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FROM THE
PRESIDENT
Patrick
Flanagan

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL AGM

We had a very successful Annual General Meeting on Sunday February 10 with over 30 members in attendance.

We called for nominations for the committee and as there was only one nominee for each position, the committee for 2019 was duly elected. I am continuing as President, Peter Crowcroft is the Vice President, while Sue Guinness continues as Secretary, Kaye Traynor as Assistant Secretary, Ross Davey as Treasurer, and Alison Watson, Margaret MacDonald, Jane Shennan and Gretel Lamont continuing as committee members. We still have a vacancy for another committee member, so if you would like to join us, please get in touch as we are able to fill casual vacancies by appointment.

Once the business of the committee was over, we were engaged by the presentation from our guest speakers Julian de Stefano and Matt Swan. Their presentation will help inform our fauna monitoring activities. Please see more detailed AGM reports on pages 3-5.



CONSERVATION VALUES PRIORITY FOR THE ANGLESEA HEATH

Since the Anglesea Heath (6,501 ha) was incorporated into the Great Otway National Park in January 2018, the Friends of Eastern Otways have welcomed the opportunity to put forward ideas on how to protect and manage the important biodiversity conservation values of the area while allowing for recreational activities that are compatible with these values.

We congratulate Parks Vic on the information provided regarding the planned management of the area, and we hope that many of our members completed the survey on the Engage Victoria website.

We have put forward our ideas for walking trails, visitor facilities and recreational use. We are strongly in favour for conservation values to be considered in any decision making.

The heathy woodland in the Anglesea Heath is the richest and most diverse vegetation community recorded in Victoria with the native plants and animals of the area being important parts of the region's biodiversity. The Anglesea River valley which winds through the Heath contains spectacular stands of swamp plants; in particular Scented Paperbark *Melaleuca squarrosa*.

A number of very rare orchids are found in these swampy areas including Lizard Orchids *Burnettia cuneata* and Swamp Helmet Orchids *Corybas fordhamii*. These swampy heaths are also significant for the aquatic habitat they provide for a number of rare and restricted species.

The Anglesea Heath Consultative Committee is recommending that conservation of the Anglesea River valley along Harrison Track be maintained as a set aside conservation area for our native plants and animals with research being a major focus. There would be no vehicle access apart from management and research vehicles, no 4WDs, no trail bikes, no mountain bikes and no horses. The Friends strongly endorse this recommendation. We would like to think this could be a positive outcome! **Margaret MacDonald**



Above: From Harrison Track overlooking the Anglesea River valley rich with stands of Scented Paperbarks and several varieties of rare orchids.



ENVIRONMENTAL WEEDING

Anglesea Heathlands

Our summer weeding program continued on the Anglesea Heathland on December 11, 2018 and February 12, 2019. We have been concentrating on Sallow Wattle and Bluebell Creeper growing in the area near 5th Ave where our cameras have detected the rare and threatened Southern Brown Bandicoot. We are careful not to remove too much vegetation as it is also habitat for these special creatures.

We have had good attendance at both sessions and we were very pleased to have Gael and Fabian's grandson and his mates at our December session. With their young athletic bodies they did a great job of crawling under the low growing vegetation removing carpets of Boneseed seedlings that had appeared following the 2018 fuel reduction burn.



It is good to see that the Otway Eden Coastal Tender program funded by the CCMA is being implemented by Parks Vic in these coastal heathlands. However this program is concentrating on removal of large woody weeds from the western section of the area and as we are aware of areas in the burnt section that need attention we have decided to stay on this site for the autumn months. Boneseed seedlings were still coming up in large numbers in February and we expect this trend to continue.

Autumn Program - Anglesea Heathlands

Tuesdays March 12, April 9, May 14.

Contact Margaret MacDonald 0412 652 419

Meet in O'Donohue Rd near 5th Avenue.



