FEO NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2022

Friends of Eastern Otways (Great Otway National Park) Inc. A0030273B

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FROM THE PRESIDENT Peter Crowcroft

LORIKEET KALEIDOSCOPE

Unless you have been out of town for the summer or really have not been listening, you surely know that there has been a great influx of birds into Anglesea and Aireys Inlet.

There are definitely two, and likely three, types of lorikeets we do not regularly see around here, and especially not in such high numbers. The Musk Lorikeet, the Purple-crowned Lorikeet, and

according to visual sightings only but no photos (yet!), the Little Lorikeet. I'd love to see the latter, as it is considered quite tricky to see, being Australia's smallest lorikeet, and it isn't yet on my list!

The consensus seems to be that the incredible flowering of our stringybark species *Eucalyptus obliqua and E.baxteri*, as well as the ornamental and very colourful West Australian 'Flowering-gum' *Corymbia ficifolia*, has attracted these voracious nectar feeders to the region. I would speculate further that in large areas where these birds are typically found, the bushfires in 2019-20 have rendered many of the eucalyptus not in a stage of flowering, but in vegetative regrowth.



Word has clearly gotten out that the Surf Coast is the place to be, and what is surely many thousands of birds have been visiting flower after

flower, presumably ensuring a great pollination rate for the trees. More productive than the cockies, who seem most content snipping off the flowers and leaving them strewn all over the forest floor!

Thanks to new committee member, Keith McLean, for the beautiful pictures of the birds feeding. I found capturing pictures of iridescent birds camouflaged among fluorescent flowers, let alone constantly on the move between flowers and speedy on the wing, is a challenge for any photographer. But the rewards are great! **Peter Crowcroft.**

Images by Keith and Peter are all Musk Lorikeets except bottom right Purple-Crowned Lorikeet.



🚡 ENVIRONMENTAL WEEDING







Above: Enthusiastic weeders taking care of special habitats on Forest Road and Mt Ingoldsby Road.

SUMMER WEEDING CLEARS SILKY HAKEA AND COAST TEA-TREE



Two successful weeding sessions were held during the summer period, one on 14 December and the other on 8 February.

In December, we followed up our November session on Forest Road where we removed the very invasive species Silky Hakea *Hakea sericea* seedlings that have invaded our valuable orchid habitat. A bonus for our efforts was the discovery of two of our rarer orchid species flowering in the area, the Austral Leek Orchid *Prasophyllum australe* (left), and the Horned Orchid *Orthoceras strictum* (right).

We ventured out on Mt Ingoldsby Rd in February to a former gravel pit area where the heathland is regenerating beautifully with a high variety of species being observed. We were concentrating on the removal of Coast Tea-tree *Leptospermum laevigatum* that was keen to invade the area.





Above: An Austral Leek Orchid and a Horned Orchid. Above: Ranger Matt using a tree popper to lever woody weeds out of the soil.

Our two Rangers, Matt and Ruby, removed many large bushes from the area in 2021 and Ruby suggested the Friends follow up removing some of the many new seedlings appearing.

It was a satisfying effort and in an area we need to keep an eye on. It is a site where Duck Orchids grow, both large and small species.



Our bonus was an exquisite St Andrew Cross Spider that had chosen this domain to make its web and await its prey. As we watched, a March Fly flew into the web and the spider quickly left its resting place and wrapped up the victim and left it there for its next feed before returning to its spectacular 'cross site'. **Margaret MacDonald.**

AUTUMN WEEDING PROGRAM Tuesday 8 March, 12 April, 10 May

Meet at the western end of Robyn Road Moggs Creek at 9.30am.

We will be working on the CCMA project area that was funded in 2021. Unfortunately, we did not receive additional funding to employ more contractor work so our volunteer efforts are needed to help out. Coffee at Aireys Inlet after the sessions. Contact Margaret 0412 652 419



FRIENDS ACTIVITIES

END OF YEAR PICNIC AT MOGGS CREEK - 11 December



Once again, we had perfect weather for our end of year celebrations and walk around the circuit track in conjunction with Angair at the Moggs Creek Picnic Ground.

After being in lockdown during the year, it was a very relaxed group of 26 people, including three children, who gathered for the walk with many joining for morning tea and a chat before setting off.



