chenopod shrublands and seeding *spinifex* communities. In 1996 a pair of Night Parrots landed 3 metres from trained observers at Newhaven. The main

threats to the species are probably predation by feral cats foxes, wildfire and inappropriate fire regimes.

Newhaven adjoins Aboriginal Freehold land on all sides. It contains six recorded or registered sacred sites. The land to the North, South and West has never been stocked while the property to the East was, until recently, also a cattle station. The Newhaven Station is a grazing lease now held by Birds Australia, and the property ownership remains with the NT. As such, the Aboriginal communities have free access to the land to carry out traditional pursuits.

Ten major vegetation communities have been identified on Newhaven. Most are either not present or only poorly represented in reserves in the Northern Territory.

There are 12 bores, two of which have a year-round supply of water suitable for human consumption. The others provide water for birds and various wildlife. Several relics of the pastoral era, including the galvanised iron homestead are to be conserved. Birds Australia is currently looking to raise the funds to provide a house for the Manager. The current Work Manager formerly ran a cattle station in WA.

There is a short-term volunteer Ranger who hails from Bridport, Tasmania (Jo Colahan) and feels like she has been thrown into the deep end of the pool with little in the way of guidelines. We tried to give her some support in working out what she could achieve, and how the draft management plan applied to her role. Most of the daily management decisions are made by the Work Manager in phone consultation with Birds Australia.

Problems at Newhaven

We were disturbed by numerous management problems at Newhaven that are damaging to the natural values, are not appropriate to a conservation reserve, are poorly thought out, are not supported by science or do not follow the intentions of the reserve as set out in the Draft Management Plan. Apparently there is now a new Management Plan, and perhaps some areas have been addressed. I look forward to seeing it.

The most disturbing thing to our eyes was the recent high frequency of fire on the reserve. Some of this has come about by deliberate burning by people not associated with the station, while some of it is the result of reduction burns trying to meet the stated "Number One Management Priority" to protect the human and infrastructure assets.

Fire is a very vexed problem in Australia. However, in the NT there seems to be no argument about it. It is simply used almost everywhere and as often as possible. It is touted as part of the natural ecology, and its long history of use is pointed to as the proper way to manage the country. As everywhere, it favours the survival of some species at the expense of others. For hunter gatherers, and graziers, it promotes a green pick for the species they favour, and keeps plants such as the various species of spinifex under control.

Unfortunately, a number of animals need mature spinifex of 20 years or more to thrive. Newhaven is a place where you can find such mature communities because of the low fire frequency. But spinifex is also very fire prone, and the fire authorities were advising the manager while we were there that burning was long overdue on the property, and control burning needed to take place. We entered into the discussions pointing out that the property was now being managed

Deb & Alison keying plants at Newhaven

for a completely different purpose than anywhere else, and that burning should only take place where proper scientific observations could be carried out as to what occurs there before and after fire. Otherwise there is a danger of destroying the values for which the property was purchased. The day we left they were burning some of the older spinifex communities along the road which the fire authority had identified as high risk.

When the question is asked as to why Newhaven has such a range of diverse values, part of the answer will almost certainly be because of low fire frequency. Since the place is now a Natural History Station rather than a Cattle Station, one would expect the highest priority be given to scientific studies and careful fire

management rather than "traditional abouz" burning.

There is a great deal of lip service paid to the Aboriginal communities as having a great deal of knowledge of fire. However, hunter gathering seems to have progressed to guns and four wheel drive vehicles these days, so I wonder if fire management is still carried out locally in a careful, traditional manner? I confess my ignorance, and would love the opportunity to find out more and view the results.

One of the early purchases by Birds Australia was a road grader to be able to make fire breaks and fight fires. The manager has been quite busy with the grader, creating an ugly, growing network of fire breaks radiating out from the homestead area. I don't believe there are any plans for where these firebreaks should occur, nor any studies as to where there may be sensitive vegetation where "degrading" shouldn't take place. The hideous scars from a grader are much more disturbing and longer lasting than burned areas, and distract considerably from this natural area.

One of the priorities in the draft management plan identified a solar power system to be installed in 2001. Instead, a diesel generator was installed to run the electrical appliances in the "dongas" (housing for the manager and the ranger). The generator started at 5 every morning, and did an afternoon shift which lasted until 10 at night. It was loud and obnoxious, and didn't use any storage system. It was clearly heard in the designated campground, and was hated by everyone. The solar power system is eagerly awaited, but no one knows when it will appear.

The "dongas" are temporary housing which are totally out of place at Newhaven. We all agreed as did the ranger that the old homestead would have been more comfortable. However, the Manager is awaiting his house to be built so his wife can come out to be with him. I suggested that an ecologically suitable house (such as rammed earth) would be in order for a conservation reserve, but he had something more conventional in mind. I suggested that a vision for Newhaven might be to create and ecologically sustainable station that could serve as an example of living in harmony with the environment. This was (I felt) seen as a bunch of conservationist nonsense, and what was needed was the quickest prefab possible, presumably requiring air conditioning rather than passive cooling. The manager confided that he didn't know anything about conservation.

The station obviously needs a Manager who can keep the bores working, the tractor and grader in order, the boundary fences repaired, and the fire breaks maintained. However, overseeing this work should be a Conservation Manager who is insuring that all works are in keeping with the stated purpose of a conservation reserve. It is probably unlikely that Birds Australia can find someone who combines these skills, and it is also unlikely that they can afford two Managers even though it appears to be needed.

