

Friends of Eastern Otways

(Great Otway National Park)
Inc. A0030273B



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From the President

Rachel Faggetter



There's an interesting new report from the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability, Dr Kate Auty. In the last year she has travelled to meetings all over the State to ask people what they are thinking, see what they are doing and listen to what they want to say about sustainability. Now she has written up this process in 'Many Publics: Participation, Inventiveness and Change' which she presented to the Minister for the Environment this month. By the standards of typical Government reports it is radical.

First, it looks different. It is bright pink, and the design is bold, the layout clear with good big photographs of people and places, all identified. Direct quotes from participants, often printed boldly against pink, highlight the fresh approach.

It is organised into five geographical areas, but reports on different concerns in each place reflect what people said and what she found. Not surprisingly she heard that in the South West, (Chapter Five 'From Convincing Ground to Moriac') people are concerned about communication or lack of it and fire management.

I found the whole Report interesting for its many vivid stories. Across the State everybody wants meaningful, not token, participation and support for the great work which already exists. As the Commissioner found, 'there is an astonishing amount of inventive and intelligent environmental work being done by the community'.

The whole report is available on line at www.ces.gov.au Let's hope the Minister reads it and takes notice.

CRITICAL ISSUES

Burn Targets unrealistic

The Victorian Government's decision to implement a program of prescribed burning on an annual target of five percent minimum on public land has seen unprecedented levels of burning across the Otway district. The minimal air movement has seen clouds of smoke lingering for weeks near townships in the area. With most of Victoria having received heavy rainfall earlier in 2012 and therefore presenting unfavourable burning conditions, the focus of reaching burn targets has concentrated on our district. The latest community Newsletter states that 3054 ha have been burnt in the autumn program with another 2000 ha (approx) listed for upcoming planned burns.

It is true the Government has honoured the recommendation of the Royal Commission to monitor the impacts of the fire program on biodiversity, but with the accelerated program being implemented in our area we have very little confidence that the monitoring program will be effective. Biodiversity monitoring is a time consuming process. Local biodiversity issues are very much paramount – who knows what effect the Cecil Track burn will have on the Helmet Orchids that once grew in the mossy areas, or who knows how the nationally listed *Grevillea infecunda* on Breakfast Creek Road will respond to its habitat being burnt.

Along with many other conservationists, the Friends can only hope that as the Victorian National Parks Association has stated recently '*Hopefully we can put enlightened fire management into practice before too much damage is done.*

Threatened Species under Government Threat

The Friends are devastated at the Victorian Government's decision to terminate the short term contract positions of the Department of Sustainability and Environment coastal and biodiversity officers as part of efficiency measures to address the high growth in government expenses. Over the years our members have worked with the biodiversity officer for our area in monitoring and protecting the rare and threatened flora species that grow in the district. Trevor Prowd, who was our biodiversity officer during 2011, was responsible for monitoring such rare and threatened species as *Caladenia maritima*, *Thelymitra matthewsii*, *Thelymitra hiemalis*, *Pterostylis chlorogramma* and *Grevillea infecunda*. We have worked alongside Trevor and have appreciated his knowledge, his enthusiasm and his dedication to his role. DSE has stated that '*it will continue to have staff committed to working on coastal and biodiversity programs, including threatened flora and fauna projects.*' Can we be forgiven for being just that bit cynical? We wish Trevor every success and happiness in his new position with Wyndham City Council – our loss is their gain.



Thelymitra matthewsii

Parks Victoria Staff take Industrial Action

As you read this Newsletter you will be aware that there is no Parks Victoria ranger report. This is due to the fact that our Park rangers are involved in industrial action in an attempt to improve salaries and working conditions. The industrial action results in many inconveniences including the provision of reports. As colleagues of our local Park rangers we are aware of the lack of support they receive in the way of salary remuneration for the time and effort they expend in caring for our Great Otway National Park and the joint project with Alcoa of managing the Anglesea Heath. The vision they have for our wonderful Park is thwarted with frustration due to monetary constraints and lack of personnel. We wonder what has happened to the promise of additional staff with the creation of the Great Otway National Park in 2005. Despite this promise staff numbers have decreased in our area since that time.

