

# Friends of Eastern Otways (Great Otway National Park)

Inc. A0030273B



Secretary

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## From the President—*Alison Watson*



As you will read in the newsletter we had a very special day last week to commemorate Claire's seat. It was lovely to see lots of her family there, as well as many Friends. It will now be a favourite place in the Park for many to sit and contemplate, and enjoy the beautiful view.

At Eumeralla the track system is being upgraded and as Friends we are concerned to protect this area especially from invasive weeds and Cinnamon Fungus *Phytophthora cinnamomi*. Walking the tracks in the last few days we have been amazed at the beauty and diversity of the area. Deakin honours students are retracing Barbara Wilson's New Holland Mouse research searching to see if they are still populating the heathland. It was especially lovely to see an Agile Antechinus and hold it briefly in my hand.

As I get out and about it seems we are well and truly into autumn now, almost winter, with cooler weather and evenings closing in earlier. Autumn orchids are appearing with lots of Parsons Bands, minute Tiny Greenhoods, Fringed Hare Orchids and Autumn Bird Orchids. Colourful jewel spiders and all types of spider-webs are appearing throughout the bush, Hooded Plovers are congregating in their favourite spots along the coast, and the first robins have been seen, adding a dash of colour - Scarlet, Flame and if you are lucky Rose or Pink. Watch out for other local migrants - Tasmanian Silvereyes, Fantails and Pardalotes and out to sea Albatross, Gannets and Shearwaters. With more rain, fungi are appearing and it's a good chance to practise our ID skills with the recently produced ANGAIR fungi brochure. The Sweet Wattle flowers are just starting to appear, the first of our many winter wattles to flower.

## Hoodie Success at Guvvos



*Chick at 24 days*

We all know that Guvvos near Pt Roadknight is a popular surfing beach, but it was exciting this year when two Hooded Plovers (NS & MR) chose this site for nesting, with the nest with three eggs in it being discovered by Bird Life Australia in February.

As the nest was within the Great Otway National Park on a beach with free dog access, Parks Victoria staff and the Friends of Eastern Otways accepted the challenge to provide protection for the vulnerable eggs, and to monitor a guardianship program for the chicks once the eggs hatched.

This exciting event happened on March 8 when a visit to the nest revealed that the parents had two tiny chicks. Despite frantic efforts of the parents the third egg failed to hatch.

For the next 35 days the Friends Group organised a volunteer roster to cover the five week-ends. We also visited on most days just to make sure the birds were OK. Unfortunately one chick disappeared when it was 10 days old – a Nankeen Kestrel was seen flying about on that day, so it may have been the culprit!

We chatted with the surfers, dog-owners and other beach users extending information about these vulnerable and brave little birds and how they could help to protect them. We were thrilled with the cooperation we received, and the interest people took in the little Hoodie family. The chick successfully fledged on Sunday April 12 when it was seen with its parents flying high over the water each time the shadow of a hang-glider was cast on the shore!

It has been a privilege to be part of this successful breeding with another Hooded Plover added to the population on the Surf Coast. Unfortunately three adult birds were taken by foxes this year, so counting two juveniles at Moggs Creek and our one at Guvvos we have just come out even!



*Margaret chatting with Lynn Hume, a regular beach user.*

## Forthcoming Events

### Heathland Environmental Weeding

9.30am – 11.00am

Contact: Margaret 5289 6326

Tuesday, May 12, Tuesday, June 9,

Tuesday, July 14

Park near distance sign on Great Ocean Road

just west of O'Donohue Road or at The Gulch

Car Park next to it at

9.30am

Over the next few months we will be concentrating our efforts on the mulched area further to the west of O'Donohue Road

that was burnt in 2007. Both heathland plants and environmental weeds are beginning to grow through the mulched vegetation on this site, and it is an ideal opportunity to endeavour to control this section of heathland.

Social interaction is encouraged through a visit to a local coffee shop following the activity.

