

Friends of Eastern Otways

(Great Otway National Park)

Inc. A0030273B

May 2016



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RESCUE OUR PARKS PETITION



Have you signed the petition? Members who receive *Park Watch* magazine will have seen Phil Ingamells' article 'Rescue our Parks'. Funding for Parks in Victoria has decreased by nearly 40% in the last 4-5 years but this government has promised to build a stronger Park management. More funds are needed for pest plants and animals and we need a strong program for community education. Clear ecological objectives for fire management are needed and with increasing severe weather events forecast, we need to invest in more research and monitoring. We need more programs for getting more people into parks, improved signage, walking tracks, staffed interpretation centres and more park rangers out in the parks to enhance visitor's experience.

Last year I travelled to south western Western Australia and was amazed at the upgrades which were happening in the Parks. With new and attractive interpretation boards and signage, improved access, and new camping and day visitor facilities, they are encouraging people to take advantage of these wonderful areas and enjoy camping, bush walking and picnicking with family and friends. So sign the petition and encourage friends to sign too in support of our Parks. Go to petition.vnpa.org.au for a copy.

Currently there is a draft 'Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2036' paper available for public consultation. The vision is 'Victoria's biodiversity is healthy, valued and actively cared for.' It has 2 goals - to encourage more Victorians to value nature; and to ensure Victoria's natural environment is healthy. Also on the website is the *Review of Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations* and details of the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*. Information about all these is available at haveyoursay.delwp.vic.gov.au/biodiversity-plan. I urge all members to read and, if time permits prior to deadline, comment on these reports to ensure we have a positive result.

Alison Watson, President, Friends of Eastern Otways



REGENERATION OF AUSTRALIAN BUSHLAND FOLLOWING FIRE

Fire has always been part of Victoria's natural history with many of our indigenous plants needing fire to regenerate. Despite the apparent destruction of our bushland following the devastating summer fires within our



Great Otway National Park, the renewal of nature never ceases to amaze. Access to the Park is still limited, but the following observations were made in proximity to the Great Ocean Road.

Many species of fern are regenerating – bracken covers large areas, while more special ferns such as Tree Ferns are looking very spectacular. Eucalypts that looked black and dead are already showing signs of life with new growth emerging through the protective layers of bark on the trunks and branches - this is called epicormic growth. Blue Gums have bluish foliage, while Manna Gums and Grey Gums are showing green foliage. If gumnuts had been held in the canopy of the eucalypts we would expect small seedlings to emerge with autumn rains.

Some shrubs that resprout from rootstock such as Prickly Teatree and Coast Beard Heath are showing signs of regrowth at the base of burnt bushes. Other species that germinate from seed stored in the ground seed bank such as Wattles and Mountain Clematis are starting to appear. This includes many of our weed species.

It will be interesting to watch the recovery process as we did following the 1983 bushfires in the Anglesea district. Parks Vic has set up photo points to monitor progress as the bushland recovers. It is anticipated that most plant species will have survived and germinate well after the fires. More regeneration photos on page 6.

ENVIRONMENTAL WEEDING

Tuesday: May 10, June 14, July 12, August 9
9.30am – 11.00am

Contact: Margaret 0412 652 419

May 10 Moggs Creek

Meet at water tank near corner of Old Coach Road, Moggs Creek.

In winter months (June, July, August) we will return to our environmental project site on Coalmine Rd. Meet at corner of Camp Rd and Coalmine Rd, Anglesea.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Marengo to Elliott River Coastal Walk

Saturday, May 21 9.30 am – 3.30 pm

Meet at Aireys Inlet Hall at 9.30 am

(Bring morning tea and lunch)

Medium 8km

Contact: Alison & Phil Watson 0400 570 229

This walk is along the most easterly section of the Great Ocean Walk beginning at Marengo near Apollo Bay. Hopefully we may be able to view some Australian Fur Seals that usually rest on the off-shore Marengo reef. The walk features coastal bushland and some spectacular views of beaches, and rock platforms. Cars will be left at Elliott River before we commence the walk.

Koala Survey Grey River Road

Saturday, June 18 9.30am – 3.00pm

Meet at Aireys Inlet Hall at 9.30am.

(Bring morning tea and lunch)

Contact: Kaye 5263 2011

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 93 koalas, compared with 99 in 2014.

It will be interesting to see if there is a change in numbers this year as a result of the summer fires. The area we survey was not directly affected.



Mammal Surveys

Contact: Patrick 0437 561 702



Above: Attaching the camera to a tree at the Coalmine Road mammal survey site.

At the present time we intend concentrating our efforts on the Coalmine Rd area past Messmate Track which was formerly one of the known habitats for the New Holland Mouse.

Unfortunately there are no current records of this small mammal in the Anglesea district, but we continue to be optimistic. Images of White-footed Dunnarts and Southern Brown Bandicoots, two other rare mammal species, were obtained in this area in 2015 by Ann Williamson from Deakin University.

