

Friends of Eastern Otways

(Great Otway National Park)
Inc. A0030273B



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From the President

Rachel Faggetter



Our small coastal settlements are completely surrounded by the Eastern Otways National Park and a spectacular marine environment. This is an immense privilege. We live in a neighbourhood of beautiful places, where there is always something new to discover or some unexpected enchantment to enjoy. Most of this land is in public hands, often the result of community advocacy and support for its declaration as a national park.

Parks Victoria manages these public lands on our behalf, but it is a statewide organization with many responsibilities.

This makes the role of a local, independent Friends Group particularly important, especially in the face of robust development pressures from tourism as well as the influx of new settlers. Our members contribute profound expert on-ground knowledge to park management. We are the local eyes and ears for the parks service. We appreciate your involvement and support and look forward to a successful 2013.

30 YEARS LATER

“Victoria’s natural environments are some of the most fire-prone areas in the world. High temperatures and limited summer rainfall produce conditions of very high fire danger in Victoria’s eucalypt forests. Sudden strong wind changes that can hamper efforts to control fires, are also common. The bushfire danger becomes serious in some parts of Victoria every few years.

Over 100 fires started on February 16 1983, a day known as Ash Wednesday. Fires swept across the Otway Ranges causing three deaths and widespread damage to property and vegetation.

Clear skies and rising temperatures were observed on the morning of Ash Wednesday. A front, or band of cold air, was located in the Great Australian Bight off the coast of South Australia. The front caused the hot air in the centre of Australia to be drawn southwards, creating a hot, dry northerly wind over Victoria. Temperatures in many places rose to over 40 degrees Celsius and the air moisture, or relative humidity, dropped to below 15%. By comparison, the average humidity on a summer’s day in Melbourne is 43%. Many bushfires were reported in the early to middle afternoon and were well established by the hottest and driest part of the day. Towards late afternoon, the front moved inland and the northerly winds became much stronger. The fires were being pushed in a southerly direction creating long, narrow fires.

Many spot fires, caused by burning material blown ahead of the main fire, developed. In many cases, spot fires spread quickly and joined to form a large fire ahead of the main fire. This made the bushfires more severe, and made it difficult for firefighters to control the fires. The wind change moved through south-west Victoria by early evening. This was disastrous, as the westerly winds caused the fires to change direction and size. Prior to the wind change, the fires had been relatively long and thin, with a narrow head, or front. After the wind change, the long side of the fire then became the head, or front, of the fire, burning across a much wider front.

The wind change also caused fires to merge. Firefighters had many problems trying to control these large bushfires. Most of the losses of life and property occurred in the hour following the wind change.”

Thirty years later we hope that we have not become complacent to the devastation caused by severe bushfires. At times we may appear critical of fuel reduction burns and the targets set by the Victorian Government. However our local D.S.E., Parks Vic and CFA staff carry out a program that we hope and feel sure is focusing on high-risk fire areas and public safety, while taking environmental needs into consideration. We congratulate them on their efforts.

Reference: DSE Website

Results of election of Office Bearers & Committee Members

President:	Rachel Faggetter	
Vice-president:	Alison Watson	
Secretary:	Margaret MacDonald	
Assistant Secretary:	Kaye Traynor	
Treasurer:	Lachlan Richardson	
Committee Members:	Joe Bolza	Evelyn Jones
	Ross Murray	Diana Trewenack
	Patrick Flanagan	(on leave)

Dennis Leavesley will stay on the Committee as Past President.

A vote of thanks and appreciation was extended to Claire Hanley who did not stand for re-election on the Committee. Claire is a foundation member of the Friends and has been a valued member of the Committee since 2004. She was presented with Life Membership and we feel sure she will maintain her interest in the Friends' objectives and activities. Life Membership was also granted to Margaret MacDonald in recognition of her valuable contribution to the Friends over many years.

Guest Speaker

We were very fortunate to have as our Guest Speaker at the Annual General Meeting, Matt Ruchell, who is the Executive Director of the VNPA (Victorian National Parks Association).

Matt gave an overview of the environmental challenges as well as some of the high priority issues that exist in Victoria. Since European settlement, 50 – 70% of native vegetation in Victoria has been cleared, resulting in extinctions, loss of habitat and decline in quality of waterways and destruction of local ecosystems.

Since its establishment in 1952, the VNPA has successfully advocated for the creation of national parks and nature reserves. Among its achievements – Alpine National Park, Grampians National Park, Box Ironbark Forests Park, Wilsons Prom., Marine National Parks, Stopping cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park, Point Nepean National Park and Redgum Park in 2010.

