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**FROM THE
PRESIDENT
Patrick
Flanagan**

SUCCESSFUL 2018 AGM

We had a very successful Annual General Meeting on Sunday February 11 with 35 members in attendance, all eager to hear the very interesting and informative talk on Southern Right Whales in South Eastern Australia by our guest speaker, Mandy Watson from DELWP.

We held elections for the Friends of Eastern Otways committee for 2018. I was nominated as President and duly elected. I'm sure you'll join me in thanking Alison Watson, our outgoing President, for her sterling service for the last three years during which she has advocated energetically for our goals and values. Alison will remain on the committee as Immediate Past President.

We welcomed Gretel Lamont as a committee member and said farewell to Ross Murray who is standing down from the committee after seven years' service to the Friends. Of course, we expect to continue seeing Ross and Merle at our activities.

Our other continuing committee members are Peter Crowcroft (Vice President), Sue Guinness (Secretary), Ross Davey (Treasurer), Kaye Traynor (Assistant Secretary), Margaret MacDonald and Jane Shennan. We still have a vacancy for a committee member, so if you are willing to serve please get in touch as we are able to fill casual vacancies by appointment.

At the AGM we also adopted, unanimously, new rules of association, more commonly referred to as a constitution.

Our previous constitution had been superseded by a generic model constitution so relevant parts were rewritten to reflect the structure of our organisation and our goals and values. This now goes to the Registrar of Incorporated Associations for approval, a process we hope will go off without a hitch! Once approved and registered we will print a report later in the newsletter.

Finally, with this newsletter you'll see our great activities program for the coming months. We hope to see you at some or all of them.



Above: Members of the Friends of Eastern Otways gathered at the CFA rooms for the AGM on February 11.

QUEEN'S BATON HONOR

As a prelude to the Commonwealth Games to be held in Queensland in April, the Baton containing a message from the Queen has been relayed throughout Australia by citizens selected for their achievements and endeavours in various fields.

Margaret MacDonald was chosen by Parks Victoria to be photographed with the baton in appreciation of her contribution to conservation and environmental projects through her volunteering work over a long period of time. Her dedication and commitment and her long association with Parks Victoria has been officially recognised in this way.

On the morning of January 17, Margaret was met at the Twelve Apostles Information Centre at the Port Campbell National Park by members of the Queen's Baton support crew. The group of young people, mostly from Queensland, were very helpful and provided her with a special uniform and she was then taken to the viewing platform at the Twelve Apostles and handed the Baton.

The Baton is carefully guarded by Queensland and Victorian Police escorts. Several photographs were taken in front of the popular tourist attraction. The next venue was the Loch Ard Gorge where further photographs were taken on the beach. The photo shoot lasted about two hours, and the Baton with the crew and security then moved on towards South Australia for the next stage of the relay.

It was a great morning, and enjoyable company and perfect weather befitting the wonderful surroundings. It was a very memorable occasion for Margaret and we can all feel very proud of what she has done and take pleasure in sharing in this special honour. **Kaye Traynor**



Above: Margaret MacDonald takes her turn with the Commonwealth Games Queen's Baton at Port Campbell National Park.



ENVIRONMENTAL WEEDING

Moggs Creek Coastal Heathlands - December 12 + Feb 13



Everyone seems to know about the Anglesea coastal heathlands, but the Moggs Creek coastal heathlands are less well known. They have a beauty of their own with massed vegetation highlighted by a magnificent ocean view. Our two summer weeding activities focussed on removing Bluebell Creeper trying to take hold amongst the indigenous species.



Autumn program – March 13, April 10, May 8

Contact Margaret MacDonald, 0412 652 419.

Environmental weeding will occur in the National Park for the next 3 months close to Anglesea, with a focus on removing Bluebell Creeper. Meet at the corner of Forest Road and Anglesea Road on 2nd Tuesday of each month at 9.30am.

Above: Enjoying the view from the Friends of Moggs Creek seat.

Top right: Pete and Chris tackle a large Bluebell Creeper.

Right: At work among the massed vegetation with a superb ocean backdrop.