We have a great team of helpers but would love some more people to come along.

### Mammal Surveys Contact: Kaye 5263 2011

Mammal surveys using our remote cameras and sometimes hairtubes are usually carried out 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. Naturally we are keen to photograph rare and threatened species and a minimum of feral animals, but whatever animals we do locate are adding to the overall picture of the fauna population in the Park. Please make contact to find meeting place and approximate meeting time.

We now have five cameras and are keen to explore further areas of the National Park and Anglesea Heath.

### Visit to Mt Rothwell Conservation & Research Centre

Saturday May 17

3.30 pm – 9.30 pm

Meet at ANGAIR Natural History Centre at 3.30 pm. Bring picnic tea. Wear warm clothing and sturdy shoes.

You are welcome to bring a torch and camera.

Contact Margaret 5289 6326 0412 652 419



The Mount Rothwell Conservation and Research Centre is a privately owned property located in largely remnant habitat some 45 km west of Melbourne. It is the largest predator free ecosystem in Victoria. The property is exclusively managed for the conservation of some of Australia's most threatened faunal species, including the Eastern Barred Bandicoot (EBB) and Eastern Quoll.

As it is important to know details for this field visit please let us know as soon as possible if you would like to come along and also if you require transport or could take some extra people in your car. We may need to limit numbers attending. We are expected to be at the Centre at 4.50pm. Entry fee of \$25 goes directly to maintenance of the Centre.



Brown Bandicoot

### Iron Bark Drive circuit with Zig-zag track and Teds Track extension.

Contact: Joe Bolza 0417 509 171

Saturday, June 20 9.30 a.m.- 2.00 p.m.

Approx Distance 8 km Grading Easy to Moderate Wear sturdy shoes and perhaps bring a hiking stick

Meet at Aireys Inlet Community Centre at 9.30 a.m. (Bring morning tea and lunch)

This walk on the outskirts of Aireys Inlet, will start at the Loves Track/Distillery Creek Rd intersection and follow the Ironbark Drive circuit in an anticlockwise direction. The next circuit involves continuing on the Currawong Falls Track till it meets the feeder track back to Distillery Creek Road. We then cross the road, and head up a nearby old 4wd track till we divert on to a zig-zag track that eventually meets the northern extension of Ted's track. We follow this down to Snaky Gully road, and either return down this to the cars, or continue on Teds track itself to the fence line, and follow this back to Distillery Creek Rd. The walk will allow us to pass through a variety of vegetation communities and hopefully there should be some winter flowers for us to admire.

We will of course also keep an eye out for birds and other animals that might inhabit these areas.

## Koala Survey Grey River Road

Contact: Kaye 5263 2011

Saturday, July 18 9.30am – 3.00pm

Meet at Aireys Inlet Hall at 9.30am. (Bring morning tea and lunch)

This annual survey at Grey River is always one of our most enjoyable experiences in amongst our yearly program, and we invite you to come along and join in the activity.

If you have binoculars, we suggest you bring them with you. They do assist with spotting the koalas in the distance.

Last year the count was 99 koalas, compared with 100 in 2013. It will be interesting to see if there is an increase in numbers this year. As

we have stated previously, the trees closer to the coast seem to be completely dead. The general condition of the forest eucalypts was good. There were however signs of over-browsing on some of the trees, especially those growing on the lower side of the ridge.



## Antechinus and Eastern Pygmy Possums



Agile Antechinus

Photo: Ann Williamson

As part of Deakin University's Honours program I am undertaking a project on the current status and distribution of the New Holland Mouse in the Eastern Otways. As many of you may be well aware, the New Holland Mouse has not been seen in the Eastern Otways since around 2000. It is hoped that we can find this small native rodent still persisting in the region, if not, information collected will at least provide some information on potential threatening processes. I will be undertaking fauna surveys at sites where the mouse has previously been found as well as some vegetation assessments. During February I was lucky to have Scott Laidlaw, who has previously done research work in the area show us some of the sites where he discovered three Eastern Pygmy Possums hanging out in an old thornbills nest! This was such an exciting discovery and a privilege to observe. In April on my survey along Forest we caught four Agile Antechinus,



Eastern Pygmy Possum

Photo: Scott Laidlaw

all male, two Black Rats and a lovely Swamp Rat. If anyone is interested in helping please don't hesitate to contact me via the Friends of the Eastern Otways.