We support our local rangers' action, and we hope that the Victorian Government will accelerate the negotiations that they say are presently taking place with the various unions with which our rangers are affiliated.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Environmental Weeding 9.30am – 11.00am *Contact: Margaret 5289 6326*

Tuesday, May 8 Tuesday, June 12 Tuesday, July 10



Feeling very satisfied with the condition of the Anglesea heathlands at the present time, we have decided to move out attention for the next three months to the area where the Coast/Sallow Wattle research has been carried out for the last few years. As a result, our next session will see us once again attack the plot that we hand weeded a few years ago. Meet in Great Ocean Road car park 100W just before the sign with the distances to Lorne etc. We have been thrilled with the support our members have been giving us with our weeding activities and we would love to have some additional helpers. We have a Conservation Volunteers Group assisting on June 12 so we should have a productive session.

The new tools were given the tick of approval Tuesday March 13

World Environment Day

Tuesday, June 5

World Environment Day is held each year on June 5. It is one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations (UN) stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and enhances political attention and action.

This year, as in 2011, we are working on our Caring for Country project site on Camp Road, Anglesea. The focus is on Boneseed but other environmental weeds will also be removed. We are hoping that the Anglesea Primary School children will be able to join with the conservation groups and agencies to celebrate this special day.

We are meeting at the old camp site past the Anglesea Primary School and just before the Readymix plant on Camp Road for a 10.00am start. BBQ lunch will be provided so for catering purposes please let us know if you are able to come along.

Painkalac Dam Walk Approx. 7.5km Moderate difficulty

Contact: Joe 5289 6498

Saturday, May 19 9.30am-2.00pm

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

A walk through the Ironbarks and other eucalypts behind Aireys Inlet on well formed tracks. The walk passes the Painkalac Dam, Aireys Inlet water supply, continues along the fire break track to Gentle Annie and then follows the narrow track downhill to the Moggs Creek Picnic Ground.

This walk has been closed for several years due to works being carried out by Barwon Water, so it will be interesting to explore the changes that may have occurred. There will be a car shuffle between the Distillery Creek Picnic Ground and pick-up at Moggs Creek Picnic Ground.

Koala Survey

Contact: Mike/Kaye 5263 2011

Saturday, June 16 9.30am – 2.30pm

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 we counted 98 koalas in the area we regularly survey. The overcast grey sky made it difficult to see the koalas high in the foliage.



Visit to Friends of Buckley Falls

Sunday July 15 9.30am- 2.30pm

Meet at ANGAIR Natural History Centre at 9.30am.

Contact: Alison 5266 1087

(Bring morning tea and lunch). Please note change of date from Proposed Program of Events

Following our successful visit to Pt Nepean (2010) and Lobster Pot (2011) we have decided to include a visit to another Friends group as a feature of our yearly program. This year we have chosen Friends of Buckley Falls near Geelong. We should be able to help with their planting program and enjoy social interaction with other conservation minded people.

The Friends of Buckley falls was instituted by the Geelong Environment Council about 25 years ago to rehabilitate the Buckley Falls region along the Barwon River. The area had been infested with a massive growth of many varieties of weeds. In addition, plantings of trees, shrubs, native grasses and flowers were undertaken. Working bees were held every 2 weeks and sometimes more frequently on Sunday mornings. Since the early years, the area rehabilitated has been greatly expanded and now extends almost to the ring road. Much has been achieved with Buckley Falls park having been transformed from an ocean of weeds to native bushland.

INFORMATION REGARDING FRIENDS' ACTIVITIES SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

Mammal Surveys

We have only completed one mammal survey using our remote cameras since our last Newsletter – this was in the Great Otway National Park near Flaxbourne Road, Anglesea. This was once the stronghold for the New Holland Mouse and we are always optimistic that this small creature might still be living in the area although there have been no confirmed sightings for many years. The only animal we caught on camera was a Black Wallaby which was determined to open the bait station to get at the Kentucky Fried inside. Was it the smell of the herbs and spices that attracted it, as we know wallabies are herbivorous creatures?