COMING EVENTS

Lemonade Creek Walk

Saturday March 17

Meet at Aireys Inlet Community Centre 9.30am

Contact Kaye Traynor 0408 551 667



This walk links Blanket Leaf Picnic ground and the Erskine Falls Car Park, taking you through interesting vegetation whilst offering gorgeous views of the creek gullies and forest. It is an easy to moderate walk with some slightly

uphill climbs. Approximate length 8km return.

BYO lunch, snacks & drinks. Wear appropriate walking clothing and footwear.



Meet at Angair office at 9am to car pool to Ballarat

Contact: Alison Watson 0400570229

Discover a very new park on the outskirts of Ballarat, Woowookarung Regional Park, with the Friends of Canadian Corridor. This 650 ha park of dry heathy forest includes a waterfall, koalas and grass trees. Return approx. 4pm. BYO morning tea & lunch, walking shoes, water, hat.



Fungi Walk - Sabine Falls

Saturday May 19

Meet at Aireys Inlet Community Centre 9.00am.

Contact Peter Crowcroft 0412 044 127

Our walk will see us well into the National Park amongst the cool temperate rainforest, where we will have the opportunity to explore for fungi. If we are lucky we might spot the Otway Black Snail, a carnivorous species which is endangered. We should also hear, and hopefully see, many of the birds that make this special place home.

BYO lunch, snacks & drinks. Wear appropriate walking clothing and footwear.



Visit to Friends of Canadian Corridor

Saturday April 21



MAMMAL SURVEYS

First Tuesday

Contact: Patrick 0437 561 702

Meet at Angair office, McMillan St, Anglesea

Mammal surveys using our remote cameras are usually carried out following the committee meetings on the first Tuesday of each month. We welcome people interested in our indigenous fauna to participate in our survey.



YEAR OF ACTIVITIES ROUNDED UP

I am pleased to be giving the Friends of Eastern Otways annual report. Going through the monthly minutes, it is always amazing how much happens in a year. The highlight of the year of course was the handover of the Alcoa lease to the Great Otway National Park. How special to know our wonderful heath is protected under the National Park Act.

Environmental weeding is always enjoyable with our dedicated weeders, and a coffee to look forward to at the end of the exercise. We have been to Urquhart Bluff near the 'perched lake' working on large Flax-leaf Broom; Mangowak Sanctuary where we worked with enthusiastic Aireys Inlet Primary School students identifying plants and removing Quaking Grass; we tackled Bluebell Creeper at Eumeralla, on the corner of Forest Rd which we found an interesting place despite the large Bluebell Creeper plants; and Robyn Rd at Moggs Creek overlooking the sea, a nice spot to finish the year's weeding.



We planted Sea-berry Salt-bush *Rhagodia candolleana* at Urquhart Bluff (at left) and Christmas-bush *Prostanthera lasianthos* along the Distillery Creek nature walk.

Mammal surveys. Our application to the Animal Ethics Committee to use baits for camera trapping was approved in March. We received a grant from the Norman Wettenhall Foundation and purchased three cameras with accessories.

Surveys were carried out at Currawong Falls Track where there was a suspected quoll latrine site. We didn't find any quolls and scat detector dogs showed no interest in the scat. Aireys Inlet cliff-top; coastal dunes west of O'Donohue's carpark where a camera was stolen, it was kindly replaced by Parks Victoria; and Black Wattle track/ Camp Rd Anglesea area; Kennett River.

Thank you Patrick for managing our cameras and surveys and entering all the results on the VBA. (The statistics from Patrick's report to the Animal Ethics Committee are detailed on page 8 of this newsletter.)



Plant survey. In October the annual survey for the Angahook Caladenia *Caladenia maritima* took place. We recorded 444 flowers, fewer than last year, but about the same as 2015.

Our **walks** are always great. In February we rediscovered the Small Milkwort

Comesperma polygaloides and enjoyed a short walk to the Hurst Rd area to observe this little plant.

Our second spotlighting evening at Moggs Creek revealed Sugar Gliders and Yellow-bellied Gliders; on the Moggs Creek /Coalmine Creek walk we were happy to find Wrinkled Buttons *Leiocarpla gatesii*.

In May, on Haggarts and Allardyce tracks we found the rare Juniper Wattle *Acacia ilicifolia* and a solitary Autumn Greenhood *Pterostylis revoluta*.