COMING EVENTS

Two Rivers Walk – Kennett + Cumberland Rivers

Saturday March 16

Meet at Aireys Inlet Community Hall at 9.30 am to car pool

Contact: Alison Watson 0400 570 229

This is a chance to explore and compare the river valleys of Kennett and Cumberland Rivers. According to the new interpretive signs at Kennett River there is a chance to see Rakali if we walk quietly. The Cumberland River track with dramatic cliffs where the Peregrine Falcons nest, leads to Jebb's Pool - we can cool off if the weather is warm. Both walks are gentle and easy, though they might include some rock hopping. Bring morning tea and lunch. Wear appropriate clothing for the weather and sturdy footwear.

For those who would like to know more about Rakali:

http://www.swift.net.au/cb_pages/observations - water_rat.php



Anglesea Heath Walk - Red River Track/Denham Track

Saturday April 20

5.5km easy walk

Meet at ANGAIR at 9.30am.

Contact: Donna Lannan/Margaret MacDonald 0412 652 419

A joint walk with ANGAIR celebrating their 50th anniversary.

In April 1996 ANGAIR introduced 'Get To Know Your Tracks' and the first walk took place on Denham Track, named after Pat Denham, a Forestry Overseer with the Department of Forestry. We hoped to retrace those steps, but as a result of closures and realignments, sections of the original walk no longer exist. We have incorporated about 1km of Denham Track into our walk.

Red River Track, the first part of our walk, about 2km, is named because of the red peat that was a feature of the landscape after the 1983 bushfire. The two tracks wind through heathy woodland with wonderful views across the Otways.



Denham Track leads us to No2 Rd and walking on the roadside verge for about 2.5km we make our way back to the start at Red River Track. In April 1996 red Victorian Heath *Epacris impressa* and white Twisted Beard Heath *Leucopogon glacialis* were most spectacular, with special mention of the birds, butterflies and other insects, so it will be interesting to see what April 2019 brings. Bring morning tea and lunch and wear appropriate clothing and footwear.



AGM 2019 - PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As President, I'd like to thank the committee for their commitment. A special thank you is owed to Jane for her creativity and skill in editing the quarterly Newsletter. I'm not the only one to express appreciation, members regularly contact us with congratulations on the quality of the newsletter. Sue deserves thanks for keeping the ship afloat and on course, and Kaye for ensuring we are up to date with our reports to external bodies. I would also like to thank Matt Russell for his hard work and support in his role as Liaison Ranger. Katrina Lovett has, as always, provided invaluable support to us in our dealings with Parks Victoria.

Environmental weeding working bees formed a major part of our year's activities - Forest Rd corner twice, Moggs Creek twice, (one was a joint activity with the Eels), Hurst Rd, off Hurst Track (Eumeralla) three sessions, and four sessions on O'Donohue's heathlands..



Above: President Patrick Flanagan presents his report to the AGM 2019.

Activities conducted throughout the year included

11 monthly committee meetings
First Aid Training April. From a grant awarded to The Friends, put together by Alison.
The annual Koala Survey held in June
Walks (Sabine Falls, Lemonade Creek, Pt Addis, Harrisons Track Nth, Peregrine Track, e-bikes Old Beechy Rail Trail)
Spotlighting- Moggs Creek (twice, once for the Friends, once assisting Carlie Bronk with the Junior Ranger program)
ANGAIR Show

Camera monitoring – 704 camera nights

Behind Anglesea PS, Eumeralla, Off Harvey St, O'Donohue's heathlands
8 species Native Fauna – Eastern Grey Kangaroo, Black Wallaby Red-neck Wallaby, Southern Brown Bandicoot (breeding female), Echidna, Grey Shrike Thrush, Magpie
4 Feral animals - fox, deer, black rat and rabbit
All fauna captured on the cameras are entered on the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas. Feral animals are also reported to Claire for the Otway Ark program.

