FEO NEWSLETTER

SUMMER, 2020-21

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

Secretary: Ellen Doxey, PO Box 502, Aireys Inlet, Victoria 3231 Mob: 0404357011 Email: ellen.doxey@gmail.com





FROM THE PRESIDENT Patrick Flanagan

FINDING POSITIVES IN ADVERSITY

Rereading our autumn 2020 newsletter, I was struck by the fact there was no mention of Covid-19. Yet just a month later it would emerge as a serious problem, subsequently blindside us and lay waste to our program of activities for the year. As we now know, Coronavirus impacted on the Surf Coast, Victoria, Australia and devastated the rest of the world. Locally, we seem to be emerging from our enforced hibernation and have our fingers crossed the situation will continue to improve.

If I was to look for positives that emerged out of the pandemic, for us on the Surf Coast and in the Great Otway National Park, it is the manifold increase in the use of the park. As my family, our friends and I went into the park to enjoy the outdoors, there were always others there enjoying it as well. On our Facebook page and a local Anglesea page the level of interest in the local environment, its orchids and wildflowers has, it appears to me, grown exponentially. A preferred outcome to exponential growth of the virus! We can only hope that the gains Victoria has made will continue and we can again plan our Friends' activities with confidence.



THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF ORCHIDS

The year 2020 may well be one that many of us would like to forget but nevertheless it has been a remarkable year for our springtime terrestrial orchids. With more time on our hands those of us fortunate enough to live near the Great Otway National Park have ventured into areas we previously didn't know existed, and many have been introduced to a new world as they have discovered these spectacular flowers. We have had the pleasure of sharing many of the photographs you have taken and we have also shared your excitement as you made your own discoveries.

The Great Sun Orchid *Thelymitra aristata* really started the game with a magnificent display in the coastal section of the Park at Anglesea in mid- September. It was flanked by Rabbit Ears *Thelymitra antennifera* and Twisted Sun Orchids *T. flexuosa*. Unfortunately that was about it for the sun orchids as the majority could not be

tempted to open in the cool conditions, they just self-pollinated and put us on hold for another year. There was just one day, October 3, when I saw the heathland ablaze with colour – pink, salmon, blue and yellow sun orchids all intermingled to display their beauty. As the last month of spring came and warmer weather arrived two of our later flowering sun orchids Pale Sun Orchid *T. pallidiflora* and Blotched Sun Orchid *T. benthamiana* put on good displays and we hope you managed to catch up with them. However it seems that the other orchid species took up the challenge to present us with a smorgasbord. 'Who needs sunshine?' they asked.

I was not here after the 1983 bushfires but I certainly can't remember a season with so many spider orchids appearing in the Park - Large White Spider Orchids *Caladenia venusta*, Mantis Orchids *C. tentaculata*, spectacular hybrids of the two species, Heart-lipped Spiders *C. cardiochila* and Plain-lipped *C.clavigera* all in large numbers and staying around for a number of weeks. My apologies to any I've omitted.

The Donkey Orchids *Diuris orientis* were not going to be outdone and then there have been the finger orchids – White Fingers *Caladenia catenata* Tiny Fingers *C. pusilla* and our own special orchid Angahook Caladenia *C. maritima*. And don't let's forget the caps – the little Bronze Caps C. *transitoria* and the Scented Caps *C. moschata*. The Bird Orchids *Chiloglottis valida* say 'don't forget us!' And of course there are our Beard Orchids *Chiloglottis sp.* and the fascinating Flying Ducks *Caleana major*.

As spring comes to an end we still have many species to enjoy: Leek Orchids, *Prasophyllum sp.* Horned Orchids *Orthoceras strictum*, Large-Tongue Orchids *Cryptostylis subulata* and of course the magnificent Hyacinth Orchids *Dipodium roseum* and *D. pardalinum*. Hopefully the

display may be repeated next year. The Great Otway National Park is just so special. **Margaret MacDonald.**

Above: Twisted Sun Orchids *Thelymitra*. *flexuosa* and Great Sun Orchid *T. aristata* Below: Flying Ducks *Caleana major* and Tiny Fingers *C. pusilla*. *Right*: Large White Spider Orchids *Caladenia venusta*.











ENVIRONMENTAL WEEDING





Above: Masked-up weeding groups on the Anglesea heath in October and on a hotter day in November. Below left: A drone assisted in the search for Margaret's backpack. Below right: Who calls weeding hard work in a location like this!

