



FriendsNET

Newsletter of the Victorian Environment Friends Network

Number 69 November 2009

Congratulations to four Best Friends for 2009!

DAVID BARR Friends of Wilson Reserve

David's interest and care, over many years, in improving the health of the wetlands and billabongs along the Yarra River near Horseshoe Bend at Wilson Reserve has led him to be an active member of the Friends group for the past 10 years.



Photo – Robert Bender

He has led many plantings, weedings and working bees in the area. David and the Friends also participate in Water Watch programs and monitoring of the frog population.

David's consistent and accurate monthly data on stormwater moving through the wetlands and settling ponds convinced the Banyule Council and Melbourne Water to clean silt from the wetlands and settling ponds thus greatly improving storm water quality entering the Yarra.

As a geologist, David has wide experience in a number of Australian environments in his work, from which his 'Friends' have benefited in their Volunteer work.

KEN HARRIS Friends of Morwell National Park

Ken, the founding member of the Friends group in 1985, has provided leadership and direction of an extremely high standard ever since.

Ken is an inspiration to both new and existing members.

He has dealt with Councils and school groups as he developed an encyclopaedic knowledge of the flora and fauna in his special Park.



Geoff Lacey and Ken Harris with their certificates which were presented by Professor Nancy Millis at the VFEN conference (Photo – Leon Costermans)

Ken has instigated an orchid survey, carried out for the last 20 years. He often leads search teams in koala counts.

From 'Orchids to Birds,' he has made his knowledge freely available through a web site and a fantastic selection of photographs to help new members and school groups learn about the beauty and serenity of Morwell National Park.

GEOFF LACEY Friends of French Island National Park

Geoff has been a dedicated member of this Friend's group since 1989.

He has held every committee position over the years and now edits the F.O.F.I. newsletter providing an invaluable source of interesting facts about the Island.

Geoff has contributed to the management of French Island NP through his intimate knowledge of geology, botany and natural history which he willingly shares with his colleagues. Geoff has used this knowledge to write two books: *Birds of French Island Wetlands*, with Des Quinn, and *Reading the Land*. Both these publications provide valuable insights and have proved a significant resource for land-managers. Geoff's wise and thoughtful approach has contributed to maintaining and conserving the park's unique plants and animals.

Geoff has also been a valued member of the Victorian Environmental Friends Network committee.

WALLACE (WALLY) MORTIMER Friends of Wonnangatta Valley

A life-long passion for the Wonnangatta Valley began in 1965 and the Valley still excites Wally's interest and passion today.

Wally has researched the family history of William Bryce, who established a cattle station which he ran for 50 years, and his descendants. He now cares for the family cemetery.



Photo – Geoff Durham

Wally is a motivator and has inspired many people to become active members of the Friends Group which he formed in 1991.

He has made over 200 visits to the Valley, from his home in Milawa, organising working bees and other activities. He is the author of 2 books tracing the Valley's history since its discovery in 1861: *The History of Wonnangatta Station* (1981) and *The Next Twenty Years* (1995).

From your Network Committee Convener



Maelor Himbury
(Friends of Maribyrnong
Valley) Network
Committee Convener
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We had an excellent VEFN Conference at Grantville in September (as you will see from the report accompanying *FriendsNET*). Our thanks go to all those who took part and especially to the staff of Grantville Lodge for whom nothing was too much trouble.

At the AGM we discussed a motion that the committee constitution be changed to remove the words 'and operates with its approval' from the criteria for affiliation with the VEFN. The relevant clause reads: 'A group...which recognises the rights and responsibilities of authorities in relation to the group's activities, is recognised by the appropriate management authority, and operates with its approval.'

This motion was lost but discussion suggested that it was up to the committee's discretion what this term means. Thus if a group receives grants or other support from the land manager

it could be said to be operating 'with its approval'. We will take this into consideration when making future decisions on affiliations.

Retiring committee member Bernie Fox was thanked for his contribution. Bernie will continue to manage the emailing of *FriendsNET*.

It is with regret that we received Tony Woolford's later resignation from the committee. Tony has served on the committee for many years and has been a faithful and enthusiastic contributor. We will miss his input.

