

END OF YEAR CELEBRATION BBQ AT MOGGS CREEK – DECEMBER 12 2015



Once again the Moggs Creek Picnic Ground was our venue for the joint celebration between Friends of Eastern Otways and ANGAIR, marking the end of another year of successful activities. Those interested in going for a walk before lunch met at 10am and walked along the track following the creek. When more members arrived Lachie and Ross, pictured below right, had the barbecue under control. It was very pleasant among the Ironbarks chatting with friends and enjoying each other's company. To round off the celebration the Friends unveiled their new interpretative display. Pictures of the boards are on page 8.



Reports of Friends' Activities

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. You can visit the website www.angair.org.au and you will find Friends of Eastern Otways under Other Conservation Groups. Photos from the recent photos from the End of Year Celebration on December 12 can be viewed on this site. We are most appreciative of this offer as yet we do not have our own website, and we thank Rod Brooks (Friends and ANGAIR member) who keep the website up to date in such a competent manner.

Below: Beaches, rock platforms and coastal bushland are features of the Marengo to Elliott River Walk in May.



RANGER REPORT – JANUARY 2016

Wye River – Jamieson Bushfire

This fire is now contained. Local staff will still have some involvement in supporting residents of Wye River accessing their properties. Rehabilitation of firebreaks, dozer lines and hand trails is now happening. Parks Victoria is working through the process of which tracks will remain open and which will be closed down. Access to the fire affected area is still quite a long way off. It may be several months before it is restored. It is unlikely that Jamieson or Wye River campgrounds will be open until next spring at least. Affected roads are being prioritised and works carried out on dangerous trees.



New growth at Wye River.

Photo: Parks Victoria

Anglesea Heath

There is no further information about changes to the management of the Anglesea Heath. Parks Victoria will continue to deliver park services, weed management and fox control in the Anglesea Heath in the interim.

Summer Rangers

James Cordwell delivered the ‘Summer by the Sea’ program for Parks Victoria in Point Addis Marine National Park and Eagle Rock Marine Sanctuary. He also assisted in the delivery of activities at other coastal locations outside Parks Victoria’s estate. Over the next month he will be attending a range of schools across the Surf Coast Shire to deliver a marine education program and field trips. Stuart Murray has been working hard on the small mammal project entering data into the database and working through analysis of the many photographs taken on our remote control cameras, and has created a short slideshow.

Hooded Plovers

Local staff would like to thank and acknowledge the fantastic efforts of volunteers involved in the protection of the Hooded Plovers across the coast but particularly in the National Park near Guvvo’s Beach. It was a fantastic result that the chick fledged last week.

Staff Movements

Frank Gleeson has moved into a new position as Regional Project Coordinator for the West Region. Michelle Anstee is the new Area Chief Ranger for the Surf Coast coming from the Colac Otway Chief Ranger Area where she held the same position. Until this position is filled Michelle will hold both roles. We have interviewed applicants to fill Peter Hay’s Ranger role at Lorne this week and are hoping to have this position filled shortly. The successful candidate will become the contact person for the Friends of the Eastern Otways as soon as they start their position. *Emma Danby, Ranger Team Leader, Parks Victoria, Anglesea*

OTWAY ARK PROJECT

Cathy Longmore, our former Friends Liaison Ranger, has been appointed as the Otway Ark Project Coordinator, to help set up a large scale introduced predator control program throughout the Great Otway National Park and Anglesea Heath. Cathy has provided the following information about the project:

Otway Ark will aim to protect significant mammal populations in the landscape. Recent studies and surveys in the Otway area indicate that many of these species are declining in abundance and distribution.

Research highlights predation by introduced species (fox and feral cat) as a major threat to the survival of many native species, such as the state and federally listed threatened Southern Brown Bandicoot, Long-nosed Potoroo, Spot-tailed Quoll, Swamp Antechinus and the Hooded Plover. The Otway Ark Project aims to help these species continue to survive in the Otways.

Parks Victoria has a legislative requirement to manage threats in the parks and reserve systems and implement actions under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988, EPBC Act 2000 and National Parks Act 1975. Fox and feral cat control has been identified as a practical, feasible and priority conservation strategy to protect native species from potential local extinctions in the Otways.

The aim for 2016/17 is to set up a robust small mammal and predator monitoring program throughout the GONP to gather baseline data and then to extend fox control from the current baiting areas in the East and West Otways. We are currently in the planning phase of the project, and will be undertaking community engagement with groups such as the Friends of Eastern Otways to see if they would be interested in being involved in such a project. This is a very exciting opportunity as the Otway Ark will help to protect biodiversity and natural assets in our district.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR 2015

I am very pleased to give the 2015 Friends of Eastern Otways report. Looking through the past year's minutes and newsletters, I am quite amazed at the amount of activities and work we have done. We have a wonderful committee and group of active friends that work diligently for our Great Otway National Park.