We managed to complete two weeding sessions for our spring weeding program in October and November 10. With the COVID-19 restrictions we were limited to 10 participants for the October session, so we decided to form two separate groups for our November session enabling up to 20 people to join in.

OCTOBER 13 - It was a sheer delight to be weeding in the Anglesea heathlands in October – the wildflowers were at their peak with so many of our terrestrial orchids displaying their beauty along the sides of the track. Boneseed was once again the target and we were very satisfied with our efforts. Naturally we will need to monitor the area in the next few years as more seeds are almost certain to germinate.

NOVEMBER 10 - Both our groups worked again on the O'Donohue heathlands. The weather was much hotter than we had been accustomed to and it was not easy work. The first group monitored the Coast Tea-tree, Coast Wattle and South African Weed Orchids that are keen to invade the indigenous vegetation in the area that the Friends have been monitoring since 2005. The second group concentrated on the gully where we have had records of Southern Brown Bandicoot - a rare and threatened fauna species.

Group 1. It was a difficult task getting out the Coast Tea-tree and Coast Wattle entwined in the indigenous Prickly Tea-tree. To make things worse Margaret misplaced her backpack with phone inside and had extreme difficulty locating it despite technical advice from Katrina (Margaret's niece) on phone from Aireys Inlet and Paul and Sue's daughter Charlotte who arrived on scene with drone in hand. Eventually Alison found it much to everyone's relief. Thanks to all who helped. We managed to locate about 20 of the Weed Orchids *Disa bracteata* mainly from slashed firebreak. Perhaps it's saying something about machinery hygiene.

Group 2. In the meantime, the second weeding group had an uneventful but successful session as they revisited Bandicoot Gully where, almost exactly two years ago, our cameras captured a breeding Southern Brown Bandicoot on hundreds of frames over 3-4months. The eight weeders attacked regrowth of Boneseed, Bluebell Creeper, Pittosporum and some small Sallow Wattle. Again with the warm weather and the uneven ground it was not easy work, With the more relaxed rules associated with the decline in Covid-19 numbers the group decided to have a coffee together after weeding and they were joined by some of the Group 1 weeders. **Margaret MacDonald.**





SUMMER WEEDING PROGRAM

Tuesday December 8 from 9.30-11.00am.

Meet on corner of Gum Flat Rd and Forest Rd at 9.30 Joint activity with Parks Vic. Weed team to focus on removal of Silky Hakea *Hakea sericea* seedlings that have germinated since burning in 2018.



Tuesday February 9 from 9.30- 11.00am

Meet at Aireys Inlet Hall at 9.20am. Weeding will be on the coastal track near Sunnymeade Beach continuing on the area where the

Working for Victoria crew worked earlier this year. We will concentrate on Bluebell Creeper. Coffee at Aireys Inlet after the session.

Please note there is no weeding session in January. Thankyou everyone for your most appreciated help during the year. Contact: Margaret 0412 652 419



With changes to Coronavirus restrictions some activities are back on the calendar. See Coming Events on page 5.



FRIENDS ACTIVITIES SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER.



WILDFLOWER WALK - October 17

Due to the coronavirus pandemic we were limited to 10 participants for this activity. However, as the Wildflower Walk is such a popular event we decided to organise two different walks in close proximity through the magnificent Anglesea coastal heathlands. Even then there were some disappointed members who could not be included within the two groups.

Despite the forecast of rough weather, we were rewarded with a lovely morning, and members were pleased to once again have good company and certainly a feast of orchids and other flowers to admire. A plant list was compiled on the Mt Ingoldsby/Coastal Track with over 100 species being listed. Both groups identified over 10 species of terrestrial orchids, and although there was not enough sun to convince the sun orchids to open there were many other species to observe - Mantis Orchids, Large White Spider Orchids and hybrids between these two species, Donkey Orchids, White Fingers and both the Southern Bearded and the Large Bearded Greenhood. It is interesting to compare and contrast these two species.

The beauty of the other flowers had people searching in our flower guides as they looked closely at the varying colours of some of the plants – pink *Leptospermum myrsinoides*, yellow *Dianella admixta*, bright orange *Platylobium obtusangulum*, deep red *Pultenaea humilis*. Surely they were trying to confuse us. Other faithfuls were there in their usual colours, and the mass tapestry of flowers was a delight to see.