The Koala count at Kennett River yielded a total of 48 mostly male koalas, down considerably on previous year's numbers. Teddy's Lookout Lorne was an enjoyable walk, as was the Kennett River walk amongst the tall eucalypts and ferns. The Wildflower walk in October is always popular, and this year at

Fairhaven we were delighted to find Tiger Orchids *Diuris sulphurea* and the yellow form of Donkey Orchid *Diuris orientis* as well as many other orchids and flowers - 86 flowering species were recorded.

Every year we choose another Friends group to visit, this year it was the Friends of Long Forest, and we had a most enjoyable day. Our group assisted their planting day activity followed by a ramble in the bush. We also visited Serendip Sanctuary near Lara, a known birding observation and identification destination.

Eumeralla Bike Trails Regular meetings regarding Eumeralla continue. The Deakin study on *Phytophthora* was inconclusive. *Phytophthora* was found in certain places but in other places where it didn't show up it could still be there. The Surf Coast Mountain Bike Trail ran a workshop for stakeholders as the start of a strategic plan. The discussion for track names is ongoing, and the result of the closure of Grasstree track is still not known.



Above: Parks Victoria rangers Katrina Lovett (right) and Matt Russell, our Liaison Ranger, at the AGM.

The **Erskine Falls donation box** is a fundraiser for the Friends and is in need of a facelift. We have been planning an updated sign for it with Kaye's drawings, and it will include a message in Mandarin. This should happen soon.

In March, 12 people attended a **GPS training day** which was informative and enjoyable. Now we just need some practice to help us feel confident.

ANGAIR Show This year we updated our Quoll display and added information from Mt Rothwell and the Cape Otway Conservation Ecology Centre. We had a lovely static display from Kaye featuring a Bassian Thrush, and rolling footage from our mammal survey cameras with a successful competition to attract the younger members of the crowd.

In April Matt Russell joined us as our Liaison Ranger and we have appreciated his help and involvement. Thank you to all the Parks Victoria staff. They are all so supportive of us and always willing to help. Thank you to Jane who puts together a great newsletter. We are sorry to say goodbye to Ross Murray, on the committee since 2011, and will miss his input and company.

Thank you to all the committee members who all work so well together, and to all the Friends for their support, help and friendship. **Alison Watson**



GUEST SPEAKER AT AGM 2018

WHALE OF A TALE AT AGM

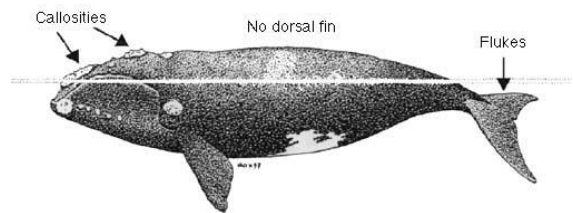
Mandy Watson was the keynote speaker at the Annual General Meeting held on February 11. Mandy is currently the Natural Environment Program Officer with DELWP. Her subject for the talk was “*Distribution and Abundance of Southern Right Whales in Southeast Australia*”.

Mandy is based at Warrnambool and manages the Logan’s Beach volunteer whale watch project. She also specialises in threatened species management, in particular monitoring and protection of the Southern Right Whales, so named because they were considered the ‘right’ whale to hunt for oil and baleen.

The Southern Right Whales have been listed as Critically Endangered under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. The Australasian population has never really recovered from the early whaling practices up to the 1920s, declining from 60,000 to their current very low numbers. There are perhaps 300 individuals in south-eastern Australia while in south-western Australia numbers had recovered to about 3000 by 2010. They are long-lived with a life expectancy exceeding 80 years, and produce a calf only once every three years.



Mandy described the physical features of the Southern Right Whale which differentiate it from another visitor to Victorian waters, the Humpback Whale. A large, black, stocky whale, the Southern Right Whale lacks a dorsal fin, has short blunt paddle-shaped flippers and its broad head carries a number of callosities (pictured left).



She said the callosities, which form a unique pattern, are used to recognize the individuals regularly sighted off Logan’s Beach. These encrustations on the face are infestations of sea-lice and appear lighter on the dark skin of the whale. Hence each mature animal has slightly different callosities and can therefore be identified, photographed and recorded.