The walk was beautiful with mosses, algae, groundcovers, ferns, bushes and shrubs all growing together. The Maidenhair Fern was intermingled with the Rasp Fern displaying its beautiful colours of red, orange and varying shades of green. The Cut-leaf Daisy was spectacular with carpets of small blue flowers lining the track, and the delicate Pale Vanilla-lily was admired by all.

We stopped at each of the four small wooden bridges along the track to see what might be in the creek or gully. Arlo and August (at left) checked to see if the Troll was hiding under the first bridge that we call the Billy Goat Gruff bridge, and having been given the all clear the group made its way across.

A very hairy caterpillar was rescued from the centre of the track by the boys and many bird calls were heard echoing through the gully.

Back at the picnic ground the numbers had swelled to 51 with three Parks Rangers joining the

group. As in 2020 there were no tables of attractive salads or smells of a barbecue due to covid restrictions, but people were soon spread amongst the Ironbarks and other eucalypts to enjoy their picnic lunches.

In Peter's absence Patrick said some thank-you's on behalf of the Friends, Sally did likewise for ANGAIR and Matt responded on behalf of Parks Victoria. ANGAIR presented Honorary Life Membership to Roger Ganly for the wonderful contribution he has made over the years.

Another year of conservation activities within a pandemic year had come to an end and people were looking forward to a break to recharge and start again in 2022 when hopefully things may be at a more normal level. **Margaret MacDonald.** *More photos* page 7.



Above: Pale Vanilla-lily



"FRIENDLY" NEWS

ANOTHER HOODIE SUCCESS AT RED ROCKS

The pair of Hooded Plovers that successfully raised their chick at Red Rocks, Point Addis in February 2021 are busily minding two more growing chicks which hatched on 2 February. It is a wild stretch of the coast and the hoodies are facing many challenges.

Parks Victoria established a temporary Dog Exclusion Zone from Pt Addis to Red Rocks and the Friends of Hooded Plovers placed additional signage to assist the parents raise their chicks to the fledgling stage.

Rangers frequently visit the site to ensure that the regulations are followed, and Friends of Point Addis, Friends of Hooded Plovers and Friends of Eastern Otways are wardening the area and talking to people to ensure they respect the rights of these little birds.





It takes about five weeks for chicks to reach the fledgling stage so we're keeping our fingers crossed.

Great news is that last year's fledgling banded BZ by BirdLife Australia has been recorded on the Mornington Peninsula, with four records in November and December last year around the Gunnamatta area.

A new nest located at Hutt Gully in February sadly failed. However, it was notable the parents were local birds, WT banded as a juvenile at Moggs Creek 2014, and SZ banded as a juvenile at Fairhaven 2018. **Margaret MacDonald**



SMALL GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

The Friends of Eastern Otways recently decided to offer a number of funding opportunities, valued up to \$500, for community groups, organisations and PhD and Honours students to undertake environmental projects within the Otways region. FEO is very keen to support like-minded groups and individuals who want to protect and enhance the unique ecological values found in the Eastern Otways.

The small grants provide support to existing, new, innovative and emerging local environmental projects and initiatives that align with the FEO's plans and objectives. To be considered the project must be an eligible activity (see below); must be largely or wholly located within the Great Otway National Park; and must have obtained all necessary DELWP, Parks Vic and AEC permits and you must provide evidence with your application.

Eligible activities include:

- Native animal survey or mapping of habitat for a threatened fauna species
- Mapping of native plants or native vegetation communities
- Effective control of weeds, feral animals or over abundant native species
- Repairing damaged areas i.e. sites previously used for dumping, sites being trespassed
- Habitat creation, including for threatened or declining species
- Trials of innovative conservation management techniques.

For more information contact Craig Grabham, email friendsofeasternotways@gmail.com/

Please include the subject heading **Small Grant Opportunity \$500** and provide a short description of your project and contact details. We will then discuss the eligibility of your project with you before sending the FEO Small Grant Application Guidelines including application details, financial acquittal template and small grant agreement. **Craig Grabham**



"FRIENDLY" NEWS

WILD OTWAY INITIATIVE GRANT

The Friends have again been successful with the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority's Wild Otway Initiative community grants program.