The Association also advises on establishment of bio-links using public and private lands to provide nature corridors that enable species to move between habitats.

Other projects include, 'NatureWatch' such as Grassland monitoring, studying frogs and lizards which might be adversely affected by disturbances. Camera surveys, working with Arthur Rylah Institute, 'Reef Watch' – Underwater monitoring of fish and counting species, in association with the Museum. The Association also supports local groups against large-scale developments that threaten the native environment. The list goes on and on.

Matt devoted some of his talk to the issue of Marine Parks and Sanctuaries. Victoria was one of the first to have marine parks, and presently 4.2% of the coastline is protected. There are plans for future expansions of exclusion zones, and priority areas that need better protection including bays and inlets.

It was a most informative presentation and of interest to all of us who are concerned about our natural surroundings and the care of them for the future

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

Tuesday, February 12

Meet in O'Donohue Road near corner of Great Ocean Road, Anglesea.

We have been thrilled with the support our members have been giving us with this project and although the heathlands are looking dry and perhaps uninteresting at this time, we know that as soon as the autumn rains come, the heathland plants will show their beauty once again. We are presently working in the gully area between the two fuel reduction burns mainly targeting Coast/Sallow Wattle.

Tuesday, March 12, Tuesday, April 9, Tuesday May 14, Tuesday June 11

Meet at corner of Bingley Pde & Wilkins St, Anglesea.

We will work on our 'Caring for Our Country Community Action Grant' site on the Anglesea River concentrating on the removal of Boneseed and Coast Wattle. The expenditure of funding and final report for this project needs to be completed by June, 2013.

We would love to have some additional helpers on our weeding days.



Mammal Surveys *Contact: Mike & 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. With the excitement of the sighting of the elusive Spot-tail Quoll in Lorne last year we are ever optimistic, but whatever animals we do locate is adding to the overall picture of the fauna population in the Park. Please make contact to find meeting place and approximate meeting time.

Surf Coast Walk (Anglesea to Aireys Inlet)

Contact Lachie 5289 7029

Sat, March 16 9.30am -2.30pm

Meet at ANGAIR Natural History Centre, Anglesea.

(Bring morning tea and lunch)

Aireys participants should meet at 9.10am at Aireys Inlet Hall to consolidate transport.

Anyone not wishing to do the beach walk from Point Roadknight to Urquhart Bluff should meet on the beach front at Urquhart Bluff lower car park at 11.30am where the whole party will have lunch.



Rufous Bristlebird

The 4.5 km walk along the uncrowded beach from Point Roadknight to Urquhart Bluff will allow you to keep an eye out for beach nesting birds and curiosities washed up on the sand. After lunch at Urquhart Bluff we traverse the new 3km part of the Surf Coast Walk through rugged coastal bushland using remnants of the original Ocean Road. There are two sets of steps along this section before we descend to the secluded cove at Sunnymeade. The remaining last 2.8 km section of the walk to Aireys Inlet lighthouse is an easy walk along a well made track with stunning views of the coast.

Although the Rufous Bristlebird is common along this section of the walk, they would not normally be very active at this time of day.

Visit to Lake Elizabeth

Contact: Joe 5289 6326

Saturday, April 20

9.00am-4.00pm

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

A circuit of 7-8km from the lower carpark to the lake and a complete walk around the lake, crossing the wetland at the end of the lake on some boardwalk, and returning along the northern side. A moderate level of difficulty on the access route.

Lake Elizabeth is close to the village of Forrest. It is a beautiful "perched" lake, formed by a landslide blocking the east branch of the Barwon River in 1952. It provides suitable habitat for birds such as waterhens, ducks and swans as well as a significant colony of platypus. The lakes and streams flowing into the lake support a healthy frog population.

Grassland and wetland areas provide variety. Tree-ferns are a feature of the northern side of the lake. Manna gums, Mountain Grey gums, Messmates and Blackwoods are some of the trees to be observed, while the understorey contains plants such as Forest Groundsel, Indian Weed, Tall Rice Flower and Bootlace Bush.

We will meet at Aireys Inlet carpark at 9.00, as it's an hour or so's drive away.

Cumberland River Walk

(approx. 4.5 km return to Cascades)

Contact: Lachie 5289 6498

Saturday, May 18

9.30am-2.00pm

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

This is a moderate to difficult walk through one of the most spectacular river valleys in the Otways. The track is generally rough, and four river crossings need to be negotiated to reach the Cumberland River Cascades. Some people may like to finish the walk at the fourth crossing as it becomes more challenging to climb up the last 250 metres to the Cumberland River Cascades.