Mandy has over 3000 images, comprising some 380 whales, in a database, enabling her to crossmatch photographs. In 2017, there were 32 new whales and 4 re-sightings of breeding female which regularly use the safe shallow waters at Logan’s Beach to give birth.



The migration path of Southern Right Whales takes them in an anti-clockwise route from Antarctica to southern Australia. Whales from different calving grounds mix on migratory corridors but females return to the place where they were born to give birth.

Although protected by law, they face many threats including vessel strikes, entanglement, marine pollution, especially plastics, noise pollution from seismic surveys, boat-based whale-watching, and climate change.

Whale numbers at Logan’s Beach have not increased and further research is needed to secure the future of these creatures. New methods include using drone technology, with the aim of making photo identifications of individuals and calves at sea. Also valuable data can be obtained from a network of citizen scientists and whale watchers. **Kaye Traynor.**

Left: Patrick Flanagan thanks Mandy Watson for her informative talk which was much appreciated at the AGM. Below right: Southern Right Whales at Logan’s Beach.





FRIENDS' ACTIVITIES SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

KENNETT RIVER MAMMAL SURVEY & WALK – November 18

We were very pleased to invite Friends of Eastern Otways to our property at Kennett River, and we began the day leisurely enjoying coffee at the Wye River store.

As we drove up Kennett Road last year's burn was evident on the right. There were small patches of purple Mint-bush still evident on the left of the track. At the top of the drive we stopped to observe an old plank still firmly embedded in a tree and speculated on its purpose. It was fairly clear of undergrowth beneath the trees and some obvious animal paths crisscrossed the area so we set up cameras on both



sides of the track, and two more at an overgrown dam.

We had a close look at an active Satin Bowerbird bower (*right*) with lots of blue treasures – tape, flowers and feathers scattered among a collection of yellow flowers.

After a pleasant picnic lunch under shady trees in the old orchard we set out to walk the 'circuit'. We marvelled at the tall Messmate, Blue Gums, Mountain Ash and Grey Gum, tree-ferns sprouting new growth and enjoyed flowering Clematis, Cassinia, and Hazel Pomaderris.

Birds seen and heard included Golden

Whistler, Yellow Robin and Bristlebird. Just one koala was spotted on our walk. Despite some leech attacks and tricky, slippery mud in one gully it was an enjoyable day in the sun with excellent company. **Alison Watson**



BBQ & SPOTLIGHT WALK MOGGS CREEK – January 5



After the hustle and bustle of Christmas and the New Year it was just so relaxing to venture into the tranquillity of the forest on a pleasant summer evening and join with some of our members for the Friends' spotlight activity in early January.

A group of 12 adults and three children met at the Moggs Creek Picnic Ground for a BBQ before entering into the depth of the forest. Unfortunately with daylight saving it took quite a time before darkness prevailed and we were able to enjoy the evening show. However we enjoyed listening to the daytime animals going to rest and the evening

animals such as the Southern Boobook giving its Mopoke call and being answered by other Boobooks in the forest. Micro-bats and possums were also active in the trees.

Close on 9.30pm, Sugar Gliders volplaned through the night sky and landed on the feeding tree (*at right*). We watched enthralled as about seven of these delightful little creatures entertained us as they moved up and down the trunk of the tree and amongst the foliage – volplaning between trees and then returning to feed on the sap exuding from the cuts in the trunk of the tree made by the larger Yellow-bellied Gliders. We thank Marg Lacey for her great photos.

Although we were very quiet, the Yellow-bellied Gliders did not appear while we were there but Patrick, Janet and young James had a good view of one near the picnic ground when they left ahead of the main group. It was indeed a magical evening and it was really great to be able to share the experience with some of our younger members. **Margaret MacDonald.**





FRIENDS' ACTIVITIES SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

END OF YEAR CELEBRATION AT MOGGS CREEK - December 9



The weather conditions were very pleasant on Saturday, December 9 when 38 members of Friends of Eastern Otways and ANGAIR came along to the Moggs Creek Picnic Ground for our annual end of year celebration. Our numbers were swelled by Emma, Jack, Katrina and Aaron (with their two girls Etta and Sunny) from Parks Vic, and Rani from DELWP (with her husband Doug and their two children Callum and Sienna).



