



FROM
THE
PRESIDENT
Alison
Watson

APPRECIATING OUR NATIONAL PARKS

This year America celebrates 100 years of National Parks. Phil and I were lucky to visit some of these iconic parks recently, including Zion, Bryce, Arches, Monument Valley, Grand Canyon and Joshua Tree and they were spectacular. They are very much loved especially on weekends when large crowds flock to their favourite park. There was a cost for entry to each (or an annual pass which was more economical),

lots of infrastructure, a map and local newspaper with up to date information were provided.

While at the Grand Canyon we noticed what we assumed was an autumn mistiness but we were shocked to learn it was predominately from pollution from big cities hundreds of miles away. Nonetheless we were impressed to find visitors were actively encouraged to refill water bottles from spring water taps placed throughout the parks and not buy plastic bottles. Hop on and off shuttle buses meant car traffic was eliminated in these beautiful areas encouraging more appreciation and walking on landscaped and designated tracks.

I was interested to read that one of the proposals for the Twelve Apostles management plan is to implement shuttle buses and remove car parking within the park to encourage visitors to experience and explore. Also planned is a visitor centre at Glenample homestead. With increasing volumes of park visitors there are some lessons for our future use.

On the east side of the country many of the smaller parks more often than not had interpretation and informative environmental centres within the park and provided good walking tracks and signage. The parks were wonderful to visit but it is so good to be home and visit our own park, enjoy the masses of spring orchids and flowers, hear the Grey Shrike-thrush calling, the clean air and peace, no costs and few people, just our own magical bush.

OTWAY ARK UPDATE Cathy Longmore

Parks Victoria, DELWP, the Conservation Ecology Centre and Melbourne University are collaborating to design and implement a best practice threatened species recovery project, the Otway Ark, across the entire Otway landscape.

The Otway Ark will deliver an ongoing, invasive predator control program, targeting the introduced red fox, designed to aid in the recovery of rare and threatened native animals. Having learnt from other Ark projects, the Otway Ark has also established a comprehensive monitoring program which will be sensitive to any changes to focal native fauna and invasive predators.

The Otway Ark aspires to be a collaborative project involving government agencies working closely with the Otway community to take action to protect native animals threatened by fox predation.



From December fox control will be expanded from Anglesea to Aireys Inlet to further protect the native wildlife and coincide with the peak Hooded Plover breeding season along the Surf Coast. From September 2017, the program will be expanded across the Otways to further reduce fox numbers and give native species an opportunity to recover.

Since June 2016, a team of staff from Parks Victoria and the Conservation Ecology Centre have placed out 300 monitoring cameras across the landscape from Point Addis through to Lavers Hill.

We are currently looking through countless images and have so far recorded a number of native and feral species, with the most exciting records being Long-nosed Potoroo, Long-nosed Bandicoot, Antechinus, Bush Rat, Koala, Echidna and Red-necked Wallabies. *Above right: Long-nosed Bandicoot. Left: an inquisitive Koala. More photos are on page 2.*

 ENVIRONMENTAL WEEDING

Tuesdays 9.30am–11.00am
 Contact: Margaret 0412 652 419
URQUHART BLUFF

December 13 & February 14 at 9.30am
 Meet at carpark on Great Ocean Road where road leads down to beach carpark at Urquhart Bluff. We will continue to work on infestation of Flax-leaf Broom (a weed of National Significance). A visit to a local coffee shop in Angelsea will follow the weeding activities.



Above & below: The FEO weeding group pictured at Urquhart Bluff in November and at the Coal Mine Road site in Angelsea last September.



 COMING EVENTS

END OF YEAR BBQ
Saturday, December 10, 10am-2pm
 Combined activity with Angair and Parks Vic. Meet at the Moggs Creek Picnic Ground at 10am. Enjoy a guided short walk around the Moggs Creek circuit track where there is always a wealth of flora and many birds to observe or hear. Or just come to the Picnic Ground to join us for lunch at 12 noon. Meat, sauce and bread provided. BYO salads, sweets, drinks, plates, glasses, cutlery and chair.