Our new grant will enable us to close off an informal walking track developing on the steep hillside between Fairhaven and Moggs Creek in the Great Otway National Park. The track is exposing the delicate and biologically diverse heathland to physical disturbance as well as the potential invasion of weeds and Cinnamon Fungus *Phytophthora cinnamomi*.

The grant covers construction of physical barriers at each end of the track and revegetation. It will also provide a new lookout with interpretative signage to encourage environmental awareness and appreciation of unique and diverse vegetation in this section of the GONP. A big thank you to those on the committee who helped put this grant application together.

We have work to do to complete the current Wild Otway Initiative grant received in 2021 to remove invasive weeds from Moggs Creek. Unfortunately, we didn't receive the extra funding sought to facilitate removal of weeds closer to the Great Ocean Road.

Keep an eye out for updates and opportunities to help with these projects throughout the year. **Ellen Doxey**













Above: The informal track up the steep hill. Below left: Damage to the heathland. Below: An early sign erected by Friends of Moggs Creek trying to protect the hillside.







COMING EVENTS

PUT THESE DATES IN YOUR 2022 DIARY

19 Mar - WYE RIVER-KENNET RIVER WALK

16 Apr - MOGGS CREEK SPOTLIGHTING

21 May - FRIENDS'S VISIT TBC

18 Jun - KOALA SURVEY

16 Jul - PLANTING DAY URQUHART BLUFF

20 Aug - WATERFALL WALK

17 Sept - ANGAIR WILDFLOWER SHOW

15 Octo - CARLISLE HEATH WALK

19 Nov - MAMMAL SURVEY & WALK

10 Dec - COMBINED PICNIC ANGAIR

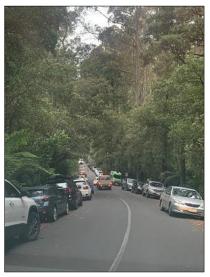


Hello Everybody,

I am very happy to provide a Summer Ranger Report, it is always a great chance to reflect on our busy time in the Great Otway National Park. Also, it is a chance to offer an apology for not turning up to the AGM, I had a minor emergency at home with our sheep deciding to visit the neighbouring property. All accounted for but only a couple more jail breaks from becoming roast mutton!

Once again, I would like to thank everybody in the Friends of Eastern Otways for your valuable work and passion over the year. We have completed some good projects together, and I am excited for the year ahead. The Friends had to miss many volunteer activities due to covid, thank you for being patient, and let's hope this year beats the last!

Busy Summer Crowds Vs La Nina Summer



Here are a couple of images which sum up summer 2021/22. The photo on the left, taken about 500 metres from the start of the Erskine Falls visitor site, shows cars parked everywhere. With everything that happened, or didn't happen, over the last two years, people were really out and about enjoying the summer. Overall, we found that the majority were well behaved and enjoying some normality.

The picture on the right shows how most of our crew spent the first half of this summer. While La Nina means reduced fire danger, it also brings more storms.



The Jamieson Campground has been open for a full summer, without any setbacks. It has gone from a small very crowded campsite without toilet to a site with toilets, BBQs, and a beautiful lookout. We had a lot of very happy campers over the summer who really responded to the new look campground.

Furthermore, we have extended the walking track which stopped at Wye River. Now walkers if they feel extra energetic can walk through to Kennett River, which I believe is the site of an upcoming Friends walking activity. Congratulations to the Lorne Parks Victoria team who have been able to bring the section together, and I look forward to hearing a report about the walk.



Operation SOHO and Hooded Plover Protection

As most of you know, Hooded Plovers are placed under a great deal of pressure from tides, people, invasive species and dogs, specially as they nest on our busy beaches when everyone is on holidays.



This year Parks Victoria and the Office of the Conservation Regulator committed to protection of Hooded Plovers through a compliance operation called SOHO (Saving our Hooded Plover). Furthermore, Carlie Bronk and Michelle Anstee have been able to make changes to the governing regulations regarding favourite Hooded Plover nesting sites in the Great Otway National Park.