We were thrilled to have two international visitors who were staying in the Anglesea district at that time – Anna from Germany and Pat a botanist from London. Pat was just so keen to discover as much as she could about the Australian flora, and Chris Morrissey acted as an invaluable guide in the field.

About 12 members joined us for the circuit walk around Moggs Creek at 10am where as usual we heard a variety of bird calls and observed a number of plant species flowering. The highlights of the walk were perhaps a male Gang-gang cockatoo that greeted us in the picnic ground, and a group of Tall Cinnamon Bell orchids tucked in behind one of the Ironbark trees.



When we got back to the Picnic Ground the BBQ was well underway. Jack from Parks Vic and Ross Murray had everything under control and Ross Davey also proved adept at cooking the sausages.

Although we underestimated the number of people who came along as our 2016 numbers had been less than usual, there was enough food for people to enjoy and certainly a pleasant environment to share with pleasant company. A few words of congratulations on another successful year of conservation activities and thank-you's reflecting on the level of participation for both groups were expressed by Patrick on behalf of the Friends and Peter Forster on behalf of ANGAIR.

Margaret MacDonald.

Top: Looking forward to the BBQ being prepared by Jack from Parks Vic and Ross from the Friends.

Centre: Our international botanist Pat admiring the Tall Cinnamon Bell Orchids. A Gang Gang keeps an eye on the picnic.

Lower: On the wooden bridge enjoying the walk before the BBQ, while Anna from Germany relaxes with some of the Friends group.





"FRIENDLY" NEWS

CELEBRATING A MILESTONE

A small and excited group gathered on Forest Rd Anglesea on January 16 to celebrate the inclusion of the Anglesea Heath within the Great Otway National Park. Overlooking a view of the Heath Sally Lewis, Regional Director for Western Region of Parks Victoria, welcomed everyone and spoke about the importance of this heathland community.

The Heath is home to about one-quarter of Victoria's native plant species, including 20 rare or threatened flora species at a state level, and eight species rare at a national level. It is also home to abundant wildlife, including rare and uncommon marsupials, and a wide variety of birds.

In August 2015 Alcoa closed after 46 years. On December 15 2017, the Parks and Crown Land Legislation Amendment Act made the legislative change to include 6405 ha of Anglesea Heath within the Great Otway National Park to protect this area for generations to come. Sally acknowledged local groups that have shown strong commitment over the years to the Anglesea Heath.



Pictured at left is Sally Lewis, Regional Director for Western Region of Parks Victoria, with Margaret MacDonald, representing Friends of Eastern Otways and Anglesea Heath Consultative Committee among others. Margaret spoke passionately about the Heath and its future protection. She noted the long term involvement and lobbying from Joan Lindros, Geelong Environment Council, who was unable to attend the celebration. Cutting the ribbon in front of the new signage erected to celebrate the occasion, Margaret said the inclusion of the Anglesea Heath into the National Park was 'a dream come true'.

In 2000 a group gathered here with the then Minister for the Environment, Sheryl Garbutt, to celebrate Alcoa and Parks Victoria working together to protect the Heath. A few of us were here

again 18 years later including Kate McMahon and Chris Rolland to see this fantastic result. As Kate said, it is the 'Jewel in the Crown'. The draft Legislation Plan has been released and Sally encouraged everyone to provide feedback into the process.

The ceremony was also attended by representatives from Alcoa, ANGAIR, Great Ocean Road Coast Committee and DELWP.

And a large Tiger Snake which, as a fitting conclusion, decided to take a rest in the back of a Parks Vic vehicle! **Alison Watson.**

HOODED PLOVER SUCCESS AT HUTT GULLY – VOLUNTEERS SWING INTO ACTION

This season we had a very special pair of Hooded Plovers ('hoodies') breeding in the National Park just west of Hutt Gully. The adult pair were the female WT (orange flag, right leg) and an unbanded male. WT is very special as she is the offspring of one of our favourite male hoodies known as OmRw (fondly known as 'the single dad'). For the last few years he has lived and bred at Moggs Creek until moving on to greener territory (we wish we knew where).