SPOTLIGHT WALK
Friday January 6 at 8.30pm
 Contact Margaret on 0412 652 419 if you are interested in joining us for this walk. Meet at Moggs Creek Picnic Ground.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Sunday, February 12, at 2pm
 Angair Natural History Centre, McMillan St Angelsea.

 MAMMAL SURVEYS

MAMMAL SURVEY & WALK
Saturday November 19 at 9.30am
 Contact: Alison 0400 570 229
 Meet at Ironbark Basin Carpark, Pt Addis Road, Pt Addis. Bring morning tea and lunch. We will place the cameras near the carpark before a walk through the Ironbark Basin. No recent surveys have been conducted in the area and it will be interesting to see what is there.

MAMMAL SURVEYS 2017
 Regular surveys and placing of cameras will continue on the first Tuesday of each month, commencing in March 2017.
 Contact: Patrick 0437 561 702



Otway Ark Update, from left: Eastern Grey Kangaroo and joey, Bush Rat and Long-nosed Potoroo.



FRIENDS' ACTIVITIES SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

VISIT TO WERRIBEE ZOO August 20

Fourteen people met at the entrance for our visit to Werribee Zoo and were joined there by Sarah, our guide for the day. Sarah spoke about the objectives of the Zoo, particularly its focus on helping to preserve endangered species through its captive breeding programs.

We were shown the nocturnal exhibits where the Eastern Barred Bandicoots are kept. Their numbers in the wild are so critically low that in Victoria they now only survive in fenced areas and zoos.

Our second stop was at the Orange-bellied Parrot enclosure. There are three male OBPs living in the aviary. We were very pleased to have the opportunity to view these extremely rare parrots. Attached to the enclosure is a much larger facility



to house birds bred and brought here from Healesville Sanctuary where they prepare for release when the time comes for them to fly to Tasmania



We were then guided around various enclosures, including African Lions, African Wild Dogs, Silver-backed Gorillas, Hippopotamus and Cheetahs. Sarah was happy to answer questions and talk at length about the measures taken to ensure that all the animals in the care of the Zoo are kept healthy, both psychologically and physically, and also stimulated so as not to become bored or depressed.

At lunchtime, the sun came out and we enjoyed a picnic lunch before boarding the safari bus for a tour which lasted for about 45 minutes. We were driven through savannah habitats containing groups of large herbivores such as rhinos, giraffes, zebras, Mongolian Wild Horses, Addaxes, Elands, Indian Antelopes and many others.

At the end of the tour we enjoyed afternoon tea at the bistro where we were entertained by Meerkats just outside the restaurant windows. It is reassuring to know that so much work is being done to secure the futures of some of the most endangered creatures in the world. **Kaye Traynor**



CALADENIA MARITIMA SURVEY

The annual survey for our Angahook Caladenia, *Caladenia maritima*, was carried out on September 27 with a second count on October 14. With the good winter and spring rainfall more flowers were recorded than last year when we had a count of 410. However the colony was still smaller than in 2012 and 2013 when over 1000 flowers were counted. Our final count this year was 682 flowers. A special thanks to Rani Hunt, Threatened Species Officer with DELWP who, in the absence of many of regular survey team members, conducted the survey for us.





FRIENDS' ACTIVITIES SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

EXPLORING THE CAIRNLEA AND IRAMOO RESERVES October 30

Ten of us set off on Sunday 30 October to explore and learn about the Featherheads Wildflower Reserve in Cairnlea and the Iramoo Wildflower Grassland Reserve, two Crown Land reserves in outer western Melbourne situated on the Victorian volcanic plains.

