

Friends of Eastern Otways

(Great Otway National Park)

Inc. A0030273B

AUGUST 2016



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IS THIS 'SPRINTER'?

The last few months we've had lots of wind, rain, a sprinkle of snow twice in Lorne and surrounding hills, and a few calm days with a promise of spring. The combination of rain and sun produced a resurgence of fungi in time for our fungi walk at Kennett River. Orchids are appearing and leaves of spring flowering orchids indicate a promising flowering season. There are signs birds are thinking about nesting, even some lizards are appearing with the sun. If we had six seasons perhaps this is 'Sprinter'.

At the Jan Juc Coast Action AGM a presentation by 'Wild Melbourne' was a reminder of the importance of engaging people with our environment – an appreciation of nature leads to caring and action. They are an enthusiastic professional group producing films and stories, engaging groups and being active in citizen science activities. Their website is wildmelbourne.org

Locally a new group is being formed through the Conservation Ecology Centre at Cape Otway – the Otway's Threatened Species Network Project. The aim is to 'formalise a network to allow for innovation, encourage collaboration and lead to greater knowledge uptake for all those working in the region'. Mark le Pla, ecologist from the Conservation Ecology Centre, spoke recently to the Friends Committee about his project to collate all relevant threatened species data into one data base, and for greater collaboration between all the organisations. Have a happy 'Sprinter'. *Alison Watson, President, Friends of Eastern Otways*

WINTER WONDERLAND IN THE OTWAYS - *Patrick Flanagan*



Given the dry summer and early autumn, who would have thought we would have two big snowfalls this year in the Otways? They occurred on 23rd June and 13th July



followed by a dusting in some areas on 25th July, turning our National Park into a winter wonderland. This winter has certainly been wetter and colder than we expected. These photographs of the first snowfall in July were taken by Michael Prideaux on the Mt Cowley Track off the Mt Sabine Road.



ENVIRONMENTAL WEEDING

Tuesdays 9.30am – 11.00am

Contact: Margaret 0412 652 419

August 9

Meet at corner of Camp Road and Coalmine Road

October 11 & November 8

Meet at car park on Great Ocean Road where road leads down to the beach at Urquhart Bluff. We will be working on an infestation of Flax-leaf Broom (a weed of national significance).

October 11 session Contact Patrick 0437 561 702

Please note there will be no environmental weeding session in September due to preparation for ANGAIR Wildflower Weekend and Art Show.

A visit to a local coffee shop at Anglesea will follow the weeding activities. We have had a great team of helpers during the first part of the year and we hope that this support will continue.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Mammal Surveys

First Tuesday every month

Contact: Patrick 0437 561 702

Mammal surveys using our remote cameras will continue following Committee meetings on the first Tuesday of each month. We are always pleased to welcome any people interested in our indigenous fauna to participate in these activities.

Please make contact to find meeting place and approximate meeting time.

Visit to Werribee Open Range Zoo

Saturday, August 20 9.30am- 3.00pm

Meet at ANGAIR Natural History Centre, McMillan St, Anglesea at 9.30am

Contact: Alison 0400 570 229

Bring morning tea and lunch.

RSVP by August 13

Discounted entrance price \$26.00, children free.

Sarah Agterhuis (Slumber and Safari Coordinator) will be our host for the day.



The opening of the purpose-built facility designed to prepare the captive-bred critically endangered Orange-bellied Parrots for release into the wild has prompted us to include this visit to the Open Range Zoo on our program. The visit will enable us to learn

about the elusive bird, and to see one first hand – an experience usually restricted to bird enthusiasts. We will also include the Safari tour and a walk around the Pula reserve where the carnivores are housed. It sounds like a very exciting day.

ANGAIR Wildflower Weekend & Art Show

Saturday, Sept 17 & Sunday, Sept 18

10.00 am – 4.30 pm

Anglesea Hall, McMillan St, Anglesea

As members of the Friends' Group are also deeply committed to this annual event, we are requesting that as many as possible help with the preparation of the Show on Friday September 16, and with the running of the Show during the weekend. Our Friends' display will be focusing on our annual koala survey at Grey River with general information about koalas. We will also include a visual presentation of birds in the district.