As we walked the tracks, we enjoyed expansive views towards the lighthouse and the two groups waved to each other across the gully – both groups relaxed for lunch on the side of the tracks. A black raven was very demanding – it seemed as though it had done this before, and was certainly not frightened of people. It was a successful walk with the challenge of numbers being catered for – the Anglesea heathlands are just so rich in their indigenous vegetation. **Margaret MacDonald and Alison Watson.**







Above and below: Lunch on the track for the two groups. Search and identify with very busy members recording their observations. The beauty of color: Hybrid Spider Orchid, pink Silky Tea-tree, orange Platylobium obtusangulum and yellow Dianella admixta.















FRIENDS ACTIVITIES SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER.







MAGIC OF MOGGS – November 21

There are certainly many beautiful places within the Great Otway National Park but the Moggs Creek environment can hold its own for the diverse habitats and the wonderful scenery that it has to offer. It was a magical morning when the 17 people who had registered for our walk met at the Moggs Creek Picnic Ground at 10am ready to spend a few hours in this great area. It was cool, pleasant, no wind and an ideal day to be outdoors.

We were pleased that some of the Melbourne people who had been in lock-down were able to join in the experience. As we had too many people to participate in one group according to the

Coronavirus Victoria regulations, the group was split in two with the decision being made to do the same walk with the second group doing the route in reverse. This was a good decision as everything fell in place nicely, and the two leaders Margaret and Alison who had reconnoitred the walk were pleased with the results.

As we walked along the tracks it was obvious to see how the vegetation changed. Firstly the dry sclerophyll forest where the Ironbarks and Messmates still showed blackened trunks from the effects of the controlled burn that was carried out in the area in spring 2014. Most of the understory had finished flowering - it would have been great to have been there just a few weeks earlier when the Large-leaf Bush-pea would have presented a mass of orange-yellow flowers. However we were delighted to look for the little treasures flowering on the edge of the track – a carpet of Cut-leaf Daisy, trailing Goodenias, the small Blue-bottle Daisy, the beautiful Fringe Lily - just to name a few. Leaving the forest the track made its way through more open woodland with good stands of Austral Grass-trees - near there Alison's group found the Flying Duck Orchid.

Reaching the coast there were great views from Moggs Creek track and the Ocean View Look-out with panoramic views across to both Aireys Inlet and Lorne – a good lunch spot for Group 2. The coastal track down from the look-out is one of the better tracks to view our wonderful coastal heathland and led us down to the beach where Group 1 had lunch before heading back along the gully beside the creek to the picnic ground.

A short break enabled us to view a special little wetland area where the purple Swamp Mazus and the Matted Pratia were growing together. An

interesting little plant Smooth Solenogyne was just ready to come into flower. Yes, it was a great walk exploring this special area within the Great Otway National Park and one that we enjoyed sharing together. Margaret MacDonald and Alison Watson.



A carpet of purple. Far left – Common Fringe Lily, Swamp Mazus and Blue-bottle Daisy. Above: Cut-leaf Daisy. Below: Walking through the grasstrees.



Below: A break on the sands at Moggs Creek for one group, while the other enjoyed a view of the coast from the track near Moggs Lookout.









"FRIENDLY" NEWS



CALADENIA MARITIMA SURVEY

Our annual *Caladenia maritima* survey took place on September 16 with a follow-up survey on September 29. We were pleased to have Ruby Wicks, Parks Vic Ranger and Jack and Oscar, Phil and Alison Watson's grandsons (*pictured below*) help with the survey. We thank them for their contribution. Despite it being an excellent orchid flowering season for most of our terrestrial orchids, the *Caladenia maritima* count was down on last year's high total of 1178 orchids with 200 plus *Caladenia carnea* hybrids which we gave up counting. This year's total was 738 *Caladenia maritima* and 210 hybrids. Although these hybrids are very beautiful it is disappointing to see how they are possibly threatening our endemic orchid colony. Perhaps the lack of rainfall in the early winter months was the reason for the lower numbers. It did seem that the area had been much more trampled than usual – we know there were more orchid enthusiasts out and about so perhaps some orchid flowers may have been destroyed. We may have to consider some form of protection for the site.