Volunteer hours recorded on Park Connect. The Friends have given 1333 volunteer hours for the year on activities related to the GONP - weeding, committee meetings, walks, spotlighting, etc

Submissions and applications

The Friends submission to the Senate Committee on Faunal extinction from the 20 years of our monitoring work. We noted the decline in small terrestrial mammals (Bandicoot, Antechinus, Smokey Mouse, Dunnart, etc Ongoing: Grant application for about \$6000 for signage along the Surf Coast for Hooded Plovers, in conjunction with FoHPSC.

Visit to other Friends Groups – to the FO Canadian Corridor/Woowookarung, near Ballarat

Highlights of the year for me were the opportunities for and enjoyment from working with young people.

- **Kids Thrive program** (Child-led community change program). August-September
Worked as one of the community partners with a group of 4 senior primary-school children of Northern Bay College on a project to protect threatened species. They helped us with a small grant to buy rechargeable batteries (and a charger) for one of our monitoring cameras. We introduced them to the animals we are interested in monitoring and the way we do it. They came out and visited and helped us set a camera. We also provided them with an animation of the camera output for their Showcase event at GPAC.
- **Weeding with the Eels at Moggs Creek (April)**
Aireys Resident and Eels President, Greg Day organised to bring the Eels to a weeding session at Moggs Creek, off Robyn Ave. Greg's older son Paddy, Patrick Dangerfield, and my good self, made up the 3 Paddys. No shamrocks but plenty of Sallow Wattle cleaned up.
- **Environment day Aireys Inlet Primary School and Mangowak Reserve.**
A targeted weeding session with the juniors and seniors and introduced them to the special plants in the reserve.
- **Parks Vic Junior Ranger Program** (assisting Carlie Bronk)
- 'Wildly' successful spotlighting night and wildflower identification activities that the kids got right into.

The young children we have had the pleasure of working with are enthusiastic, energetic (sometime too much so) and extremely interested in their natural environment and their maturation into adults bodes well for our future. I'm sure I speak for the others who have helped with these activities when I say I find it very rewarding working with them, if sometimes a little demanding.

For 2019:

Anglesea Heath: Saul Vermeeren of the Anglesea Heath Establishment project, incorporating the Heath into the GONP, would appreciate input from conservation-minded residents and users of the Heath into a survey on future land uses in the (bushwalking, mountain biking, horse riding, etc). Land uses prior to the incorporation are being pushed by interest groups to allow them to continue after incorporation.

Hoodies: If we are awarded the grant for Hooded Plover signage, we'll be very busy coordinating the project to ensure it is finished within the 2-year time frame.

Activities: We are putting finishing touches to our program of activities for this year.

Working bees will continue to be held on the second Tuesday of the month, please join us. Details are enclosed in our regular quarterly newsletter. Our autumn program focusses on the O'Donohue's heathland.

Fauna monitoring: we are holding a planning meeting in the next couple of weeks for our monitoring program for the year. If you are interested in being involved in either or both phases, please email me, or Gretel (gretel.lamont@gmail.com). **Patrick Flanagan**

FIRE ECOLOGY AND DIVERSITY

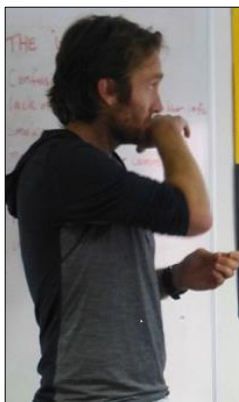


After the AGM, Dr Matt Swan (*left*) and Dr Julian Di Stefano (*lower left*) from the University of Melbourne spoke to us about their research on ground-dwelling mammals in the Otway Ranges. Data from motion-sensing cameras deployed between 2010 and 2017 suggest that medium sized species such as southern brown bandicoot and long-nosed potoroo have stable populations, but that foxes and feral cats are also common. Further, many species are responding more strongly to habitat structure than to time since fire, which means that using fire to maintain high quality habitat may be an effective management strategy.