The Friends of the Hooded Plover Surf Coast volunteers (some of whom are FEO members) swung into action once we had chicks. The volunteers have given an enormous amount of their time and goodwill to help protect the chicks from off-leash dogs and raise awareness and educate the beach-users about the hoodies.

Finally, both chicks were observed taking flight over the water with their parents. Success... butJuvenile hoodies remain



vulnerable to predation and drowning on the rocky platforms, with only 50% surviving the first year. Despite being able to fly, on Thursday 8 February one of the juveniles subsequently failed. The remaining juvenile is doing extremely well and has been witnessed taking longer flights supported not only by its terrific parents but also other hoodies in the neighbourhood!

We will continue to watch over them for a little longer and we hope they will still be around in early March when BirdLife Australia come to band them. This will help volunteers and BirdLife Australia to track their movements and life history, which is how we know WT is the offspring of OmRW.

Thank you to all the volunteers and members of the public involved in supporting and protecting these wonderful birds. It makes a huge difference to their chance of survival and what a great feeling when they successfully fledge! **Sue Guinness.**

Above left; Keeping an eye on the kids! And above right: Using the grasses for protection.

Photos courtesy of Marg Lacey, Graham Lee and Sue Wilson.





"FRIENDLY" NEWS

OUR CAMERAS CAPTURE 25 SPECIES

Recently we compiled a report for the Animal Ethics Committee which approves our use of camera monitoring with attractant (golden syrup, peanut butter and rolled oats). The statistics highlight how busy we have been. Since the end of June 2016 to Christmas 2017, we have conducted 700 camera days of monitoring. This is equivalent to having a camera in the field for two years! In the 20 months since we gained approval we have placed 34 cameras in 10 locations in and around the Great Otway National Park.

This monitoring has resulted in 300 triggering events by an animal, often an individual, or less often by more than one, such as a kangaroo or wallaby and joey or a family of magpies. There were over 18,000 frames on the cameras, though this number is inflated because the camera can be triggered by wind-blown foliage and moving shadows on a sunny day.

In total, we identified 25 different species of fauna (both native and feral).

The native animals captured on the camera included the Rufous Bristlebird at Aireys Inlet, camera-hogging Grey Currawongs in the Ironbark Basin and on Messmate Track, the secretive Bassian Thrush near Kennett River, a few sightings of Koalas moving between trees also at Kennett River, a photogenic Short-beaked Echidna near Currawong Falls and numerous frames of Black Wallabies and Eastern Kangaroos.



The images can be viewed on the Friends area of the ANGAIR website at <http://angair.org.au/angair-friends-groups/friends-of-eastern-otways-great-otway-national-park?id=655> where we have some short animations created from our camera outputs. The first is a Black Wallaby with joey in her pouch, the second is of a Rufous Bristlebird, and the third is of an inquisitive echidna.

Heading the list of different individual animals identified was the Black Wallaby and Common Blackbird. Unfortunately foxes and cats were common visitors to our baiting stations. Perhaps this is because often we monitor around Anglesea and Aireys Inlet and so feral animals that are attracted to human settlement are over-represented in our monitoring efforts. We didn't capture any frames of quolls, bandicoots, native mice (such as the New-Holland Mouse) or dunnarts. But we live in hope!



Our sightings are contributed to the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas and the Otway Ark Project, a Parks Victoria program to control feral animals. In this way we contribute to the overall picture of the health of our native fauna. You can add your efforts too, by contributing to the Biodiversity Atlas with VBA-GO, a simple website that allows you to contribute your observations in the field to the database. **Patrick Flanagan.**



NEW MEMBERS

We welcome these members who have joined us since our November newsletter:

John and Katrina Lenagan, Diamond Creek
Craig Grabham, Anglesea
Margaret Lacey, Aireys Inlet
Tim Ryan and family, Anglesea

EMAIL REQUEST

If you are receiving your newsletter by post, you are missing out on our beautiful colourful editions which show our natural environment in all its glorious shades. In addition each posted newsletter costs \$1 to post plus printing, envelopes and labels, plus volunteer's time to fold and post. Where possible, all members are requested to please provide an email address to simplify the process. And add to your enjoyment! Email Patrick Flanagan - prflanagan@gmail.com

MEMBERSHIP FEE

Members are reminded the annual fee of \$15 for individuals and families is now due and can be paid as follows:
Electronic Bank Transfer
Bendigo Bank: BSB 633-000 Account Number: 150830826
Account Name: Friends of Eastern Otways.
Please provide a 6 letter code in the reference field (the first 6 letters of your surname or surname plus initial if name is shorter) so we can identify your payment.
Cheque made payable to "Friends of Eastern Otways" can be mailed to The Treasurer, PO Box 140, Anglesea 3230.
Please note we depend entirely on your support for our ongoing efforts to protect our environment. Any donation on top of your subscription is greatly appreciated.