If you have some spare time on any of these days, please contact Margaret 0412 652 419.

Wildflower Walk

Sunday October 30

Meet at ANGAIR 9.00 am

Contact: Sue 0407 070 641

Bring morning tea

RSVP by October 14

Grassland Exploration Day - see attached flyer

Please note change of activity date from Sunday, October 23 as advised in our February Newsletter.

As a joint activity with the Friends of Iramoo we will be visiting two nature reserves in their area – Featherheads Wildflower Reserve at Cairnlea and Iramoo Wildflower Grassland Reserve at St Albans. As the Friends of Iramoo are providing lunch it is essential that we know how many will be coming.



This is an opportunity for us to see some of the rare and threatened wildflowers in this area, as well as to mingle with people who are endeavouring to conserve them. Friends of Eastern Otways donated to their request for funds to enable them to obtain funding from the Victorian Government to implement their 2016 conservation projects. We look forward to hosting a return visit possibly in November to share some of our terrestrial orchids.

Mammal Survey and Walk

November 19

Details in next newsletter.

End of Year BBQ

December 10

Moggs Creek Picnic Area

Details in next newsletter.

FRIENDS' ACTIVITIES SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

Environmental Weeding

To this stage we only managed one session on our environmental project site on Coalmine Road as our July session was cancelled due to gale force winds and safety danger. We will have another session there on August 9. We are very concerned with the Bridal Creeper that has emerged on the site and also the growth of additional Boneseed bushes. Parks Victoria has offered to spray the Bridal Creeper to help bring it under control.

Coastal Walk from Marengo to Elliott River May21 - *Alison Watson*



After morning tea in Apollo Bay at the 'official' start to the Great Ocean Walk we proceeded to Shelly Beach Picnic Area and started our walk through the tall towering gums, their stripped bark leaving shiny trunks. We were walking in the 'wrong' direction back towards Marengo due to safety concerns regarding the tides. This meant it was mostly downhill. As we headed down the track to the sound of the ocean and glimpses of the sea through the trees we were amazed to see lots of beautiful fungi appearing beside the track. We took a short

detour to Shelly beach where the tide was well in. The track is attractively designed with steps using local rock and some boardwalks. Only a few birds were seen – 1 Yellow Robin, 6 Sooty Oystercatchers, 2 Hooded Plovers and we didn't find the Beach Stone Curlew that had been seen in the area. After walking across the shell-strewn Three Creek Beach, we climbed to Bald Hill where we had lunch. The views were spectacular, the day sunny and warm(ish), walkers cheery, simply a splendid time and place. One seal was seen leaving rocks and heading into the waves at Three Creek Beach while more were seen at Marengo Marine Sanctuary at the end of the walk.



Koala Survey on Grey River Road - *Kaye Traynor*



The Koala count was always going to have a slightly different focus this year because of the proximity of the survey location to summer fires in the Great Otway National Park.

Held on June 18, the day was cloudy, fine, windless and cold. Nine Friends turned up and we made our way to Kennett River where we had morning tea. Driving up to the starting point on Grey River Road we had to carefully negotiate our way through ducks, cockatoos and rosellas in the middle of the road. They were reluctant to move out of the way and have no apparent sense of danger. This is most likely due to the fact that visitors and tourists enjoy a photo opportunity while encouraging them with bits of food. We began our

walk at 11.00 am and followed the usual circuit, counting Koalas on both sides of the road. It became evident as we approached the turning point that the numbers of Koalas would be fewer this year. After lunch we continued along the powerline ridge counting from both sides. It appeared that the majority of Koalas we counted were males. Usually we have a fairly balanced mixture of both males and females. We did see one young female Koala feeding while on a low branch. She stopped feeding when we approached and remained inert, pretending not to be there. We noticed that she had an engorged tick on the side of her face.

At the completion of the walk we had seen a total of 71 Koalas, much lower numbers than in previous years. We are not quite sure why that is the case.