Our surveys are usually carried out following our Committee meetings on the 1st Tuesday of each month and we welcome any interested people to participate. Please make contact to find meeting place and approximate time

Right: White-footed Dunnart at camera site on Coalmine Road.



Fungi Walk at Grey River

Saturday July 16 9.30am-3.00pm

Meet at Aireys Inlet Hall at 9.30 am

(Bring morning tea and lunch)

Contact: Alison & Phil Watson 0400 570 229

This very special walk gives you the experience of entering cool temperate rainforest where you will find giant Mountain Ash and other eucalypts, vines, tree-ferns, mosses, lichens, liverworts, ferns as well as a variety of fungi all intermingled in this plant community.

After lunch we will have another walk in the Kennett Rd area - possibly visiting Alison & Phil's delightful property where again there should be plenty of fungi to see.

FRIENDS' ACTIVITIES SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

Environmental Weeding

Our efforts during the summer and autumn months have concentrated on the heathland hillside at Moggs Creek where a large amount of Coast Tea-tree has now been removed.

We were thrilled to have three sessions with members of the Green Army a program funded through the Commonwealth Government. We thank these young people very much for their assistance.

The Surf Coast Shire and Parks Victoria, joint managers of the land, have helped with removal of cut vegetation.

Below: Morning tea with members of the Green Army at Moggs Creek.



Mammal Surveys



Above: Members setting up the camera at the Perched Lake site at Urquhart Bluff.

We have had remote cameras in two areas since our last newsletter. In March we surveyed in the vicinity of the Perched Lake at Urquhart Bluff – a small swamp area that sometimes contains water. It is not unexpected that it is completely dry at the present time. We were keen to see what fauna inhabited the area and were disappointed to only obtain images of kangaroos and wallabies. We did however get a great image of a Rufous Bristlebird, a rare and threatened species.

Ironbark Gorge Walk - Saturday March 19



Our first walk for the year was selected as easy in case of hot weather, in fact it was the opposite with a little drizzle thrown in.

Seven members of the Friends enjoyed the wonderful aroma of the bush after rain with the gorge never failing to impress, with the giant rocks, the lovely coverings of moss and ferns, even water in the odd rock pool. We were not expecting to see much flora this time of year but *Correa reflexa* had quite a show.

There were bird calls from 14 different species and sightings, including Golden Whistler, Eastern Yellow Robin, Striated Pardalote and White-throated Treecreeper.

It was agreed by all that it was a walk not to be missed despite the weather.



Little Aire & Triplet Falls Walk Saturday April 16

It was an inauspicious start to our walk as the morning was wet and rainy and we had to navigate a route to Triplet Falls around road closures for long-distance bike races in the very area we were heading. Perhaps deterred by the weather and the difficulties getting there, only 8 members met at the Aireys Inlet Hall to go on the walk. After a well-earned morning tea at Gellibrand, in drier conditions, we headed off to the GONP area around Triplet and Little Aire Falls (*below*) and were not disappointed by our choice for the walk.



Maybe because of the earlier rain, the fungi appeared thick and numerous, and also brought out some unique Otway Black Snails (*below right*). We were awed by the number of large, old Myrtle Beeches as well as some remnant Mountain Ash along the trail. There were few signs of orchids, perhaps its a bit early and its been perhaps too dry as well.

We chose to walk the circuit in a clockwise direction and so visited Little Aire Falls first. After lunch there we continued on to Triplet Falls. To get there we chose to follow (guided by Lachie Richardson) the old track alignment of Phillips Track rather than trudge the many steps and metal boardwalks, kindly provided by Parks. These would be a necessity in the wetter months as even with the little rain we had, the old track was often soft underfoot, and occasionally slippery.

Particularly spectacular on the walk to Triplet Falls was a trio of venerable Myrtle Beeches that must have been many hundreds of years old. It was fortunate that



they survived earlier selective logging in the area. Triplet Falls are a picturesque and extensive set of cascades on Youngs Creek that richly deserve their name.

It was a bit of an anticlimax as we headed back to the carpark to return to civilisation, but with the bonus that road closures were no longer in effect and we could take a more direct route home. *Patrick Flanagan.*

GENERAL INFORMATION

Dog ban at Mornington Peninsula National Park

The Friends of Eastern Otways welcome the news that with the introduction of this policy the vulnerable Hooded Plovers that breed on the Mornington Peninsula should now have more chance of raising their young chicks in a safer environment in the next breeding season.

As we have reported in previous Newsletters, the Friends of Eastern Otways play an important role in working with BirdLife Australia and Parks Victoria to protect the Hooded Plover families that breed within the Great Otway National Park in the Anglesea district. As we have spent time on the beaches we have been concerned with the number of dogs that are not controlled in close proximity to our Hoodies. We believe that it is only through dedicated volunteer work that we have seen two successful breeding seasons over the last two years at Guvvos beach near Anglesea. The Friends generally support some seasonal regulations such as enforcing a dog on lead policy where Hooded Plovers have nesting sites within the National Park, and we have discussed this situation with Parks Victoria rangers. There is also a need for improved signage and ongoing education for dog owners.