As we stated in our Spring Newsletter there has been outstanding success with the growth of *Caladenia maritima* seedlings at the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne so hopefully the future of this vulnerable species is guaranteed. **Margaret MacDonald.**









AN UNWELCOME VISITOR – DISA BRACTEATA

The South African Weed Orchid is a distinctive species with its tuft of 4 to 12 long lance-shaped leaves and thick, almost asparagus-like flower spike to approximately 25cm tall. It bears up to 60 crowded greenish-white flowers with a brown hooded dorsal sepal and a long yellow narrow labellum. It is a self-pollinating species and can produce vast numbers of minute seeds, readily transported by wind. It is one of the few orchid species that has become naturalised in Australia. First recorded in Western Australia in 1944 it was first recorded in the Anglesea district in 2009.

The orchid flowers from October and December and it is best to remove it before it sets seed. It is easy to dig up with a small digger of some type. There are 2 tubers – one smaller than the other. Make sure you get both of them and dispose of them carefully. We suggest that whenever you go for a walk carry a small digger and plastic bag in your backpack and dig up any of these orchids you come across. If there is a large number please let us know.



End of Year Picnic Saturday December 12

10:00 am – 2:00 pm Combined with ANGAIR & Parks Vic *Moggs Creek Picnic Ground* Contact: Kaye 0408 551 667

10am guided walk Moggs Creek circuit track to see the wealth of flora. Lunch at 12.00. BYO lunch, drinks, plates, glasses, cutlery, chair & table. Food sharing NOT permitted. Limit of 50 people so book your spot.

BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL



Annual General Meeting Sunday February 14 2021 at 2pm

CFA meeting room Anglesea Contact: Ellen 0404 357 011 A review of the year's activities and plans for 2021, plus guest speaker.

Picnic and Spotlight Walk Friday January 8 2021

Picnic 7.30 pm. Walk 8.30pm Moggs Creek Picnic Ground Contact Margaret: 0412 652 419 BYO picnic, torch & mozzie repellent.

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"FRIENDLY" NEWS

NATIVE GRASSLANDS FOCUS FOR SWIFFT SEMINAR

The final SWIFFT seminar of 2020 focused on one of the most endangered ecosystems on the planet - native grasslands. As stated by presenter Emily Scicluna, less than 1% of Victoria's grasslands remain similar to their pre-colonisation state. The seminar covered topics from the importance of disturbance, acknowledgment and implementation of traditional indigenous management methods, and the current conservation status of the Fat-tailed Dunnart in Victoria.

Dr. John Morgan, La Trobe University, spoke about the importance of disturbance in the management of native grasslands using an interesting study looking at the impacts of changing from grazing to regular burning in native grassland reserve near Dunkeld, the Wannon Water Reserve. Prior to European settlement in Victoria cultural burning, and the digging and grazing by native fauna species reduced biomass within



grasslands with the effect of increasing the biodiversity or number of species present. At the Wannon Water Reserve, previously grazed for more than 100 years, trials of annual and biennial Autumn burning have occurred since 2012. This study showed that the number and cover of native species was influenced strongly by climatic factors and effects of the change in disturbance regime were gradual. In this particular case, the long grazing history most likely has depleted the seedbank of native species and effective restoration would benefit from the addition of seeds.



The next two presentations focused on the importance of integrating traditional indigenous knowledge with western knowledge to improve management of natural landscapes. Chase Argan, Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and Dr Brad Farmilo, Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research, presented an example of bringing together the western knowledge with the local Wadawurrung knowledge to develop a grassland vegetation monitory protocol to effectively manage the grasslands at Point Lillias on Wadawurrung country. Nathan Wong and Amos Atkinson, Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation , presented an example of reintroducing traditional knowledge to burning for management. Nathan and Amos highlighted the importance of returning indigenous people and practices to the landscape

providing benefits to the natural environment and communities.