Ann Williamson

## 25 Years of Service to the Park

This year Parks Victoria has recognised the assistance given to the Great Otway National Park by the Friends of Eastern Otways over the past 25 years. Of course in the earlier days the Park was known as the Angahook-Lorne State Park and the Friends were known as the Friends of the Angahook-Lorne State Park.

These name changes took place with the creation of the Great Otway National Park on 11 December, 2005.

Since the Friends group was established by two of our very valued late members, Ted Faggetter and Claire Roberts, the group has grown in strength and has contributed to the welfare of the park in a variety of ways. This contribution is continually documented through our regular Newsletters - sharing our knowledge of the Park by exploring the tracks, thus developing awareness and appreciation of the Park's values; monitoring flora and fauna in an effort to increase knowledge of the Park's biodiversity; working with Parks Victoria and alongside other conservation groups to eradicate pest plants that are threatening indigenous plant species; and participating in a variety of environmental projects.

The grant of \$3000 given to the group by Parks Victoria has enabled the Friends to purchase more monitoring cameras and GPS units. The remainder of the funds will be used to present an informative interpretation board reflecting the Friends group at both the Distillery Creek and Moggs Creek picnic grounds. We hope to complete this project in the second half of this year.

# Information Regarding Friends' Activities Since our last Newsletter

## Mammal Surveys

We have only carried out one mammal survey since our last Newsletter and this was on the inland side of the Great Ocean Road at Urquhart Bluff. We were trialing a suggested method of not using baiting stations but we were disappointed with the results as with no clear centre to focus on, the camera revealed partial images of animals that at times were not easy to identify. We did however identify Black Wallaby, Kangaroo, Brushtail Possum, rat of some description, fox and an unidentified bird. Short video of Black Wallaby with joey was enjoyable to watch.

## Environmental Weeding



Weeders in action

Over the last three months our efforts have concentrated on the removal of Coast/Sallow Wattle from the woodland and roadside areas of the National Park at Urquhart Bluff.

It is disappointing to see just how much of this invasive weed is in the area. We are hopeful that Vic Roads and Parks Vic may be able to work as partners to remove some of the larger trees that are just not suitable for volunteers to remove. The views from the Great Ocean Road are completely blocked by this dense vegetation.



A great place to weed - Urquhart Bluff

## Lemonade Creek Walk Saturday March 21

The weather forecast of a fine sunny day encouraged 22 walkers to step out for our first excursion of the year – a walk along Lemonade Creek track beginning at Blanket Leaf Picnic Ground and leading to the Erskine Falls Car Park. The large bushes or small trees of the Blanket Leaf *Bedfordia arborescens* were eye-catching. Some of the blackened leaves that were still attached gave the impression of 'bats hanging from the trees'. It is easy to understand why the species is called Blanket Leaf when one feels the matted-woolly texture of the underside of the leaves.



Lachie was our lead walker making sure that the group kept together and knew which track to take. Although there was very little water in the creek, the walk through the margins of the cool temperate rainforest and the fern gullies was very pleasant. The small bridges and boardwalks made easy access across the creek gullies. There were some great views of the gully featuring the tall straight trunks of the eucalypts and the tall tree-ferns. The damp habitat meant that there were fungi species growing along the sides of the track. We were not sure what they were, but they nevertheless captured the attention of the photographers.