FOLLOW US ON OUR WEBSITE

ANGAIR (Anglesea and Aireys Inlet Society for the Protection of Flora and Fauna) very kindly offers the Friends space on their website to include reports with photographs of most of our activities. Visit the website www.angair.org.au and you will find Friends of Eastern Otways under Other Conservation Groups. We are most appreciative of this offer as we do not yet have our own website, and we thank Rod Brooks (Friends and ANGAIR member) who keeps the website up to date in such a competent manner.



Lily's Mammal Surveys

Following Lily Zhuang-Griffin's presentation to our Annual General Meeting about monitoring the small mammal populations in the Anglesea district, some of our members accompanied Lily into the field and assisted with placing and checking the Elliott traps used for her research.

Her first site was near Batsons Track on No 2 Rd within the Anglesea Heath, an area that we hope will soon become part of the Great Otway National Park. This area used to be a stronghold for the Swamp Antechinus *Antechinus minimus* but Lily had to be content with capturing only Bush Rats. Swamp Rats and Bush Rats were also found at Coogoorah Park and a Blotched Blue-tongue Lizard was trapped at Fairyland near the Anglesea Bowling Club.

Memorial Arch Precinct Master Plan

The Memorial Arch is located at Eastern View on the Great Ocean Road and was erected in 1932 as a tribute to the World War One servicemen who built the Great Ocean Road. One of the area's best recognised landmarks, the Arch precinct is a popular tourist destination attracting great numbers of people every day. The Great Ocean Road Coast Committee (GORCC) has commissioned a master plan in an effort to improve the use and management of the Arch precinct and provide a vision and plan for the future.

The Friends of Eastern Otways have a genuine interest in this project as the group has been involved in the area since joining with Parks Victoria to revegetate the site on the internal side of the road when a very large population of Monterey Cypress trees were removed by Parks Victoria in 2007. The Friends coordinated an intense program of planting indigenous vegetation involving a wide variety of volunteers including ANGAIR members, Conservation Volunteers Australia, Aireys Inlet Primary School children and members of the local community. At that stage Parks were requested to leave a few of the Cypress trees as it was felt they would screen the houses when people were wanting photographs of the Archway. Along with many other concerned people, the Friends now believe these trees should be removed – they are certainly not healthy and create safety issues for anyone entering into that area. The Friends are keen to revisit the site and carry out works to tidy up the vegetation and once again make it an attractive site as it was in 2014 after a few years of our efforts.



Threatened Species Protection Initiative

Members of the Friends of Eastern Otways participate in a variety of activities aimed at identifying and protecting threatened flora and fauna species in the Anglesea/Aireys Inlet, and some sites further afield in the Eastern Otways.

These activities include monitoring *Thelymitra matthewsii* Spiral Sun Orchid and *Caladenia maritima* Angahook Fingers, assisting with *Grevillea infecunda* Anglesea Grevillea surveys, annual koala survey at Grey River, Hooded Plover monitoring, and the use of our remote cameras in an effort to determine rare and threatened species. We have had success with obtaining images of Southern Brown Bandicoots in a number of sites.

In 2015 Parks Victoria donated two GPS receivers to the Friends group and we are using this equipment in relation to many of our activities. In an effort to become more competent users of this technology we have applied for a \$5000 Victorian Government Threatened Species Protection Initiative Grant to enable some of our members to participate in GPS training later this year.



Erskine Falls Donation Box

Over the years the donation box at Erskine Falls has provided funds for the Friends of Eastern Otways, enabling us carry out a number of projects that are of benefit to visitors to our great National Park. People visiting the Falls have made generous donations – we have memories of hours spent washing the coins before bagging them and taking them to the bank.

The donation box has certainly had its problems. For a few years it was repeatedly broken into before Parks Victoria finally found a way to make it ‘burglar proof’. However donations have been declining. There may be a number of reasons. However we feel that one may be that the donation box looks ‘tired’ and does not encourage

people to donate. We are in the process of designing a new box that will complement the other improvements that have been made by Parks Victoria at this popular tourist resort.



RANGER REPORT – MAY 2016



• Meet Giselle Owens

Giselle Owens is the new Liaison Ranger for the Friends of the Eastern Otways. Giselle has worked for Parks Victoria since 2012 in Wilsons Promontory, East Gippsland and the Mornington Peninsula. In the past she has implemented weed control projects in the Latrobe Valley and looks forward to taking the reins on the Otway Eden project. Giselle holds a Bachelor in Wildlife and Conservation Biology and has particular interests in botany and marine conservation.

Park updates

- Pending conditions, planned burns are still slated for local areas. Local staff have been working hard on burn preparations or have been deployed to burns across the state.
- Calicivirus is being released into the rabbit population at Lake Gherang Wildlife Reserve as part of a Good Neighbour project.
- Emergent weeds at Wye River and surrounds are being tackled collectively by various government bodies (including us) and local groups including Wye Weed Warriors and the Southern Otway Landcare Network.



GREEN AFTER THE FIRES from page 1