These changes have meant that, as land managers, we have been able to make the use of dog leads mandatory, plus create dog exclusion zones in certain locations. These enable PV staff and Hooded Plover volunteers to set up a dog exclusion zone in the critical periods for the Hooded Plovers. (*Continued*

This has meant Parks Victoria and the Office of the Conservation Regulator staff have been at National Park beaches trying to change the behaviour of dog owners, both through education and by issuing infringements. We hope that the message gets out there, that visitors need to read the signage regarding what they can and can't do with their dog. Also, that your dog is not allowed in an Exclusion zone to give our special birds some space, and as Authorised Officers we can enforce this.



Fuel Reduction Burning

Fuel Reduction burning is about to start again in the landscape - depending where you are, and the date this is published, it may have already started. Like 2021, with La Nina type conditions, we have the weather conditions needed to safely conduct these burns earlier than normal. At left is a recent Planned Burn underway in the Park.

The team has several burns prepared and planned for the next few months, which may impact on recreational activities around townships in the Otways. Just a friendly reminder to make sure you give our crews a bit of space during the fuel reduction burn, and most importantly until the area is opened again. While there might not be any fire around after the burn, our crews go to a great effort to make sure that the area is safe again for visitors.

If you would like to know more about fuel reduction burning, the website below is a great resource. Alternatively, if you google 'FFMV' and 'Planned burning' you can find this website. The information on

this website may interest Friends members, plus you can zoom in on your location and find out what fuel reduction burns are planned for your local area. https://plannedburns.ffm.vic.gov.au/

New Appointment for Carlie Bronk

Finally, I would like to mention that one of our favourite Rangers has taken up another job in Parks Victoria. Carlie Bronk is now responsible for understanding and controlling the impact of deer in the Great Otway National Park. Carlie will be back in July 2023. I am sure the Friends of Eastern Otways will continue to see Carlie around, as she has such passion for the Hooded Plovers and wildflowers of our heath. Good Luck in the new position Carlie!

Thank you once again, see you at the next weeding activity. Matt Russell, Ranger, Lorne.





Report: Moritz (Moz) Maschek - Seasonal Ranger

Sharing my time between Anglesea and Lorne this season has been a great learning experience. My focus has been on connecting people with nature and helping to deliver the best possible visitor experience throughout the National Park at our campgrounds, picnic areas and coastal hotspots.

No two days are ever the same as a Seasonal Ranger; some days are spent patrolling the park, other days may include anything from maintaining walking tracks, leading Junior Ranger activities, setting up Hooded Plover exclusions and putting out Fauna cameras, just to name a few.

Some of the less glamourous duties that are equally important include picking up loads of rubbish, maintaining toilets and dealing with visitors who don't respect the National Park or the rules protecting our precious environment and unique wildlife. Regardless of the job at hand, it's been a privilege to help manage our Park and look after the amazing coastline, heathland, and temperate rainforest in the Eastern Otways.



Above & below: Junior Ranger activities in the bush and on the beach covered the coast from

Cumberland River to Point Addis.

Junior Ranger Activities

Given my background in environmental education and interpretation, the Junior Ranger program was a strong focus this season and we delivered multiple activities during January despite Covid doing its best to wreak havoc. It was so nice to see the kids out and about learning and enjoying nature after a difficult couple of years.

Nature based learning plays an important role in connecting future generations with their natural surroundings and ultimately fosters their sense of care and respect for the environment.

This year our summer program included Rockpool Rambles at Point Addis where we learnt about the importance of Marine Parks and how our unique marine life has adapted to life on the rocky intertidal shores.

Another session was a guided nature walk at Sheoak Picnic Area (Lorne) exploring the beautiful tree ferns and tall eucalypts which are typical of the Otways. This taught us about the important role rainforests play in supporting an abundance of life.

> I facilitated a Minibeast session at Cumberland River where we took a closer look at macro-invertebrates (water bugs), their lifecycles and how they indicate the overall health of our streams.

Luckily the Cumberland River is largely unaffected by industrial or farming activity, reflected in the highly sensitive aquatic organisms we identified and observed under our magnifying glasses.

The best part was watching kids make the connection between dragonflies buzzing around and their larval nymphs found in the water. This is a great way of demonstrating how different environments are interconnected.





Maintenance and Park Operations

Other important work that has taken up a large chunk of my time this season has been responding to the constant challenges thrown at us by mother nature. Extreme weather events and large amounts of rainfall have really kept both Surfcoast teams busy with constant maintenance, risk management and storm damage assessment.