Just before we reached the Erskine Falls car park the elusive Rose Robin, that is highlighted in the Friends' Walk Book for this particular walk, was sighted by a few of the party causing a great deal of excitement. Unfortunately it quickly flew high up into the canopy amongst the *Clematis aristata* seed heads and stayed hidden from view. The call was there, but most of us were denied the pleasure of seeing this attractive little bird.

Other birds we saw or heard that called this habitat their home included Grey Fantails, Eastern Spinebills, Eastern Yellow Robins, Pied Currawongs and Golden Whistlers. The highlight was the sighting of some King Parrots absolutely gorging themselves on the fruit of the Austral Mulberry *Hedycarya angustifolia*

with the fruit falling on the walkers below. Chrissy managed to capture one of the birds in action.



*Male King parrot feeding on Native Mulberry*  
*Photo: Chrissy Freestone*

After reaching Erskine Falls car park, the more energetic walkers tackled the walk back to Blanket Leaf Picnic Ground while the rest mastered the difficulties of car shuffles safely, so ending a great day.

## **Currawong Falls Track/ Commemorative Ceremony for Claire Roberts' Seat Saturday April 18**

Claire Roberts was a keen environmentalist, and with the late Ted Faggetter was the co-founder of the now named Friends of the Eastern Otways (FEO) and also a long time member of Angair. She died in 2012, and



*Cake made by Ros Gibson*

in recognition to her work and vision in Aireys Inlet, a memorial seat was commissioned by the FEO, built by the Anglesea Men's Shed (Geoff Giles), and was recently sited along the Currawong Falls Track by Parks Victoria.



*Claire's family on her seat*

Sat April 18 was the date to officially unveil the seat, which has a panoramic view of Aireys Inlet, the sea and surrounding hills along the track about 2km from the Distillery Creek Picnic Ground.

Three walks took place by a combined FEO/ANGAIR group, all designed to meet at 2pm at the seat. Other than some residual smoke from a nearby burn off, the weather was perfect. One walk was the entire 10 km circuit led by Joe Bolza involving 8 walkers. Another 6 walkers did a circuit of the Distillery Creek Nature trail, followed by the uphill trek to the seat site, led by Lachlan Richardson. Another contingent of about 25 people drove by 4WD along Loves Track, and walked in from the Trig Point, carrying with them a superb cake by Ros Gibson, sandwiches, biscuits and drinks. Very appropriately, several descendants (and generations) of Claire's Family were able to attend. We all met at the appointed hour, the seat was unveiled, Rachel Faggetter talked about Claire's achievements and many photographs were taken. The panorama was admired by the many newcomers to the area, even with the burn-off smoke softening the view. After a toast in dappled sunshine, all returned home before the arrival of the cold, windy front.

## **Great Otway National Park Eumeralla Trails Proposal**

The Friends of Eastern Otways are in the process of walking the proposed mountain bike trail network within the Eumeralla section of the Great Otway National Park. This network proposal is for over 20km multi-use trail network with approximately 13km of dedicated cross country mountain bike trails and 8km of shared trails that will incorporate bushwalking and walking dogs on leads.

Parks Victoria states: 'Increased informal and unplanned construction of trails has been damaging the natural environment through fragmentation of vegetation communities, erosion and soil compaction and the spread of weeds and the plant pathogen *Phytophthora cinnamomi* (Cinnamon Fungus) that exists within the trail area.'

While we accept that mountain bike riding is firmly established in the area, and that there is a need to rationalise this usage, it is essential that we keep in mind the fact that this is a national park, and that the protection of the natural environment has to be our major concern. We are therefore considering just where this network of tracks is proposed.

We will be presenting a submission to Parks Victoria when we have completed our study of the area.

Parks Victoria invites feedback and comment on the *Great Otway National Park-Eumeralla Trails Proposal*. However comments must be received by May 11.