Ross Davey, Hon. Treasurer

PS Could the person who made an unidentified payment through First Bank please contact Ross on daveyfam2@bigpond.com

I am very happy to write this extended Annual Ranger Report, it has been a great chance for me to reflect on my first year on the Surf Coast. Thank you to everybody in the Friends of the Eastern Otways for making me feel so welcome.

Firstly, it has been a good year for Parks Victoria on the Surf Coast, seven new people join the team, including myself. In addition, four new Rangers, a new Field Services Officer, Glen who replaced the retired Sam Griffiths. Scott Nicholson is currently filling in for Emma Danby as Ranger Team Leader and, Dale Fuller became a Coordinator for our landscape projects Otway Eden and Otway Ark. This has been fantastic for our team, with more hands we are able to deliver more projects, and it means that hopefully everyone can expect to see more Rangers out in the park.

Out and about in the Park

We are almost through another busy summer season with high visitor numbers putting an extra strain on visitor sites. Particularly in the campgrounds around Lorne, which have been well and truly over capacity. These numbers unfortunately bring some management issues that keep our staff very busy. This summer we have been making an extra effort to manage the high amounts of illegal camping, campfires and off lead dog offenses. However, I am sure that the Friends can appreciate that while PV staff try to maintain a presence in high use areas, there is still some gaps. So, thank you to all the Friends who have been helping staff by providing information on park use both good and bad. It helps us immensely.



Our Seasonal Ranger Cameron Say has been busy with a huge summer program. We are fortunate that we could expand our Junior Ranger Program with increased resourcing and staff mentioned earlier. The Surf Coast team were able to deliver a variety of fun activities that we hope to expand on next season.

The Anglesea Team have had a major success with targeted compliance that has shut down a commercial rubbish and firewood operator in the Anglesea Heath. Parks Victoria Staff noticed an increase in timber cutting and rubbish dumping in the Heath, and quickly acted. The team then went about collecting evidence and conducting surveillance to catch and charge the individual. While it is sad to see some damage in the new national park area, it is a positive to see how the team quickly got a successful outcome in the end.

Eumeralla

The setup of bike trails in Eumeralla has been a big project for the Anglesea team, and hopefully the team is starting to make head way. The Anglesea team has been working closely with representatives from Wathaurong and cultural representatives within Parks Victoria, to make sure that important archeological sites are not impacted by the work. We are hoping to have interpretation signage for the site installed. Lachie Davis lined up some volunteer working bees to undertake these works.

Anglesea Heath into the Great Otway National Park

In the last year we have finally seen the Anglesea Heath be included into the Great Otway National Park. This is a fantastic win for the area, and I would again like to thank all the Friends



Above: Margaret MacDonald cuts the ribbon watched by (from left): Dale Antonysen, District Manager West Coast District of Parks Vic, Peter Forster, Michelle Anstee Parks Vic, Ros Gibson, Kate McMahon Parks Vic & Alison Watson - all have had long term commitment to the preservation of the Anglesea Heath.

who have worked over many years for this to happen. Hopefully we can look after this significant area for future generations and ensure the longevity of important ecological community in the Anglesea Heath. With that said we are busy organising several pest plant projects in the Heath, road changes, and new Great Otway National Park signage has replaced the old signage. There will also be an Anglesea Heath Coordinator position advertised soon, which will then oversee the road change requirements, facilities for the area, and law enforcement. The Anglesea Heath coordinator position will facilitate community consultation with all major decisions, which I am confident the Friends will be consulted for their insight and expertise.