In Anglesea, I was involved with managing and responding to cliff collapses that seem to be happening on a regular basis along the coast between Southside and Anglesea.

The Anglesea side of the Park also experienced some extremely heavy rain events which required lots of going out and checking for damage on roads and walking tracks.

In Lorne, most walking tracks and visitor sites required constant clearing, brush cutting and mowing. With increased rainfall and humid warm weather our sites were becoming overgrown very quickly and I spent a lot of time out in the field helping our Park Operations team stay on top of the constant maintenance.

Hoodies

With the Hooded plover season in full swing, I have been involved with ensuring these vulnerable little birds get the protection they deserve to be able to breed without major disturbance.

Working together with our passionate volunteers, I have been busy educating visitors, erecting signage and creating exclusions, particularly at Point Addis/Red Rocks where last year's successful pair have once again been raising chicks.

These efforts have been complimented by increased compliance activity and these targeted operations have been very successful in educating people that regulations exist for a reason.

All in all, it's been another great season and I hope to continue my journey with Parks and meet you all down the track.



On this page - Challenges of the summer flooded roads, cliff collapses and fallen trees.







AGM 2022 - PRESIDENT'S REPORT

LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

Hi Friends and welcome to 2022!

Let's briefly look back at the disjointed year that was, which started and finished strongly but with the middle being quite the mixed bag. The Friends still made some notable achievements during these times so allow me to reiterate some of the highlights for the Friends of Eastern Otways.

Website - Our website, www.feo.org.au is up and published, although not quite functioning to its full



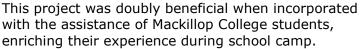
potential yet. Development will be an ongoing task through this year and beyond. If anyone has a great experience to share when out in the park, the website is a great place for it. Drop me a line and we'll add it to our Friends Journal section.



Grants - This year we have more grant applications to write, following successful applications to celebrate and put into gear. One of the most exciting in the pipeline is the large grant application to create a digital version of our popular walking tracks of the eastern Otways. We'll keep members posted on this development which has been driven by committee member Wendy Brooks and her husband Rod - I would like to take the chance to personally thank them for their time, effort, and contributions to the Friends during this time. We really appreciate their expertise and drive!



Weeding - Our grant success and the resultant weeding at the biodiverse Moggs Creek heathlands, has wrestled back some space to grow from the grip of a serious Coastal Teatree invasion.





Bioblitz - The Great Southern Bioblitz was successful

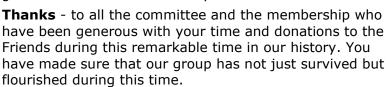
at observing and admiring the incredible biodiversity of our region. The Friends members contributed strongly to the overall observations made, with notable observations by Alison Watson (96), John Lenagan (214), Marg MacDonald (58).



Trips- Given the circumstances we made a remarkably large number of trips into the park, like the annual Koala Count, annual Wildflower Walk on the Anglesea Heath and Creatures of the Night event. The trip to Wildlife Wonders and the amazing walks including the Lemonade Creek Erskine Falls Track, the 5-Mile Track, Sheoak Falls Swallow Cave and Jamieson Track were highlights for members.



Rangers - We appreciate the amazing ParksVic Rangers, specially Matt for his constant guidance and regular contributions to our Newsletter, and our quest writers Katrina and Ruby.



And we're looking forward to 2022 being a busy one with activities from weeding to walking for our passionate group of volunteers. Peter Crowcroft.











AGM 2022 - MEETING REPORT

ZOOMING GOOD MEETING - 13 February

Because of the on-going covid restrictions the Friends' Annual General Meeting for 2022 was held on-line via Zoom with 25 people in attendance. Guests were welcomed followed by the Acknowledgement of Country.

Peter delivered the President's Report. He outlined the activities over the past year, which in spite of the challenges, still enabled us to fulfill most of our planned program - some of which included Grant Awards, the Moggs Creek work project with MacKillop College students, walks in the National Park, Annual Koala Count, regular monthly weeding, biodiversity surveys etc and setting up of the Friends' website.