The final talk, by 3rd year PhD student Emily Scicluna, La Trobe University,, presented startling data from her project on Fat-tailed Dunnarts in Basalt Grasslands. There are two sub-species of Fat-tailed Dunnarts, *S. crassicaudata crassicaudata* found in Victoria, south-east SA and southern NSW and *S. crassicaudata centralis* which occupies desert areas in central Australia. The conservation status in Victoria is Near Threatened however this considers both sub species together. Emily sampled sites previously known to have populations sampled by Morton in the 1970's at the Western Treatment Plants in Werribee and found no dunnarts in twelve months of sampling. These results have prompted Emily to seek relevant agencies to review and elevate the conservation status of *S. crassicaudata crassicaudata* on its own given the decline in numbers and



threats to Grassland ecosystems in Victoria. Ellen Doxey For more information visit the SWIFFT website: https://www.swifft.net.au

MONITORING FAUNA IN COVID-19 TIMES











As we were unable to continue with our study of fauna in the Great Otway National Park, we took the opportunity in September to monitor fauna in the regeneration area on private land in the Painkalac Valley. Not surprisingly we saw Eastern Grey Kangaroos at each of the sites. We also saw many different bird species, only three of which are shown here.

Over 4000 trees and shrubs have been planted by volunteers and the billabong is now full. It will be fascinating to see how the fauna changes as the plants grow and the wetlands further restored. **Gretel Lamont**

Above: The Eastern Grey Kangaroos were very interested in the cameras and one nosy roo looked like it was lining up for a coronavirus test! Also posing for our camera, the male of a pair of Australian Shelducks on lookout duty, White Ibis and Straw-necked Ibis.



"FRIENDLY" NEWS

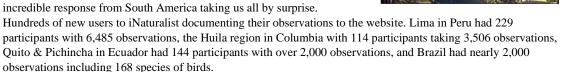
MASSIVE FIRST YEAR FOR GREAT SOUTHERN BIOBLITZ

Three thousand observers participated in the Great Southern Bioblitz in September, collating over 90,000 observations of more than 12,000 species from around the globe. The umbrella project now represents an amazing and openly accessible display of citizen scientist biodiversity observations.



This searchable database is a treasure trove for naturalists, educators, researchers and anyone interested in nature, just choose a project from any place in the world and explore the observations citizen scientists made of their local flora and fauna.

Participation was greater than anything we could have anticipated. The incredible response from South America taking us all by surprise.



On the Surf Coast we totalled over 400 species for the GSB which is our best result yet. Along with Gariwerd National Park, the Surf Coast is one of the best places in Victoria to see wildflowers. A total of 240 plant species were seen including 31 orchid species. The Friends contributed strongly by uploading their observations to the online database, iNaturalist, including Marg MacDonald who contributed 40

observations, Kaye Traynor and Ellen Doxey. A special mention to Alison Watson who contributed

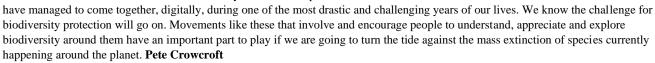


128 observations of interesting biodiversity from the region over the weekend.

My favourite observation was an immature White-bellied

My favourite observation was an immature White-bellied Sea Eagle circling low over Distillery Creek at Aireys Inlet. Given how the ducks started to fly away and sound the alarm, it may well have been hunting them! Craig Morley from the Geelong Field Naturalist Club said it is the offspring of one of just two breeding pairs in the region.

Everyone should be proud of this incredible effort. We



 $Adapted \ from \ a \ longer \ article \ available \ at \ \underline{https://greatsouthernbiobl.wixsite.com/website/post/great-southern-bioblitz-amazing-first-year}$

WORKING FOR VICTORIA CONTINUE GREAT WEEDING

Since the last newsletter, Working For Victoria crew assisted with weeding in September and twice in October. For the first two sessions they continued working at Urquhart Bluff, removing Boneseed and Bluebell Creeper from the gully behind the amenities block up towards the carpark at the top of the Bluff. On the second, they worked on a gully at the other end of the section towards the northern end of Sunnymeade Beach. Both sessions required agility, strength and good balance, as the gullies were steep-sided and deep.

To give them a completely different experience in October, and because Parks Vic had scheduled a burn around Urquhart Bluff, the crew worked in an area off Forest Rd, near Gum Flats Road, an area burnt in 2018. This burn stimulated the germination of the locally-naturalised Silky Hakea *Hakea sericea* so the area was strewn with small seedlings in a very extensive area around the parent trees. The terrain was mostly flat, so the crew were able to pull the small seedlings by hand and work systematically through the affected area.