During the day we saw several Brown-headed Honeyeaters, an Eastern Yellow Robin, and a Bassian Thrush foraging on the ground for food just ahead of us. We were allowed a good view of this lovely little bird which was not particularly bothered by our presence. Grey Fantails were common, we also saw Grey Shrike Thrush, Crimson Rosellas, one male Satin Bower-bird and heard a Rufous Bristlebird.

I'm sure everyone enjoyed the day. It is always such a nice walk, and although we didn't see as many Koalas as expected, this is possibly due to the summer bushfires. It does indicate the value of our survey which enables us to learn a bit more about the population dynamics of these very special marsupials.

Mammal Surveys

We have had our remote cameras in two areas since our last Newsletter, both out on Coalmine Road where the New Holland Mouse has previously been recorded. The first site resulted in a photo of a Black Wallaby although there was an 'eye' of a critter that we were unable to identify. The photographs from the second site near Messmate Track are yet to be analysed. We have decided to request a permit to once again use baiting stations as our results are a little frustrating with no focus spot for the camera.



Fungi excursion at Grey River
Alison Watson

The fungi were impressive! A week before our excursion on July 16 there was very little to be seen, just single specimens sparsely spread. Then on the day at least 20 species, very new and fresh, and some very unusual that we'd not seen before. It took us over 2 hours to traverse the short fern gully walk at Grey River observing with mirror and magnifier and consulting books.

We also took time to observe the diversity of ferns and the views of magnificent Mountain Ash high above our heads and glimpsed through the tall tree ferns. A bonus at the end of the walk was a beautiful patch of flowering Maroonhoods, some even growing on a tree fern. Lunch was very welcome when we returned to the picnic area. This little walk must be one of our prettiest.

Koalas were spotted on the way back down Grey River Road, and some of the group were lucky to spot a whale between Kennett River and Wye River. I think everyone involved increased their knowledge and appreciation of fungi and enjoyed exploring a special place in our National Park.



FRIENDLY NEWS

Otways Threatened Species Network Project

Following his presentation to the Otways Threatened Species Forum on 24 June, Mark Le Pla attended our July Committee meeting to explain a new project developed by the Conservation Ecology Centre. With funding from the Ian Potter Foundation and the Norman Wettenhall Foundation, the Otways Threatened Species Network Project will create a Research Database for information about threatened species, such as the Spot-tailed Quoll, the Long-nosed Potoroo, and Southern Brown Bandicoots which are present in the Otways but in danger of disappearing over time. With more information, actions can lead to better management practices and protection of areas where these animals might be found.

The Project will be in contact with other community groups, as well as Parks Victoria, DELWP, SWIFFT, Otway Ark, CEC, CCMA and universities, sharing information and making contributions through research, experience and practical knowledge. They will also fundraise to support field work, training, and equipment such as GPS and cameras. It is hoped this project will be a long term effort which will enable positive outcomes for threatened species in the Otways.

EXTINCTION DRAMA AT GPAC

A small group from Friends of Eastern Otways joined with many other conservation minded people on July 15 to view the drama *Extinction* at the Geelong Performing Arts Centre. The play, written by Hannie Rayson, explores the conflict between maintaining a healthy environment and our need to generate power, develop industries and create employment.

At the centre of the drama was the Spot-tailed Quoll – a creature that the Friends have been endeavouring to capture on camera in the Otways for many years. We have had limited success with analysis from our hair-tube surveys, and one was caught on camera by Parks Victoria near Aire River in 2014, with another sighting at a private residence in Lorne in the same year, so we know they exist.

The Conservation Ecology Centre at Cape Otway is carrying out a successful captive breeding program, and the conclusion of the drama shows a magnificent visual image of the species that can hopefully be saved from extinction. The question we are asked is should we be doing more to save the Spot-tailed Quoll and the other 96 endangered species that reside in Australia.



Above: A captive bred Spot-Tailed Quoll at Cape Otway Conservation Centre.