The inquisitive wallaby



Caught red-handed

We presently have our cameras on site in the Great Otway National Park behind Lorne near the bottom of the track where we had success with our hairtubes for Tiger Quolls a number of years ago.

Grassy Creek Walk

Saturday 17th March [St Patricks Day]

Ten Friends left St Bernards College Car Park at Grassy Creek, to walk to Grassy Creek Falls, and return approx. 6kms. The walk was not arduous although you were required to cross the creek eight times to reach the very small waterfall. This was achieved easily as there were plenty of boulders to use as stepping stones. Following the eighth crossing we had to negotiate our way along the creek bed – a tricky situation in some places. We then walked along the creek to a flat rocky area where we had lunch.

The interesting aspect of this walk is that the creek follows roughly the dividing line of cool temperate forest to the south west, and the drier sclerophyllous more open woodland to the east, apparently brought about by some ancient earth movement or volcanic effect. The track winds through some old forest friends, with familiar understory plants we enjoyed identifying.

There was quite an array of different fungi making for excellent photography. The Golden Whistler serenaded us along the way, also Grey Fantails, Currawongs, Shrike Thrush and Yellow Robins.



Negotiating our way along the creek bed

Visit to Cape Otway Centre for Conservation Ecology

Saturday, 21st April

Following Lizzie Corke's excellent presentation regarding the Tiger Quoll Flagship Program at our Annual General Meeting in February, an excited group of 27 people came together for the promised visit to the Centre for Conservation Ecology.

It was one of those magical spring days and a great one for driving along the Great Ocean Road with tremendous coastal views, and in other places vistas of tree ferns and majestic eucalypts lining the roadway.

Having stopped for morning tea at Kennett River where we were entertained by Black Ducks and Wood Ducks, we reached the Ecology Centre at about 11.30am where we were met by our hosts Lizzie Corke, Shayne Neale and their three-year old daughter Tess.



We first visited the marsupial nursery where we observed a young Eastern Grey Kangaroo being bottle fed, a small Black Wallaby and two orphaned koalas. The injured or orphaned animals are cared for in the nursery until they are strong enough to return to the wild.

Lizzie and Shayne then took us for a walk through the property until we finally arrived at the great enclosure that Shayne has built to provide a safe and stimulating environment for their three Tiger Quolls. These animals have been brought into the Centre to enable people to observe the creatures and learn about their behaviour and their needs.

Female



They intend breeding this year from the male and female that have been brought to the Centre from different parts of Australia so that they are genetically suitable for breeding. The Quolls are now three years old, and Lizzie and Shayne hope that they will have a successful breeding season. Quolls usually mate in May with the young being born in June. It is an exciting time for the Centre.



Male

We thank Lizzie and Shayne very much for sharing their exciting program with us.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Healthy Parks Healthy People Grants 2011/12

The funds we received (\$4500) are being used to employ private contractors for chain-sawing, brush cutting and mulching on some of our weeding sites. We have engaged Conservation Volunteers Australia for three days to assist the Friends in removing some of the smaller weeds at Moggs Creek, Anglesea and Aireys Inlet. Tuesday, June 12 (Anglesea), Wednesday June 13 (Moggs Creek) and Thursday June 14 (Gilbert St Aireys Inlet). If you are able to assist with any of these special projects please contact Margaret 5289 6326. The funding needs to be expended by June 30.

Caring for Our Country Community Action Grants 2011/12 Swampy Riparian Woodland and Heathy Woodland restoration

We have until June 2013 to expend the \$18 750 we have received to continue in the restoration of the area of approximately 22ha adjacent to the Anglesea River and bordering Camp Road and Coalmine Road Anglesea. This is the area where we worked with the assistance of the CCMA grant in 2011.

ANGAIR has scheduled two working bees in the area for May 21 and June 25 and with World Environment Day on June 5 we will be able to make a start on this challenging project. We have used funds to buy some new tools which as we mentioned earlier are making weeding easier for us. Hopefully you may be able to join in some of these scheduled activities.

We are hopeful to work once again in a cooperative relationship with Parks Victoria, DSE, Alcoa, ANGAIR and the Anglesea Primary School in weed management and habitat revegetation.