

Fire in the Landscape

In early 2013, the 'Angry Summer' brought devastating bushfires to Tasmania. On 4 January, Hobart experienced its highest temperature since records began in 1882, reaching 41.8 °C (107.2 °F) at 4:05pm. Intensified by the heatwave, by the 5 January, more than 40 fires were burning across Tasmania. The most devastating of these fires started at Forcett and burned quickly toward the Tasman Peninsula, almost wiping out the small fishing village of Dunalley. Fires continued to burn in many locations in Tasmania through to April 2013.

Day 1 Field Excursion: Dunalley

Fire disasters - the need to understand the present and forecast the future

Field Excursion 1 will take you along the Arthur Highway along the path of the Forcett fire. The fire burned with very high intensity and impacted 20,000 hectares of private land and forest plantations. You will visit Dunalley, where the fire burnt down off the Blue Hills into the village destroying 65 buildings, including the police station, primary school and bakery. We will visit the Bushfire Recovery Centre and speak with John Harkin who has led the community recovery team in the government's Bushfire Recovery Unit. Along with the Bushfire Recovery Centre, the Dunalley Pub was central to the village's recovery and we will drop in to the pub for lunch.

On the tour, you will see areas that had a planned burn about a year prior to the fires, but reburnt with low intensity with no houses lost adjacent to the pre-burned area. But just across the way, you will see where many houses were lost. Along the Flinders Bay Rd (south of Murdunna), you will visit a forest that was burned as a crown fire. At Murdunna boat ramp you will see where the fire jumped across over a 1 km stretch of water destroying houses on the far shore.

Watch **Firestorm: the story of the bushfire at Dunalley**, an e-media article published by the Australian edition of The Guardian (best viewed with Google Chrome or FireFox).

www.theguardian.com/world/interactive/2013/may/26/firestorm-bushfire-dunalley-holmes-family

Day 2 Field Excursion: Collinsvale and Styx Valley

Confronting reality - the complexity of firescapes

Two seminars at the University Staff Club by Jon Marsden Smedley (*Fire Mapping of the 2013 Fires*) and Grant Williamson (*Fire Regime History and Seasonal Dynamics in Australia*) will introduce the complexities of firescapes in confronting reality.

Field Excursion 2 will take you through the Collinsvale and Molesworth areas, where a fire in February 2013 was stopped from spreading into the rugged Wellington Ranges. Had this fire established in this rugged terrain there was a genuine threat to the City of Hobart and surrounding peri-urban areas.

We will then take you deep into the Styx Valley Forest, 100kms north-west of Hobart, where iconic areas of contiguous old-growth forest exists in a unique ecological balance with rainforest. Unlike tropical forests, the ecology of the carbon-dense temperate Styx Valley forest is dominated by infrequent catastrophic fires. The Styx River Valley contains the most exceptional stands of *Eucalyptus regnans* and 30 registered giant trees, many more than 90 metres tall.

Watch Stateline Tasmania's old-growth forest report: www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIL28Kokp5s.

If time permits, we will then drive west from the Styx Valley to the infertile south west Tasmania, where forest vegetation is replaced with open, highly flammable sedgelands.

Fire in the Landscape - Field Excursions