Left: The Friends of Eastern Otways enjoyed an informal dinner at Caruggi Restaurant before attending the performance of 'Extinction'. Great meal, great company!

REDUCE THE THREAT OF DIEBACK – WASH YOUR BOOTS!

Dieback, the dying back of plants, often results in the death of many native plant species. It is frequently caused by *Phytophthora cinnamomi* (the disease commonly known as Cinnamon Fungus). This invading plant disease lives in the soil. Many of our plants have no resistance to it. About 2000 different plant species (most of them Australian) are susceptible to the disease. Collapsed grass-trees are just one indicator of its presence.

It's therefore very important to stay on tracks when walking through diseased areas. If you walk off-track your boots will carry and spread infection. The only way to remove the contamination is to clean out all soil from your footwear and wash and brush footwear with disinfectant before you leave the area. Carry a plastic trough, some methylated spirits and water and brushes for this purpose. Or use a stiff brush and spray the cleaned boots with a 70% methylated spirits/water solution. Insist that the rest of the group also clean their footwear.

The swimming spores are very tiny and have no cell wall so they are very easily killed with any disinfectant, but any soil or gravel on your footwear will prevent the disinfectant from reaching them. You must not wait until you get back home. Clean your footwear immediately. **Victorian National Parks Association - May 2016**

RANGER REPORT: Giselle Owens

OTWAYS SCENIC SNOW

The wintry weather has seen snow fall at least three times behind Lorne and although picturesque, it has ensured staff are busy attending to storm damage. Erskine Falls was closed for two days due to fallen trees and snow. Darren Balderas and Peter Hay cleared over 20 trees in one day to ensure the prompt reopening of the popular visitor site, while Lachie Davis and Glenn Adkins worked hard to clear Lemonade Creek and Kalimna Tracks.



LAKE GHERANG GHERANG WILDLIFE

Lake Gherang Gherang currently has water and is bustling with frogs and woodducks. We encourage you to go and experience it for yourselves but be mindful of the muddy conditions. Works removing woody weeds and rabbit control are ongoing in this area.

OTWAY ARK FOX MONITORING

Fox monitoring cameras are currently being implemented across the Central and Western Otways, with the assistance of other PV staff and the Conservation Ecology Centre. Camera set-up is scheduled for Aireys Inlet / Anglesea in Spring-Summer and Carlisle in Summer. If you see any foxes locally please report to Cathy Longmore (cathy.longmore@parks.vic.gov.au). We also encourage you to visit the Feral Scan homepage (<http://www.feralscan.org.au/>) to report on other feral species, such as cats, goats and pigs.



COASTAL TENDERS TACKLE WEEDS

Works on the new Coastal Tenders are commencing soon and you will see contractors tackling weeds on the O'Donohues block of the GONP and near Cathedral Rock. This is a great opportunity to build on the wonderful work the Friends have done on the O'Donohues block and prevent reinfestation.

WYE RIVER REHABILITATION WORKS

Rehabilitation works continue in the Wye and Kennett River areas. The fire crew have been working on fire line rehab on both public and private land, fencing and gating of fire access tracks and re-establishing drainage to minimise erosion.

REPORT DUMPING IN PARKS

Unfortunately our parks are occasionally used as dumping sites for household waste and criminal evidence. Recent incidents have included 2 dumped cars, one set alight. If you see any suspicious activity, please contact us or Victoria Police. Litter offences can also be reported to us or the EPA (<http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/get-involved/report-litter> or 1300 372 842). You can register as a litter reporter with the EPA and report incidents that occur on any land, whether it is in protected parks, on the roads, beaches, anywhere!



WHALES ON VIEW

Southern Right Whales have been seen along the Shipwreck and Surf Coast. Members of the public wishing to contribute whale sightings reports should



note the date, location, time, direction of travel and species and/or provide photos for identification purposes. This information can be emailed to mandy.watson@delwp.vic.gov.au or call DELWP's Customer Service Centre on 136 186. Thanks to Michael Prideaux for these photos of whales pictured near Wye River last week.

On behalf of Parks Victoria, thank you you Friends for your dedication and contributions!