

Short Note A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CENTRAL NORTH FIELD NATURALISTS

by Martha McQueen

(with three plates)

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This paper provides a brief history of the Central North Field Naturalists since its foundation in 1987 as the Deloraine Field Naturalists and lists the many contributions this community group has made to improving nature conservation and education in Tasmania.

Key Words: Central North Field Naturalists, Tasmania, Disjunct Naturalists, giant freshwater lobster.

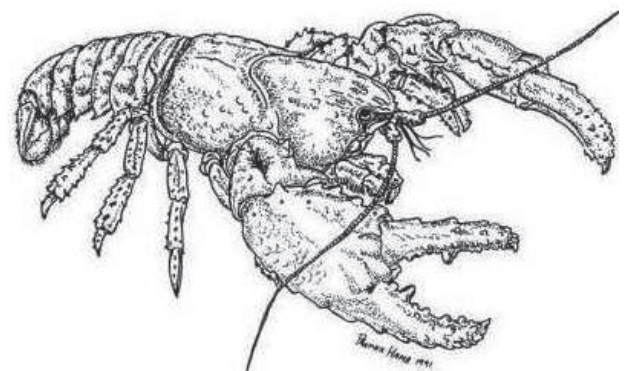
HISTORY OF CONTRIBUTION

The Central North Field Naturalists (CNFN aka Disjunct Naturalists, <https://www.disjunctnaturalists.com/>) was founded in 1987 as the Deloraine Field Naturalists, a community group dedicated to the exploration and preservation of Tasmania's natural environment. Jim and Claudia Nelson and others were instrumental in establishing this group, which now includes over 100 members mainly in northern Tasmania as well as other parts of the state, Australia and overseas. Some of the early projects included work with Dr Pierre Horwitz at the University of Tasmania that led to the nomination of the endemic Giant Freshwater Crayfish *Astacopsis gouldi* (pl. 1) as a threatened species and the protection of its habitat in the Gog Range. Since then, the group has gone on to be involved with frog conservation (including producing an audiotape of frog-calls, now a CD (see the CNFN web page)), platypus research, and education on an endemic group of burrowing crayfish in the *Engaeus* genus that have very restricted ranges in Tasmania. This work has culminated in more information being known about several species especially the Central North Burrowing Crayfish *Engaeus granulatus*, which is now listed as endangered on State and Commonwealth threatened species legislation (<https://www.threatenedspecieslink.tas.gov.au/Pages/Central-North-Burrowing-Crayfish.aspx>).

The group's ecological knowledge of the Rubicon Estuary contained in *Munginabitta's Country, the flora and fauna of Panatana and Marshalls Hill* by Sarah Lloyd, greatly assisted

the Indigenous Land Corporation and Tasmanian Land Conservancy to form a partnership in 2016 and raise the funds needed to protect Panatana for its cultural and natural values (<https://tasland.org.au/reserves/panatana/>). Another significant contribution of the group has been its acoustic bird monitoring program called 'A Sound Idea' whereby landholders are helped and encouraged to identify bird species on their properties and by doing so contribute data on declining groups such as robins. At the time of its development, this citizen-science approach was new, and became a forerunner to other acoustic monitoring programs now underway in Tasmania.

Over the years, the group has been hosting monthly walks at various locations across northern Tasmania, with occasional weekend ventures. During these activities, members have gained expertise in many areas of natural history, notably identifying fungi, birds, invertebrates,



Disjunct Naturalists

WEBSITE OF THE CENTRAL NORTH FIELD NATURALISTS



PLATE 1 — Logo on the Central North Field Naturalists website (<https://www.disjunctnaturalists.com/>) featuring the Giant Freshwater Crayfish.

slime moulds, plants (particularly orchids) and geology. More recently the group has been involved in ecological studies concerning various proposed activities on public land, including the Narawntapu horse trail, the Rocky Cape and Narawntapu running trails, and Kelcey Tier as well as current protection efforts for the Westbury Reserve.

The group's flagship publication, *The Natural News*, is expertly produced three times a year by editor Sarah Lloyd OAM with articles she and others submit (pl. 2). In 2018, in a collaboration with Cradle Coast NRM, two CNFN members, Ian Ferris and Phil Milner, produced the *Beginner's Guide to Common Orchids of North West Tasmania*, containing superb images to help the public identify the many orchid species found throughout the north of the state (pl. 3).

OBJECTIVES

In the nearly thirty years since its formation, the CNFN objectives continue to be:

- a. to study and appreciate the natural environment through personal observation
- b. to encourage the preservation of the natural environment by bringing together people with similar interests
- c. to participate in surveys and research to increase knowledge of Tasmania's biodiversity
- d. to provide and disseminate information about the natural environment, and
- e. to be a responsible apolitical advocate on environmental conservation matters.

(accepted 6 Nov 2020)



PLATE 2 — Cover of *The Natural News*, No. 76, August 2020. The newsletter is produced three times a year by the Central North Field Naturalists. (Image taken from <https://www.disjunctnaturalists.com/naturalnews/76.pdf>)



PLATE 3 — A page from the booklet *A Beginner's Guide to Common Orchids of North West Tasmania* produced in 2018 by Central North Field Naturalists members Ian Ferris and Phil Milner. (Image from author)