They worked in the morning through to a late lunch and, as a reward, we showed them an orchid-rich



area where they experienced some of what makes our region so special. We saw masses of Large White Spider Orchids and Mantis Orchids (as well as their hybrids), Plain-lipped and Heart-lipped Spider Orchids. We also introduced them to the White Fingers, now widespread in the area, as well as numerous examples of Sun Orchids, which because of our cool, cloudy spring were not open. They, for their part, located a colony of Blotched Sun Orchids leaves and buds just waiting for a warm and sunny day to emerge. We also showed them a colony of Large and Small Flying-Duck Orchids near Harrison Track North. Unfortunately, the orchids were still in bud. After working with them on a number of occasions, I have been constantly struck by the enjoyment they get out of being in the environment and how willing and appreciative when we talk to them about what we enjoy about living here. **Patrick Flanagan.**

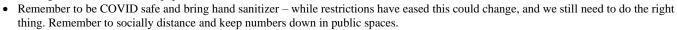
Parks

RANGER REPORT

Hello Friends,

I hope that everyone is ready for another summer on the Surf Coast. Our Parks staff are busy getting the Great Otway National Park ready for the high fire danger period, and for our high visitor numbers. I normally start every November report with a quick note about summer safety in the Park. However, as you all know it is going to be a bit different this year, with an extra consideration you will need to think about before going into the Park. Here are a few tips from our ranger staff to be safe when outdoors.

- Plan your trip Let someone know where you are going and avoid extreme fire danger days. As we are going to get more extreme fire danger days each year in Australia, we must plan around these days.
- Download the Vic Emergency app last summer proved how important this tool is for early information.
- Bring a hat and water we often provide first aid for Park visitors who have no or little
 water when hiking in the heat so please be prepared.
- Bring a map we often find people who have lost phone reception and google maps cannot find their location. Either have a photo of a map or download one before starting. Or better still have a paper version.



Most snakes will move on if they see us – just give them space and wear suitable footwear and leg coverings.

Campground Upgrade

Campsite booking is up and running for our campgrounds in the Eastern Otways, and early signs suggest it is working well. At Hammond Road, Allenvale and Sharps Track Campgrounds, Parks Victoria have upgraded the sites and now offer camping in these locations as booked sites. This means that anyone who is interested in booking a site in these



campgrounds can ring 13 19 63 or look on the Parks Victoria website. Whilst, the sites are no longer free, we feel that it is a reasonable price to pay for your own site, and for our staff we have witnessed better behaviour in these campgrounds. Jamieson Campground, between Wye River and Lorne, will remain shut due to an ongoing planning issue. We hope that we can open it soon.

Spring Fuel Reduction Burning

The fire and emergency team have been busy lately using milder weather conditions to complete some strategic fuel reduction burns around Anglesea. I am sure that everyone has seen a bit of the smoke around. Again, these burns are an important tool to protect the township from bushfire. Plus, I am sure that the Friends will be looking forward to next year to see what orchids pop up in these

blocks. Above is a picture of a Flying Duck Orchid that was protected during the Burn Operation.

Strategic Fuel Break Program

Some of you may have noticed the vegetation removal that is happening around Anglesea lately, this is part of the strategic fuel breaks constructed to protect townships from bushfire. The fuel breaks are one of the tools used in conjunction with fuel reduction burning, that will help lower the risk of bushfire in our coastal communities. If you would like to find out more information, please contact me or look on the DELWP website for information.

Weed Works

Once again, I would like to thank everyone in the Friends for their valuable weeding work. In spring there is an explosion of growth in the Great Otway National Park, and it is nice to see small piles of pulled Boneseed and Bluebell Creeper on walks around the Heath, keep up the

good work. Also, in a trying year we haven't been able to hold many weeding activities due to isolation rules. Thank you for your patience, and hopefully we will have full activities soon. As Parks staff we couldn't possibly look after the Park on our own, and if everyone pulls out a few weeds it is a way we can all help look after our amazing diversity.

DELWP Weed Work

Under the guidance of Tim Miller DELWP have started an extensive weed control program in the Otways. This project will focus on several invasive species especially around Anglesea. Please look at this wonderful photo (*right*) that Tim Miller has taken of a large infestation of Sallow Wattle that has been well and truly killed. This project will also tackle some of the gully lines and harder to reach areas within the O'Donohues block, and build on the amazing work that the friends have completed in this area.

Thank you once again to everybody for helping us look after the Great Otway National Park. **Matt Russell.**





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