Featherheads Wildflower Reserve contains natural temperate grassland in an area which was once part of the Albion Explosives Factory. Housing development now surrounds the grassland which was set aside as an "offset" to the development. A fauna tunnel connects the reserve to Kororoit Creek. Run by the volunteer Cairnlea Conservation Reserves Committee of Management with incredibly dedicated volunteers, the three hectare reserve was almost completely covered by Serrated Tussock grass. Thousands of hours of spot spraying and hand weeding has now resulted in a number of native species returning. Seeding and direct planting continues to supplement the biodiversity of grassland and wildflower species.



Led by Amanda, Rick and Helen, we observed a range of floristic species including Featherheads *Ptilotus macrocephalus*, Basalt *Podolepis Podolepis sp.1*, Kangaroo Grass *Themeda trianda*, Blue Devil *Eryngium ovinum*, Pink Bindweed *Convolvulus erubescens spp. agg.*, Common Everlasting *Chrysocephalum apiculatum s.l.*, Native Flax *Linum marginale*, Cut-Leaf Goodenia *Goodenia pinnatifida*, and a yet to be confirmed orchid species. We were pleased to see a clump of the critically endangered Spiny rice-flower *Pimelea spinescens spp. spinescens*.



Parts of the reserve are burnt yearly to help keep the grasslands healthy as well as to create spaces for the wildflowers to germinate and grow. An additional key resident of this reserve is the Striped Legless Lizard, *Delma impar*, which is listed as Vulnerable in Australia.

The group then headed to the larger Iramoo Wildflower Grassland Reserve 32 ha adjacent to Jones Creek) where we took shelter in the shade and enjoyed a delicious lunch generously provided by the Committee of Management. After lunch Amanda led us off for a walk through the reserve pointing out key species, research study areas and sharing her incredible knowledge of the ecology of the area, the different species present and the work being undertaken including an arts initiative creating a tin bandicoot in the grasslands.



The Committee of Management and the Friends of Iramoo have an impressive 30 year plan for the management and restoration of the reserve. One of the many complexities of managing this site is that it is a Serrated Tussock *Nassella trichotoma* dominated grassland which has been found to be home to a large population of the Striped legless Lizard.

The Serrated Tussock *Nassella trichotoma* provides key habitat for the lizard. Over time the Friends Group are seeking to shift the balance away from Serrated Tussock back to Kangaroo Grass whilst maintaining a stable population of *Delma impar*. Reptile surveys are undertaken by Victoria University researchers to monitor the lizard population.



FEO look forward to reciprocating such an occasion in 2017. Find out more about the work being done by these two groups here: friendsofiramoograsslands.wordpress.com. **Sue Guinness**

Top: Friends of Eastern Otways in Featherheads Wildflower Reserve. Above right: Featherheads. Above left: Pink Bindweed. Right: Basalt Podolepis



FRIENDS' ACTIVITIES SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

ANGAIR WILDFLOWER WEEKEND September 18-19

Once again the Friends of Eastern Otways contributed to the ANGAIR Wildflower Weekend as our September activity. Our display this year featured the characteristics and life style of the well-loved Australian mammal and marsupial, the koala. Information was also at hand regarding our regular annual koala surveys at Grey River and the recent relocation of koalas from Cape Otway.

Our secondary focus was on the birds of the Great Otway National Park with a video presentation featuring the photography of Marg Lacey, a resident of Aireys Inlet who is a keen bird photographer. A special display presented the Eastern Yellow Robin with a photograph of a nest with chicks taken at Distillery Creek.

Members of the Friends Group were on hand to answer questions and chat with visitors, talking about our role in working with Parks Vic staff to help care for the wonderful asset of our Great Otway National Park



"FRIENDLY" NEWS

GRANT FOR GPS TRAINING

The Friends of Eastern Otways was recently advised that we were successful with an application to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning for a \$5000 grant to develop skills in ecological survey techniques using GPS equipment.

In 2015 we purchased two new GPS receivers and we are keen to use this equipment to effectively record our endeavours with flora surveys and remote control camera work.