Otway Ark Project

The last year has been big for the Otway Ark Project, with a new Coordinator and Ranger coming on board, and the expansion of the program. For the first time Parks Victoria are coordinating fox baiting in the Lorne area, which has increased our control program to target most of the Great Otway National Park. The other major component to the Otway Ark program is a large camera trapping program, which we run in the Park periodically. It continues to provide valuable data that helps us understand who is living in the Great Otway National Park.



Above: Our Otway Ark Ranger Claire Miller recently came across this pregnant Southern Brown Bandicoot snooping around one of our cameras.

Otway Eden Project

It was another big year for our landscape pest plant program, Otway Eden. With several projects completed that contribute to the protection of the Anglesea Heath. Firstly, through Otway Eden we funded a new round of biodiversity monitoring, which means that there is now three sets of data going back 10 years. With this level of data we can begin to make scientifically informed interpretations. I will pass on to the Friends what information arises when the data is analysed.

This year the Otway Eden program had an expanded commitment to eradicating South African Weed Orchid, with several new sites discovered. Whilst this is disheartening, the positive was that with the amount of outbreak reports we received from members of the Friends and ANGAIR we were able to undertake treatment of these areas.

Without these reports the Parks Victoria led control program would not have been so responsive. I would especially like to thank Neil Tucker for his valuable work in coordinating everybody.

Finally, my favourite project of this round of Otway Eden was the Coast Wattle control along the Anglesea River in the Great Otway National Park. This work was very satisfying and has improved a truly beautiful area of the Anglesea Heath. If anyone is interested is seeing this beautiful area have a look at the river section between Harrison South Track and Allardyce Track, where you are bound to see a bird of prey cruising up the river.

Lastly, thanks once again to everybody in the Friends group, you make our jobs as rangers much easier with the valuable time that you put into the Park, and I am sure we will have another fantastic year working together. Thank you.

It has been another busy summer here on the Surf Coast and in the Great Otway National Park, with visitors coming from all around the world to explore this incredible area. This summer, I have been very fortunate to be able to join the Parks Victoria team at Anglesea. Where I have enjoyed helping to deliver the educational programs through the school holidays, and working alongside the team through the peak visitor season.


Junior Ranger

This summer was another successful year with the delivery of the Junior Ranger program. We had almost two Junior Ranger sessions per week throughout January, where we aimed to connect children aged six to twelve with the park and inspire lifelong connections. The sessions included the popular 'Bush Detective' at Distillery Creek where we learnt how to set up wildlife cameras to monitor native and invasive species in the park. Other activities included 'campfire connections' at Blanket Leaf Picnic Ground where children learnt about bushfire safety in a fun and friendly environment.


Summer by the Sea

The Summer by the Sea program in conjunction with Eco-Logic was a fantastic opportunity for families to learn more about the incredible marine life we have here in the parks. Sessions which I helped in delivering were run at Point Addis Marine Park and Eagle Rock Marine Park, the diversity and differences in fauna and flora distribution between the Parks was fascinating.

A few of the highlights were seeing a Maori Octopus, learning about unique Elephant Snails, Goose Neck Barnacles, and my favourite was finding Chitons hiding in the shade. After each session not only were the kids super excited to have been able to explore the intertidal zone, but the parents thoroughly enjoyed learning how much life there really is along the shore.


Caravan parks and Sea Search

In between the Junior Ranger program and Summer by the Sea we were able to visit the Big 4 Caravan Park in Anglesea and bring the park to them. We learnt about our unique marine life by exploring the 'marine treasure box' and learnt about the wildlife in the Great Otway National Park, through observing an array of taxidermy animals and their unique 'creature features'. This summer I also joined the Friends of Point Addis and Friends of Eagle Rock for their summer 'Sea Search' events. At these events everybody enjoyed working together to collect data to understand the health of our marine parks and sanctuaries. These events have taken place for over a decade, and soon the results will be able to be accessed online through the Parks Victoria website.

The Great Otway National Park truly is an incredible place and it has been a very special opportunity to be able to join the community in helping to protect the park, and connect visitors to these incredible spaces we have here. I want to thank all the other Parks Victoria Rangers for helping me deliver and plan the summer program, Eco-Logic as well as the Friends groups for their ongoing support and knowledge they provided.

Pictured are (top) bivalves on a cuttle, (above right) an Elephant Snail on a rock, and (above left), an Ocellate Sea Star.