# Ranger Report April 2015

## Staff Movements

Katrina Lovett has returned from maternity leave and was successful in obtaining the role of Team Leader Eastern Otways. She is working three days a week out of Anglesea and Lorne. Aaron Ledden will be on secondment until 26 June in the position of Regional Fire and Emergency Coordinator for the Western Region. His position of Ranger Team Leader Lorne will be backfilled by Peter Hay.

## Out and about in the Park

The fox control program within the Anglesea Heath/ GONP is occurring from 13 April to 8<sup>th</sup> June.

It is with great pleasure that I thank all involved for their wonderful efforts in wardening the Guvvo's Hooded Plover family, and helping the little chick through the perilous 35 days period to fledging stage. We really appreciate the enormous effort of all the volunteers – all the hard work, positive encouragement and support of one another and the hours spent in the sunshine, showers and icy cold wind on the beach! There has been a lot of positive feedback from beachgoers, both locally and those from far away, commenting on how great it was to have the opportunity of viewing the birds through the scope and to have people raising awareness of the birds. A special thank you to Margaret for her amazing dedication and willingness to take another hoodie family under her wings, her daily visits and fantastic organisational skills in recruiting other enthusiastic people to join in.

I met with Pete Hay recently to discuss weed control in the Anglesea area. We visited a couple of blocks that will be treated shortly – the 'Scrubby Hill' block at the top of Coalmine Rd and a section of the block between Eumeralla and Ellimatta Rd, along the Great Ocean Road. These blocks have a mix of boneseed and wattle which will be removed. When there have been gaps in the planned burning program, the fire crew have been removing weeds from a number of sites within the Eastern Otways: Red River track (Sallow Wattle, Boneseed), O'Donohues (Wirilda), Pipeline/Alcoa Powerline (pine), Hammonds Rd (gorse, Dolichus), Flaxbournes Rd block (Sallow Wattle, Boneseed) and blocks off Messmate Tk/Mt Ingoldsby Rd (Ti-tree, Sallow Wattle, pine) There was also a contractor removing Sallow Wattle along Alcoa Boundary Track and Allardyce Track last month.

Parks Victoria and Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) staff have been busy in

March/April conducting planned burns within the Otway Fire District. The district has reached its target for the yearly planned burn program, with over 9100 hectares treated in a mix of mostly asset protection burns (fuel reduction) and environmental burns. The planned burns focussed on areas around Gellibrand, Carlisle, Forrest, Barongarook, Simpson, Jancourt, Anglesea, Aireys Inlet and Eastern View. Burns that took place locally included Whites Track, Gum Flats Road, Ironbark Spur, Duck Ponds/Gentle Annie Track and Eastern View.

In March/April Parks Victoria were inviting feedback for the Great Otway National Park – Eumeralla Trails proposal for a multi-use trail network, providing approximately 13 km of mountain bike trails and 8 km of shared trails. The proposal was seeking to address concerns about the impact of mountain bikers in the area and the growing extent of unofficial tracks forming, potentially causing damage to environmental and cultural sites within the Park. I sincerely apologise that FoEO were not notified of this feedback opportunity, it was a large oversight on Parks Victoria's behalf. We will make every effort to ensure this does not happen in the future.

## Friends of Eastern Otways and Friends of Moggs Creek 25 Year Grants

The walking track from the end of Robyn Road up to the Ocean View lookout is currently being upgraded. As those who have walked it in recent times would have observed, this track was in poor condition with some very rutted and eroded sections. The Friends of Moggs Creek grant will see that this track is much more user friendly for walkers in the future.

I met with a number of FEO members in late March to discuss how to spend the remainder of their 25 year grant. The group decided that it would be valuable to create some interpretation signage about the Friends Group for the displays on the information shelters at Distillery Creek and Moggs Creek picnic areas. The good news is that we are able to roll over the grant funds into the next financial year, so that the signs are done properly and not rushed. I'm looking forward to working together to create some fantastic looking signs to inspire the community!

**Thank you** once again for your tremendous help and dedication to the Anglesea Heath and Eastern Otways. Kind Regards, Cathy Longmore