A GPS training session will be run early in 2017. Our aim is to train a group of 12 people who would then be able to pass these skills on to other members.

HORSES FOR COURSES

The Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) is calling for public help in opposing the use of Belfast Coastal Reserve beaches for the training of racehorses by commercial trainers. A recent edition of the VNPA newsletter states:

"A fragile coastal reserve in South West Victoria is being torn up and invaded by racehorse trainers

who are using conservation areas as 'race tracks', undermining years of environmental management and jeopardising threatened birds such as Hooded Plovers.

"The Belfast Coastal Reserve is the second most important breeding ground on Victoria's coastline for Hooded Plovers... they cannot co-exist with commercial horse training, they churn up the sand, disturb the chicks and nesting birds, crush eggs and damage protective nest fencing.



"We have teamed up with BirdLife Australia and local groups in calling on the Victorian Government to end commercial horse training in the Belfast Coastal Reserve between Port Fairy and Warrnambool. Please join us in calling on the Victorian Government to ban commercial horse training from the Belfast Coastal Reserve and come up with a simple alternative, such as constructing a purpose-built sand track away from the reserve's beaches and dunes for trainers to use."

To read the article and complete an eletter to the Victorian Environment Minister go to www.vnpa.org.au/page/nature-conservation/take-action.

Hello Friends! It has been a busy last few months for Parks Victoria with high winds, wet weather, storms and burgeoning spring growth.

SEVERE WEATHER

Staff were involved in the emergency response to the September landslides along the Great Ocean Road, attending to locals in need as well as reporting slides. More recently, high winds have seen multiple trees down across parks and our staff doing their best to keep the tracks clear. Severe weather warnings continue to occur frequently - please heed strong wind warnings and reconsider visiting a park in severe conditions.



SEASONAL CLOSURES

Due to exceptionally wet conditions, we have extended the closures on several tracks until November 24. The area around the Wye River fire will also remain closed until further notice, however works are planned by DELWP to get some of these tracks open in the coming weeks. Maps (20C & 20D) are available at

<http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/explore/parks/great-otway-national-park>

Kalimna Walking Track is also closed until further notice due to the wet conditions. Work will be undertaken as soon as we can get in there to fix the wettest sections.

CLIFF MONITORING

AECOM have been contracted to develop a cliff monitoring program around Anglesea. Along with a geomorphologist from Latrobe University, AECOM have been analysing and developing a cliff monitoring program, potentially utilising a mobile app, for the Anglesea area. Watch this space for further updates.

WEED WORKS – SOUTH AFRICAN WEED ORCHID



Spring has sprung which means weeds weeds weeds! Multiple contractors are completing works across the Great Otway National Park and Anglesea Heath as many species need treatment before seeding and are easily spotted by their flowers.

A new sighting of South African Weed Orchid was identified last week on the Barwon Water bore site near Coalmine and Messmate tracks.

Already in flower there was little time



to lose. With the co-operation of Alcoa, Barwon Water, ANGAIR and FEO held an adhoc working bee on November 14.

Many hands made light work as roughly 5500 orchids were hand-dug by 18 sets of hands in an hour and a half. This site is now mostly clean and will be followed up. Barwon Water has lodged this as an incident and will investigate it further. It was wonderful to see such a great turnout with such little notice and we can all be proud of the results!



South African Weed Orchid is a new weed in the Otways. It has a short flowering time in October/November and seeds by December. Spores are dustlike and can travel up to 10km. There are a few known sites of South African Weed Orchid in the Surf Coast but new sightings are emerging. Please report sightings to me at giselle.owens@parks.vic.gov.au

Pictured above left: South African Weed Orchid near Anglesea, and (above right) a closer view of this emerging threat. Left: The working bee clears the weed from the Barwon Water bore site near Anglesea on November 14.

As always, thank you for all your work and community support. **Ranger Giselle Owens**