A Life Membership Award was presented to Patrick in acknowledgement of his valuable contribution to the Friends of Eastern Otways. His time spent as a committee member, Vice-President and then as President brought many benefits to the successful functioning of the Friends' group. He has always been willing to lend assistance when required and provided sound and innovative ideas in dealing with particular projects. The Life Membership truly reflects the appreciation felt by all the members of the Friends Committee.

Patrick announced his resignation from the Committee and we thanked him for his outstanding contribution. We warmly welcome Keith McLean on to the Committee and look forward to sharing ideas and projects.

A video presentation by Nick Carter provided a fascinating insight into the natural history of the Powerful Owl. Nick's study has concentrated mainly in the Melbourne area, and later, the Brisbane Ranges and Otways. The knowledge gained from better understanding these fairly secretive, nocturnal birds is extremely valuable, particularly for future planning and development in areas overlapping Powerful Owl habitat.

We look forward to an exciting and productive year ahead which it is hoped will see a return to precovid normality. **Kaye Traynor**

LIFE MEMBERSHIP TO PATRICK FLANAGAN

Congratulations to Patrick
Flanagan who was presented
during the AGM with Life
Membership of the Friends of
Eastern Otways in recognition of
the wonderful contribution he has
made over a long period of time.

`Who am I? I joined the FEO committee in February 2011 - before that I joined as a member when I arrived at a Friends' activity, but



famously asked Marg MacDonald if I was in the right place for the Angair weeding activity. Never one to miss a trick, she told me that no, this is the Friends of Eastern Otways but signed me up there and then! I was Vice President from 2015-2017, and president 2018 through the difficult year that was 2020. I have been responsible for the establishment, development, and management of the highly regarded camera trapping program and still manage the member's database and emails we all appreciate. Of course, I am Patrick Flanagan.'



MEMBERSHIP REMINDER 2022

If you haven't renewed for 2022, we would appreciate your payment. Bank transfer - Bendigo Bank **BSB 633 000 150830826.** Include ID. Or cheque to **Friends of Eastern Otways,** PO Box 140, Anglesea 3230.



AGM 2022 - GUEST SPEAKER.



TRACKING THE POWERFUL OWL

Nick kindly provided a pre-recorded presentation for the FEO 2022 AGM.

Nick Carter is an ecologist undertaking a PhD researching Powerful Owls Ninox strenua at Deakin University.

His PhD project focuses on researching Powerful Owls throughout various landscape of Victoria, including forest, urban and agriculture dominated environments.

Nick's study area incorporates Greater Melbourne, Brisbane Ranges and the Eastern Otways. The project has been going since 2016, most recently focusing on the Eastern Otways.

Powerful Owls are Australia's largest owl weighing 1.2-2 kg, 60-65 cm tall and wingspan of greater than 1 m. Adults Powerful Owls have brown and white barred feathers, golden eyes and big sharp talons and large beak.

Utilising GPS technology (a tracker attached to the bird's tail feathers which communicates with a satellite network), he tracks individuals to uncover this threatened species nocturnal exploits and discover how they are utilising and moving through the woodland environments it occupies.

He is currently tracking birds at Ironbark Basin-Point Addis, Gundry's Road and Gum Flats Road. Tracking of birds in Greater Melbourne has revealed that pairs of birds have distinct boundaries with little overlap.



Nick plans to survey and track Powerful Owls in the Moggs Creek and Distillery Creek areas and other parts of the Great Otway National Park. Key messages from his presentation:



Powerful Owls need:

- * Prey (mostly medium sized arboreal mammals) including common brushtail and ringtail possums, sugar gliders and in some areas greater and yellow-bellied gliders
- * Roost trees (daytime sitting/sleeping), typically bushy trees in gullies or near watercourses
- * Nest trees large old trees with large hollows, usually 200 years old

Threats:

- * Habitat loss (large areas of bush) * Loss of hollows
- * Lack of knowledge about the species!!!

To help Powerful Owls:

- *Report sightings (but not via social media) on Victorian Biodiversity Atlas or contact Nick
- * Be ethical when taking photos don't disturb, don't use white flash
- * Plant lots of native trees for future hollows and roosting
- * Don't use second generation anti-coagulant rodenticides (SGARs) possums accidentally consume and are then eaten by Powerful Owls.

Nick would love to hear from any members with information about Powerful Owls in our region. Please email: nbca@deakin.edu.au Craig Grabham