Then there is the issue of pest species. There are a few foxes and lots of feral cats on the station. The Manager was told he was not allowed to have a rifle at Newhaven because it was not in keeping with a conservation reserve. If pest species are not to be shot, then other management tools need to be sought.

There are still a few cattle running wild, but a much bigger problem is a large camel population which is probably in the hundreds and doubles every 8 years. The Manager has a scheme for rounding these up and trucking them to market. Camel meat is highly prized in the NT. Whether Birds Australia will sanction that enterprise is yet to be determined. The camels do a lot of damage to vegetation, and their numbers will surely have to be controlled somehow. Perhaps they can provide some revenue in the process.

In fact, what is lacking at Newhaven is a Business Plan spelling out just how the place is going to make a go of it. With the 130 k dirt track in, plus about 4 hours down the Tantani track from Alice, it is unlikely to receive droves of campers eager to camp in the red dust and shower at the bore, while being serenaded by the dulcet tones of a generator. And at $5 a night they would need hordes of visitors to make a go of it.

Newhaven is surrounded by Aboriginal land, and apparently relations with the three different local language groups are not all that good. Exactly why wasn't spelled out, but I noticed little mention of the Aboriginal neighbours in the Draft Management Plan other than consulting them to assist with burning. A Business Plan for Newhaven might consider how the Conservation Reserve and the communities could work together to bring needed money to the area. With Tilmouth Well 130 k away, the nearest petrol and supplies are at the nearby Aboriginal community store about 60 k further along the track. It seems likely this community would be interested in sharing some business, and might also be able to provide eco-tourism opportunities for Newhaven visitors. There are many interesting places on Newhaven which are special to the Aboriginal people, and they could provide interesting interpretation. A long range plan might be how to organise Newhaven Reserve to eventually be owned by the original owners - Uluru surely sets the example. But Birds Australia isn't going to be able to organise such things from a city based management of this Reserve.

The ancient landscape of Newhaven enters one's imagination as a place of great beauty with a promise of ecological sustainability. I wonder if it can be.....

Members' Poetic

Earth stars creamy softness nest in
dogwood mulch,
Nearby, Wolf's farts gather at myrtle
boles,
Jelly fungi tremble nervously as we
stroll past,
While Dead Mans fingers stolidly sit
branch-fast,
Witches butter slides down
towards the
Chocolate-brown Earth's tongues whose
delicate fingers lick upwards
Close by Horsehairs stretch to light...

by Alison Moore

(These wondrous living organisms were under close inspection and a serious photographic onslaught by twelve or so FLAG'ers first outing to see fungi in the lower reaches of Meander Falls Reserve on the last Saturday in June. Colours, shapes and textures so varied that each fresh footstep brought calls of "Have a look at this!" "Wow, what's this?". Sarah's explanations were digested and memorised until the next specimen of these fascinating organisms was discovered a minute later. We VERY SLOWLY perambulated around a soft ferny streamside track crowded with *Dianella tasmanica* clumps, numerous *Libertia pulchella, (Pretty* Grass Flag Iris) and wet, dripping lichen-encrusted *Pomaderris apetala* and *Nothofagus cunninghami.*

A terrific introduction to some of the fungi family, Thank you Sarah and see you next time.)

Alison and Angus.

Collecting Fungi

Turning old logs-
Disturbing frogs and beetles.

Lots of time on your hands and knees then
Wading in bogs until your toes freeze.

Trip on a root and tumble right down
To the bottom of the hill.

And there it is - What a thrill!

At last it is found - *Secotium fragariosum!*

Then a voice from above call out loud and clear -

"Is this what you are looking for? -
There's one up here-"

by Helen Jones
Lord Howe Island
7/5/2003

Observations

Fossil Bluff

One after whom nobody whistles, at
Fossil Bluff I stood quite glum.

Who'll "aaah" and hammer me with
chisels out of the rocks in days to
come?

Who'll stroke my relief with tender
fingertips? Identify
my family, my species, gender? and
who I was in times gone by?

Faulty Earth. Things lift, then fold.
There's spill and fill and great
commotion.

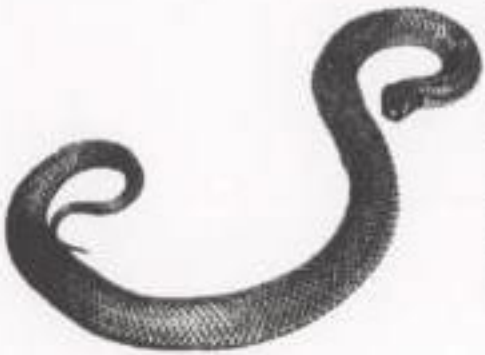
Revered weathered rocks – so
old...reminders of my own erosion...

I travelled aeons for a minute – the
brachiopodian, clamish zone.

The world of fossils with us in it, and
found

The heartbeats in the stone.

by Carla



Flat-Rock Rock

Foursome on a flat, hot rock
our slow Blood stirs.
-There's warmth in numbers-
Palisaded with flowers and thorns,
A hieroglyph of skinks.

by Peter Bamford

Witness

A sudden rustle shocks us
To a stop.
Still!
Keep still.

Denying us entry to our safe place,
A tiger snake.
Blacker than a crow's foot.

Unhurried.
Serenely poised.

Strike!
So rapt with speed and certainty
Nor skink
Nor us can grasp
The enormity of it.

One life engulfs another.
Soundlessly.

We three are left, sobered.
Privileged.
Dowered, in spite of ourselves,
with a sense of
The rightness of things.

by Peter Bamford