The track takes you between towering craggy cliffs along the Cumberland River and is lined with a variety of ground-ferns. It winds its way through eucalypts and groves of Blackwood, Musk Daisy-bush, Austral Mulberry and Hazel Pomaderris.

The Golden Whistler and the Forest Raven are some of the bird calls you may hear and small trout can often be seen swimming in the shallow areas of the river. The picturesque Jebbs Pool is just past the first river crossing.



Jebbs Pool

INFORMATION REGARDING FRIENDS' ACTIVITIES SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

November 16 Mammal Survey and Walk in Ironbark Gorge

We were pleased to welcome 14 people to our mammal survey and walk in the Ironbark Gorge at Distillery Creek on Saturday 16 November. It was great to have three children join in the activity with us – Oliver, Ruby and Sophie Woods.

Our first task was to place three cameras and baiting stations in locations close to the creek just north of the lower picnic ground. The habitat looked good but our camera results showed that only Black Wallabies were keen to investigate the baits.

After a brief morning tea at the picnic ground we followed the walking track through the Ironbark Gorge. The weather was overcast and produced a few light showers, however they did eventually clear and the conditions were ideal. The gorge is always spectacular, and we had fun identifying where we had taken the photo for inclusion in our walking book guide in 2004.

Helen, Sophie and Ruby posed in the spot for us. Check the photo in our guide book.



Once we reached the top of the gorge we stopped on the bridge to admire the panoramic view back down the creek. November is the perfect time for walking in the forest with the many different bird calls, and so many varieties of flowering plants. Among the most prolific were the clusters of white blooms of Dusty Daisy bush *Olearia phlogopappa* and yellow Hop Goodenia, *Goodenia ovata*, growing throughout the forest. Trigger Plants *Styliidium armeria* were flowering in abundance.

Many birds could be heard including Fantail Cuckoo, Golden Bronze Cuckoo, Golden Whistler and the very vocal Grey Shrike thrush. Sulphur-Crested Cockatoos and Gang Gangs could be seen perched high up in the very tall Manna Gums growing within the Ironbark Gorge. On the return track a Spotted Pardalote flew right across the walking path at knee height just in front of one of our group. It had flown from a small hollow burrowed into the side of the track only a few centimetres from the ground. The entrance was decorated with a Trailing Goodenia.

We returned about 1.00 pm, in time for lunch at the picnic ground where Pied Currawongs were hopefully waiting to be fed.

December 8 End of Year Celebration Friends of Eastern Otways/ANGAIR

Thirty people participated in this function that was held at Moggs Creek Picnic Ground on Saturday, December 8. The forecast was not good, with hot northerly winds predicted, but fortunately the weather was kind and those who came along appeared to enjoy themselves.

The walking group met at 10am and had morning tea before setting off on the circuit track that follows the Moggs Creek gully. As we walked this pleasant track there was plenty of vegetation to admire, and birds to hear with their calls echoing through the gully. A young Sulphur-crested Cockatoo was quietly watching us as it remained at the entrance to its nest – once home for Sugar Gliders. Buds of Hyacinth Orchids were appearing in large numbers, and the white Christmas Bush, *Prostranthera lasianthos*, was just coming into flower

The sighting of a Red Stinkhorn Starfish Fungus captured our attention. It was quite fascinating. Smelling like rotten meat it attracts blowflies that were resting on the arms.

Once we reached the Picnic Ground, the remainder of the group had come along and were enjoying chatting to each other. Frank and Lachie had the BBQ lunch ready right on 12 noon and people collected their food and spread out under the tall eucalypts to eat their lunch



Red Stinkhorn Starfish Fungus

Before we left, thank-yous were expressed by Helen Tutt (ANGAIR) Alison Watson (Friends) and Frank Gleeson (Parks Vic). Another year had ended, and we were all looking forward to a well-earned break and another successful year in 2013.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Healthy Parks Healthy People Grants 2012/13

Biodiversity Grant

The Friends have made an application for the Parks Victoria grants for community groups to carry out biodiversity protection management works on three of our usual environmental weeding sites:- Moggs Creek Heathland Hillside (in conjunction with Friends of Moggs Creek) Gilbert Street, Aireys Inlet (tip site following Ash Wednesday bushfires) and Anglesea Heathlands Gully area on O'Donohue Heathlands.