1. How does fire influence resources for animals
2. How do species and communities respond to fire and habitat change
3. How do species and communities respond to interactions between fire and other processes

New Otway-specific habitat suitability models for ground-dwelling mammals showed that climate was a much stronger driver of habitat suitability than time since fire for most species. Models for declining species such as New Holland mouse and swamp antechinus can be used to identify remaining areas of high-quality habitat, or sites for future reintroductions. The dry forests north of Anglesea provided better habitat for more species than the wetter forests to the southwest.

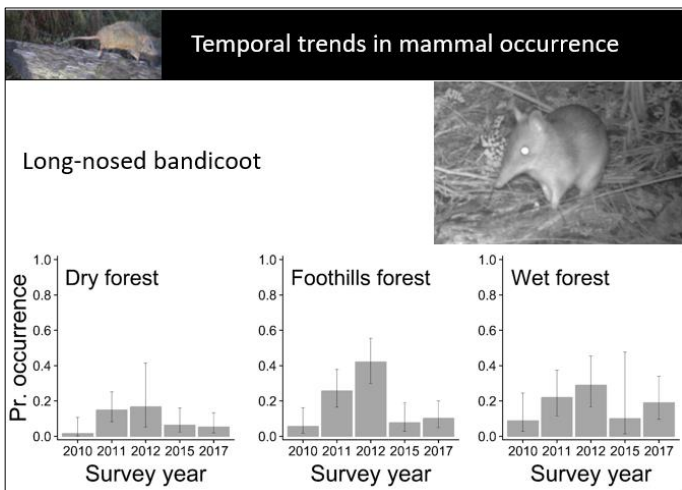
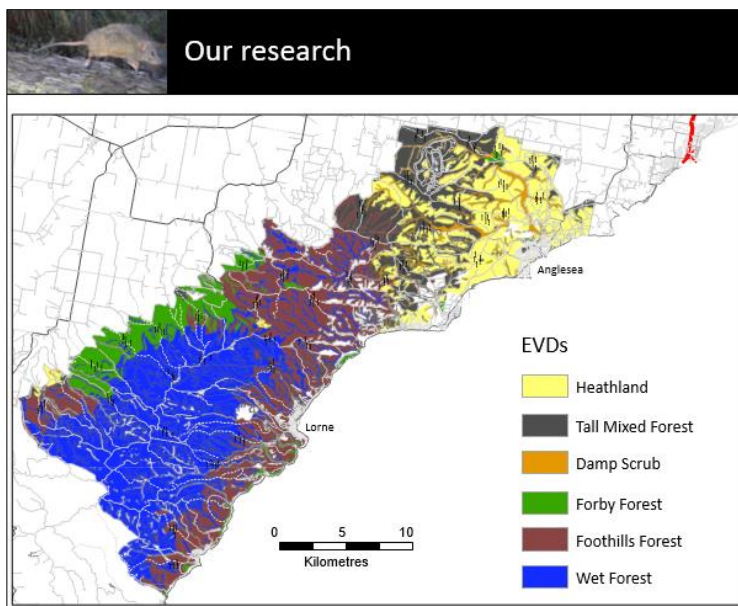
Above: The main points of the presentation to the AGM from the Fire Ecology and Biodiversity research project.



The combined effect of climate change, fire and invasive predators pose the greatest threat to ground-dwelling mammals of the Otways. A practical conservation strategy is to determine the habitat resources that species require and use fire to maintain these resources across the landscape.

You can see more information about this subject at <http://www.fireecologyandbiodiversity.com/> and on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/fireecologygroup>

Thank you to Julian and Matt for these images from their PowerPoint presentation.



GOOD ATTENDANCE AT AGM

The Annual General Meeting for the Friends of Eastern Otways was held on Sunday 11 February, attended by 33 people and held in the CFA Rooms in Anglesea.

