

Entomological Society conference field trip 2002

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The 51st annual conference of the Entomological Society of New Zealand was held in Dunedin, from 3 – 6 April 2002. Members of Dunedin Branch of the Society (Warwick Don, Malcolm Foord and Anthony Harris) arranged a field trip for delegates at the conference. The field trip gave visitors (and some of the Dunedin members also!) a view of the hilly, sparsely-populated country that lies inland to the north of Dunedin. It included collecting opportunities in a variety of habitats: creek, kanuka forest, pond and tussock grassland. The trip finished after lunch at Nenthorn, a ghost town, with a visit to the booming Macraes Flat goldmine. Nearly 40 members and friends took part.

After travelling through Bucklands Crossing, the first stop was at Dip Creek. This held several species of caddis, collected by John Ward, and mayfly larvae, with a sub-imago resting on a kanuka bush. The hydraenid beetle, *Homalaena dispersa*, was found by John Nunn.

An interesting *Peripatus*, possibly a new species, was found under a stone, as were darkling beetles *Zeadelium* and *Mimopeus*, with Elateridae under wood. Hamish Patrick netted several Ichneumonidae, including a large *Pterocormus promissorius*, not often seen in Otago. Malcolm Foord beat several *Clubiona* spiders, a bright green *Diaea* and a brightly patterned *Coloranea* species from kanuka and *Muehlenbeckia*. Tim New, our guest speaker from Melbourne, found, amongst other insects, a small, thickset, black stratiomyid fly in the genus *Beris*. Four copper butterflies were seen but not netted.

Our next stop was at an altitude of 650 m, 2.5 km from the summit of Swampy Hill. Beside the road was a small pond, steep hillsides with snowgrass and speargrass, exposed rocks and a small creek down in the gully. Tiger beetles, *Cicindela latecincta*, ran over a bank riddled with the burrows of their larvae. Over the pond were the two damselflies, the blue *Austrolestes colenisonis* and the red *Xanthocnemis zealandica*, on the surface were pond skaters, *Microvelia macgregori*, and underwater were diving beetles, *Rhantus pulverosus*, plus water boatmen and backswimmers. A tussock butterfly and a red admiral were seen. In the creek were more caddisflies.

The final stop for lunch, sightseeing and more collecting was at Nenthorn. Recent rain had filled a small, deep hole, probably a miner's prospecting pit, and this water contained Coleoptera and Hemiptera as above. A good nest of the ant *Monomorium*

* *Recently deceased*

antarcticum was found, with nest chambers and galleries exposed. On our exploratory trip Warwick Don also found the ant *Huberia striata* here. Some unusual winged, native booklice (Psocoptera) were found. This area is a centre of distribution of the endangered lizards, the grand skink and the Otago skink, but we did not see any. With a party of our size, they would have seen us first. At two stops we saw smaller skinks.

To conclude, a note on the historical significance of Nenthorn. Situated some 27 km inland from Waikouaiti, “Nenthorn was Otago’s last quartz mining rush. Its rapid rise to prominence was matched only by its equally rapid decline: discovery, boom and bust all occurred within a few short years, 1888-1891.” (Hearn 1988). Today the only prominent signs of the once thriving settlement are the ruins of a hotel and a chimney stack. We couldn’t help but notice the striking contrast between the gold mining sites of past and present, Nenthorn and Macraes Flat.

Reference

Hearn TJ. 1988. *Nenthorn. Gold and the Gullible*. Otago Heritage Books 19, Otago Heritage Books, Dunedin.