Funding requested totalled \$7,060. This includes six lots of Conservation Volunteer Australia assistance - \$ 3,600. Chainsawing - \$2,250, Mulching - \$660, Spraying - \$550. This work will need to be completed by May 2014. It is interesting to note that one year's funding seems to have quietly disappeared. We would have usually had funding that needed to be expended by the end of the financial year – that would have been June 2013. As a result of this Government decision we have applied for additional funding.

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

This has been a challenging project for us and we have just four months to complete the expenditure of the \$18 750 we received from the Federal Government to continue in the restoration of this 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.

We have had tremendous support from so many groups including Parks Victoria, Department of Sustainability & Environment, Conservation Volunteers Australia, ANGAIR, Anglesea Primary School and St Bernards College. So many people have given of their time voluntarily that it has certainly enabled the project to be most successful.

Once the Boneseed was removed, the main target has been Coast/Sallow Wattle that invaded the area following the fuel reduction burns. We still have some funds to employ contractors to help with the removal of the larger trees and we have funds to perhaps carry out some revegetation works in the more degraded areas. We planted some trees last year with young students from Anglesea Primary School. Obviously one student watered his/her young seedling during the summer weather and it looks really great. The other ones were not so fortunate, so we will endeavour a second effort once the autumn rains arrive! We are considering requesting swinging the remainder of the revegetation funds to weed removal as the regrowth has been much more prolific than we anticipated.

We are also working with a local bird photographer to produce a powerpoint presentation of birds observed in the area. We will then have a presentation for the children at the Anglesea Primary School and the presentation will be available for ANGAIR and other groups to make use of.

We are confident that we will be able to complete the project on time.

Ash Wednesday Commemorating 30 years 1983-2013

Although this is not a Friends activity, we have included it on our yearly program, and we encourage people to go along to the community event at the Aireys Pub on Saturday, February 16 at 11.00am to commemorate and reflect on the events of that day, thirty years ago.

The event commences at 11.00am and concludes with a free BBQ at 12.30pm

So much of our beautiful area, Angahook-Lorne State Park as it was in those days, was devastated by these fires, and many of our members were either in the area or knew someone who was affected by these fires that are listed as one of Australia's most well-known bushfire event.

**RANGER REPORT: For Friends of Eastern Otways (FEO)
Anglesea) PARKS VICTORIA**

From: Carlie Bronk (Ranger,

February 1st 2013

Hello Friends of Eastern Otways

We have had a very busy month with all visitor sites heavily used



Visitor services

- Big Hill camp site was reopened early in the new year following an upgrade to the campsite
- Work continues on the replacement of the Erskine Falls steps. About 60 % complete.
- Hand rail at Castle Rock look out has been up-graded and replaced.
- Work on the replacement of the Kalimna walking track bridges will recommence in Feb.

Fire

Fire staff have/are being rotated on deployments away to East, North east, south west, NSW and Tassie.

Burns: A number of small burns for asset protection around Anglesea and Moggs were completed prior to Christmas. Will start burning for 2013 in west and work towards east once more rain has fallen. Asset Protection Zone works have been completed around Anglesea and Lorne.

Small Mammal Camera Monitoring

- 50 cameras were set up over December. Data is still being analysed but we have captured a diverse of species including potoroos, southern-brown bandicoots, long nosed bandicoots.

Fox Control and Prey Response monitoring project;

- The Summer pulse has 1 week to go. Bait takes for the summer pulse are up on previous pulses. Possibly due to dispersal of young.

Weeds:

Recent works include

- Bluebell, bridal creeper sprayed at Sunnymead. Great results on Bluebell creeper
- Shiny Eye- pines, coast wattle and boneseed
- Block behind depot through to GORd- boneseed and wattle
- Roadside weed works around heath- mainly wattle

Planned works include

- wattle and boneseed control (west of Lynches) and coastal tea tree on coastal heath east of Lynches
- looking at setting up photo points across the Otways Eden area. This will be done in conjunction with Luke Hynes, Otway Community Conservation Network.

New Friends Group:

A new friends group will be established for the Surf Coast Walk. There is an upcoming meeting on 17th Feb for perspective members. If any Friends of EO are interested in becoming members, please contact Frank Gleeson.

Signage upgrade:

We are currently replacing many of our old directional signs along walking tracks with new signs. If you would like to check out some of the new signage, Ocean View Track has been completed.

THANKYOU!!

On behalf of Parks Victoria, thank you friends for your dedication