The monthly weeding mornings have taken place at Urquhart Bluff in February, March and April to remove Coast/Sallow Wattle; the mulched area of O'Donohue's - Coast Wattle regrowth in May, June and July; in August, September and October we worked in the National Park at Moggs Creek on the Bluebell Creeper and in November and December we tackled boneseed removal in Camp Rd Anglesea together with the Green Army. In January the Green Army helped at Moggs Creek. In all these sites we have seen an improvement and the indigenous plants are responding well.

Mammal surveys

We began the year by complementing the work being done by Ann Williamson and Lily Zhuang-Griffin from Deakin University looking for New Holland Mouse and Swamp Antechinus setting our cameras at Urquhart Bluff in February, March and June, and August and September at Coalmine Rd and Forest Rd. In November the cameras were set at Portreath Rd.

Also in November our mammal survey and walk took us to Reedy Creek/ Big Hill where we had previously had Spot-tailed Quoll hairs from hair tubes confirmed, but this time just kangaroos, Black Wallaby and fox. We had the help of a St Joseph's student together with his father and brother, and also Harvey from the Green Army.

We experimented without bait stations at Urquhart Bluff, but with no focus identification was more difficult. Over the year we have photographed lots of local fauna but the most exciting must have been finding both the Long-nosed and the Southern Brown Bandicoot (*pictured above*) living in the dunes at Urquhart Bluff. We are now going to be adding our results to the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas.



Parks Victoria grant

With the 25 year grant from Parks Victoria we have purchased 2 new cameras and a new Garmin GPS. Our new interpretative signs for Moggs Creek and Distillery Creek were also completed with this grant. The Distillery Creek sign was unveiled at the End of Year BBQ and was very well received.

At left: Friends member Patrick Flanagan shows the students how to set one of the new cameras.

Mt Rothwell visit

Our evening visit to Mt Rothwell in May was very enjoyable and gave us an insight into the small mammals we do not usually see, and the importance of a fox proof sanctuary such as Mt Rothwell for the protection and breeding of critically endangered animals. Thank you to John Holman for being our guide for the evening.

Many enjoyable walks

We have undertaken a number of very enjoyable walks in the past year. Ross Murray led the Lemonade Creek walk where we were delighted to see Rose Robins and King Parrots. Joe Bolza took us on a 'figure of 8' walk in Distillery Creek area which included the delightful grass-tree lined Zig Zag track. The adventurous walk was led by Lachie Richardson to Mt Sabine and included some unscheduled off-track bush bashing when we found a large tree across the track. Lachie also took us to Kelsall's Rock Lookout with its spectacular view across the Grassy Creek valley with 2 peregrines flying around us. The wildflower walk led by Margaret in Anglesea recorded an amazing 60 indigenous plants but also 13 environmental weeds.



Claire's seat

A highlight early in the year was the special celebration at Claire's seat on the Currawong Falls Track at Distillery Creek. Three walks were organised to meet at the seat for the unveiling and a special afternoon tea and a stunning view. It was great to have many of Claire's family present. This is now a special place in the park to remind us of one of our founding members.

Wildflower show

The Wildflower Show display featured a Year with the Friends, Kaye's beautiful Hooded Plover display including eggs and nest, both bandicoots and a wonderful video produced by Margaret Morgan. It was very well received.

Koala survey

The annual koala survey was undertaken in July and 93 koalas were counted. It will be interesting to see if there is a change in the next survey after the recent fires at Wye River.



Caladenia maritima

The number of flowering *Caladenia maritima* plants counted in the annual survey this year was down on recent years (410 plants) but the low number is similar to other orchid observations throughout Victoria, due possibly to lack of autumn rains.

Hooded plovers within the Park

This year a wonderful group of people have again wardened the Hooded Plovers at Guvvo's and the parents have successfully raised their chick. They have protected the chick from many threats, teaching it to cope with visitors and the foxes that have frequented the area.



Eumeralla mountain bike trails

After walking the tracks at Eumeralla and careful consideration we prepared a comprehensive submission to Parks Victoria detailing our environmental concerns for the area including the spread of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* Cinnamon Fungus. The bike trails are going ahead with some closures, trailhead cleaning stations and monitoring of tracks.

Photo: Parks Victoria

Thank you to all the committee members

A special thank you to Lachie and Rachel who are both standing down from the committee. We really appreciate all Lachie's work over the years especially his walks, and also his work as Treasurer. Rachel has been a wonderful support for the committee for the past 4 years including 3 years as President – we appreciate your commitment.

A special thanks to Margaret for all her diligent work and organisation, without which we would not achieve all that we do. Margaret was awarded the 2015 Australian Natural History Medallion for her contribution to botany and conservation. A well-deserved award for all the environmental work she does.

Thank you to our wonderful Liaison anger, Cathy Longmore, who has supported us so well with enthusiasm and assistance - we will miss her. We will also miss Frank Gleeson who has also been a great support to us over the years. Our very best wishes to them both and hope they will still keep in touch with our Friends group.

With the closing of the Alcoa power station we have the opportunity to play a critical role, through community partnership and cooperation, in ensuring the expansion of the Park and that development maintains the highest conservation values. *Alison Watson, President, 14 February 2016*