2010 Best Friends Awards

The closing date for groups to nominate an outstanding member who has made an extraordinary contribution as a Friend is 31 March 2010.

Groups in action

In *FriendsNET 65* (Nov. 2008), we reported on the Sherbrooke Forest Lyrebird Survey Group's fiftieth anniversary. Another group – the Blackburn and District Tree Preservation Society – has attained the remarkable distinction of 50 years' achievement in conservation. Here, Les Smith, a long-time campaigner for conservation in Victoria, reports on the Blackburn group with which he has been actively associated since its first public meeting.

The Blackburn & District Tree Preservation Society is celebrating its 50th birthday.

The main factor which led to its formation was the spread of suburbia to the Blackburn area after the war.

The aims of the Society, originally without the '& District' in its name, were to discourage removal of the natural tree cover, to make sure that open space was retained and to encourage the use of Australian native plants in gardens.

The first aim has continued to be a most important issue for the Society, which advanced considerably with the campaign with other groups to set up the Special Residential Zone for 49 streets in the 'Bellbird' area of Blackburn in which trees above a certain size were protected and limits were set for site coverage of houses and hard surfaces. This area, and others, are now designated with a 'Significant Landscape Overlay' (SLO). Vigilance on tree preservation has become more important again with the widely differing views on the hazards caused by trees in bush fires.

For the second aim, the Society has also been successful, together with local residents, in campaigning for many areas of bush remnants being preserved as open space. It achieved the appointment by Council of Advisory Committees to assist in the management of these areas.

The third aim was carried out by running an annual native flower show in conjunction with the Doncaster & Templestowe Conservation Society from 1961 to 1975. In later years the Maroondah Branch of the SGAP took over this function. Visits to gardens using native plants were organised, the first of which was so popular that it caused

traffic jams in Blackburn! The booklet '100 Native Plants to grow in Blackburn' was also published, although very few of the species recommended were native to Victoria. The move to planting of indigenous species began in the late '70s and led to the setting up of community nurseries.

In 1969, the Society, with many other groups, campaigned under the banner of the Save Our Bush Action Committee (SOBAC) to stop the proposed subdivision of Crown Land in the Little Desert into small farms. The successful conclusion of the campaign led to the State Government setting up the Land Conservation Council, to which the Society made many submissions.

The Society formed the Urimbirra Co-operative Society Ltd in 1973 to purchase a 400ha bush block adjacent to what is now the Little Desert National Park. It has since purchased an adjacent 600ha block and has more than 200 shareholders, many of them members of the Tree Society.

The Society participated in the Regional Employment Development (RED) Scheme of 1975-76, receiving a grant of more than \$50,000 to employ 25 unemployed persons to plant 40,000 natives between Nunawading and Healesville and Warburton. Members of the Tree Society Committee supervised the planting.

The Society has less working bees than it used to, as this activity is carried out by the Advisory Committees, which have many Tree Society members. But it continues to run working bees in conjunction with Council in areas which don't have Advisory Committees. It also keeps an eye on Council planning decisions, particularly where they concern tree cover.

Experience Exchange (your space)

More on Frogs (from FN 68)

When our reserve was created 15 years ago, the developers dug out a sizeable hollow at our request, but it did not hold water. The Council has now lined the hollow with Butyl, and 24 students from a local secondary college and their frog-friendly teacher, Craig Clelland, have finished the project with logs and rocks collected by us, with tyres for islands, and appropriate plantings. We are very hopeful about the future of our 'Frog City'.

Carol Clarke (Friends of Loughies Bushland)

Poo survey (Group Grapevine in FN 67)

The result of the Friends of Ruffey Lake Park dog faeces survey:

Armed with poo markers (orange flags) and our hand held GPS unit, we scoured areas of the park for dog faeces. When we found a specimen, we logged the location, and were then able to construct an accurate map. Whilst we did this to quantify the amount of faeces, we also used the opportunity to educate dog-owners about why they need to pick up. The experiment was very well accepted by park users, many of whom thought we were setting up a golf course. We found 143 specimens, with many located in close proximity to dog litter bins, so installing more bins may not be

the answer. We plan to make this one of our annual activities.

Tom Dowsley (Friends of Ruffey Lake Park)

Volunteers or paid workers?