Following the formalities of the meeting, our two guest speakers provided an enlightening address to the group. Dr Julian Di Stefano, Fire Ecology and Biodiversity Research Group and Dr Matthew Swan, School of Ecosystems and Forest Sciences, both from the University of Melbourne, delivered presentations based on studies of the effects of fires and other landscape disturbance on small ground-dwelling mammals. A few points from their presentations:

- Data was collected from 180 Research Sites throughout the Otway Ranges. The areas monitored were Dry Forest (Anglesea), Foothill Forest, and Wet Forest habitats.
- Remote sensor cameras were most frequently used, as well as some trapping with Elliott traps. Although labor intensive, the traps enable more precise identification.
- The research indicates that while some native fauna populations are stable, others are declining, such as Swamp Antechinus and White-footed Dunnart. The New Holland Mouse is particularly threatened. Feral animals, cats and foxes, have also been recorded and their impact on populations of small mammals is significant in all of the study areas.
- Drying climate, loss of habitat, fires and increase in feral animal predation pose severe threats to native animals. However mosaic burning in the right time and place, can maintain vegetation structure suitable to sustain small mammal populations.



Above: Friends President Patrick Flanagan presents a copy of Margaret Lacey's book to guest speakers Matt Swan and Julian di Stefano at the AGM.

In appreciation of the very interesting and informative presentations, a copy of *Birds of Anglesea and Aireys Inlet on the Great Ocean Road* by our local author Margaret Lacey, was presented to each of our guest speakers.

The Meeting closed at 4.30 pm and was followed by a delicious afternoon tea. **Kaye Traynor**

 **FRIENDS' ACTIVITIES SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER**



ERSKINE FALLS DONATION BOX IN BUSHLAND SETTING

The new sign for the donation box is finally in place at Erskine Falls.

Following the decision to stay with the old box rather than install a new one, GONP Ranger Matt Russell has been busy and given the old box a new lease of life.

We are just waiting for some new signs to go on the front of the box in English and Mandarin to indicate where to place donations.



The sign and the box look very attractive in their bushland setting. Thanks to Matt for his help in getting the project to this stage.

Special thanks to Kaye, pictured above, for her beautiful illustrations.

Over the years a considerable amount of money has been received from public donations. These funds have enabled the Friends to implement important projects within the National Park.

We hope the new sign, including a special message for our Chinese visitors, will attract attention and result in more donations. **Margaret MacDonald**



FRIENDS' ACTIVITIES SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

END OF YEAR AT MOGGS CREEK – December 8



Craig & Pete managing the BBQ.

This event is always a great one when the Friends join with ANGAIR and Parks Victoria to celebrate another successful year of volunteering in conservation.

We had put the Guide Camp shelters on stand-by as occasional showers had been forecast but when 21 people turned up at the Picnic Ground for the walk at 10.00am we felt the weather was going to be kind to us, and indeed that was the case. Gentle misty rain was falling as we set off for the walk but it wasn't long before the raincoats and umbrellas were able to be set aside.

As we walked the circuit track that had been well cleared for us by Parks Vic staff the rain ceased and we were enthralled at

how lush the vegetation was despite dry conditions over the previous weeks.

A highlight was the many specimens of the Victorian Christmas Bush *Prostanthera lasianthos* that were in full bloom. Pete found an interesting caterpillar that seemed to be decorated with red dots. However his sharp eyes detected that something was not quite right and discovered that tiny red mites were attacking the caterpillar. It is always a pleasant walk amongst the ferns and vegetation that grow along the Creek.

Back at the picnic ground and our numbers had doubled and Craig and Matt from Parks Vic. had the BBQ underway with Pete soon sharing the cooking duties. People had brought a variety of salads, and plates were soon filled with everyone sitting down in this 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. Katrina and Matt from Parks Vic expressed their appreciation for the volunteers' efforts. Another year had come to an end and people were looking forward to a break to recharge and start again in 2019. **Margaret MacDonald**



Above: Time to tuck in.