The VEFN Conference brought together some interesting and well-researched speakers. Notably, the final discussion panel set out to inform us on how we might improve our already overburdened volunteer activities. However, I suggest that there is a very thin line that separates volunteering and the employment of paid workers. There has been an enormous increase in the use of volunteers, not only in environment groups but also in essential areas of education and health. It is unacceptable that a country as wealthy as Australia needs an army of volunteers when unemployment and under-employment is rife. It seems to me that the situation has got out of hand and that governments have created a culture that forces us to take up the slack. Australia doesn't need an increase in the current level of volunteering, it needs a workforce capable of caring for those essentials that we know are lacking. However, there will always be room for people with genuine interests in areas such as ours to volunteer their services.

John Ellis (Friends of Ocean Grove Nature Reserve)

We have had follow-up items relating to subjects raised in recent editions of *FriendsNET*.

Opinions and responses are always welcomed.

Share your questions, experiences or ideas – contact a Committee member (see page 4)

At the VEFN Conference, September 2009, at Grantville

See the accompanying summary of the Conference, with thanks to Bob Reid for its compilation.



1. Prof. Nancy Millis explains future water issues.
2. A group visiting Churchill Island, hosted by the local Friends.
3. Another group visits the Bass River Valley, led by Phil Westwood.
4. Friends of French Island celebrate their 25th anniversary.

Photos 1, 2 & 4 by Leon Costermans
Photo 3 by Bob Reid



FriendsNET may be downloaded from the Network web site (home.vicnet.net.au/~friends) and emailed to group members. Articles in FriendsNET may be used in Group newsletters with acknowledgement.

Group Grapevine

Friends of Bogong celebrated their 25th anniversary with a special weekend centered on Mt Beauty on 14-15 November.



Friends of Bogong at Wallace's Hut – photo by Iris Curran

Friends of Westgate Park are concerned about the significant decrease in the water level of the park's two lakes. They have initiated a project to identify additional sources of storm water from surrounding areas.

Friends of Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands advise that water has returned to the wetlands and their Edithvale Road hide is open at weekends.

The Friends of Edgars Creek, in partnership with the Newlands Community Centre and the Moreland City Council, recently held a short story competition for young writers. Entrants were asked to begin their story with the line 'Down by Edgars Creek ...' The winner was 10-year-old Eleanor West.

Friends of Warrandyte State Park have donated a trailer to the Strathewen Landcare Group to replace one lost in the Black Saturday fires.



Trailer donated by Friends of Warrandyte SP – photo by Linda Rogan

Friends of Chiltern Box-Ironbark National Park have changed their name to Friends of Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park.

The Victorian High Country Huts Association 2010 Calendar featuring black & white photos of alpine huts is now available for \$10 from Ken & Vicki Birch 5940 4651.

Friends of Organ Pipes have produced their last paper newsletter. All future newsletters will be sent by email.

The Friends of Brisbane Ranges National Park had 530 visitors to their Wildflower Show on 11 October.

The 2009 Victorian Landcare Awards were announced in September. The winner of the urban category was the Friends of Westgate Park, and Highly Commended was the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater.

As the highlight of Parks Victoria's November celebration of the centenary of Wyperfeld National Park, on the initiative of the Friends of Wyperfeld, the 15 km Nature Drive has been named the James Barrett Nature Drive to honour the outstanding contribution to the park of the late Sir James Barrett. The Friends paid for eight interpretation signs out of the proceeds from their book, 'Wyperfeld—Australia's first Mallee National Park'. It is proposed to put the history section of the book on the Web.



Kathryn Browne (Pajero 4WD Club Vic), Hugh Barrett (grandson of Sir James Barrett) and Karen Fuller (coordinator, Friends of Wyperfeld) after the opening of the James Barrett Nature Drive – Photo by Bob Reid

And we welcome ...

Friends of Holden Flora Reserve
Holden Flora Reserve is an area of public land upstream of Organ Pipes National Park. The Friends Group aims to facilitate the coordination and cooperation of the community in the preservation, revegetation and environmental and cultural protection of the reserve. It has recently been established and has about 20 members. Garry Bartlett 9744 1923

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