Below: Pete examining an unusual caterpillar.



BBQ & SPOTLIGHT WALK MOGGS CREEK – January 11



We had scheduled this activity for January 4 but due to high temperatures during the day of 40.5 degrees and forecast for extreme wind conditions in the evening we decided to postpone the activity until January 11.

It was a beautiful evening and as we said last year so relaxing to venture into the tranquillity of the forest on this pleasant summer evening joining with some of our members who had come along to share this activity.

A group of 14 adults and 4 children met at the Moggs Creek Picnic Ground for a BBQ before going into the depth of the forest. It took some time before the night sky started to darken as we walked along the creek track but sharp eyes and torches enabled viewing of some of our smaller creatures – spiders and insects. The children were very excited to see three quite large scorpions on the ground most likely waiting for some prey to come their way. There were some good calls from the Southern Boobook giving its Mopoke call and being answered by other Boobooks in the forest.

Eventually we heard some calls from the Yellow-bellied Gliders and were able to focus our spotlights on these amazing creatures. There were two of them that we

found high up in the eucalypts. They were not on a feeding tree, as it was an Ironbark with its rough trunk, but perhaps they were very aware of our presence and stayed in the same position enabling us all to see them. A little further along the track a Sugar Glider was seen but again very high in the canopy of the trees.

On returning to the picnic ground the first members of the group spotted a Common Brushtail Possum foraging around our BBQ site, but it quickly made its way into the nearby vegetation. It was a very enjoyable evening and it was great to be able to share the experience with some of our younger members. **Margaret MacDonald.**

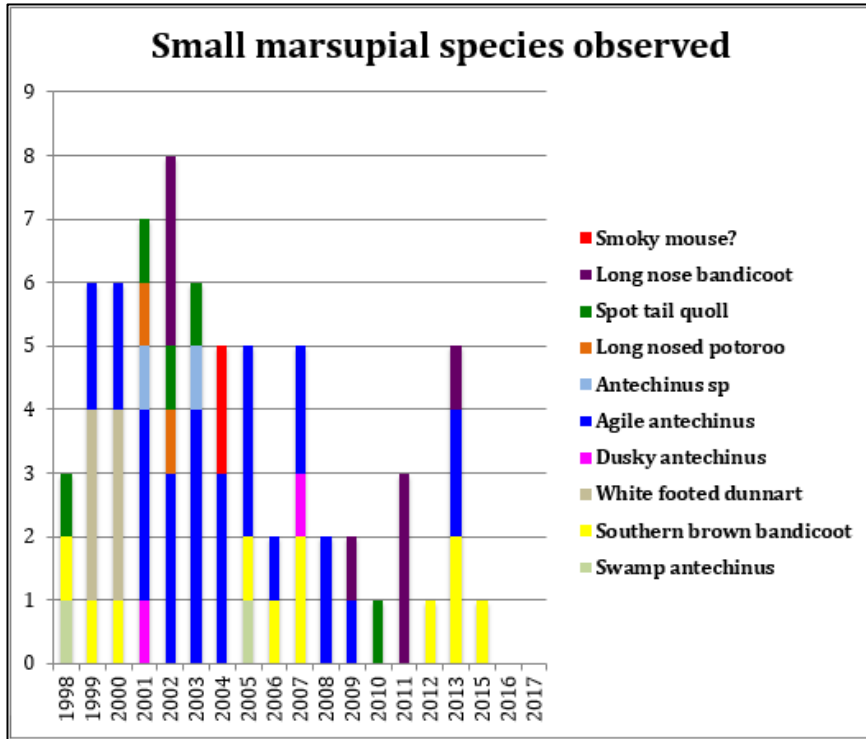
Above: These photos of the Yellow-bellied Glider (left) & Sugar Glider were taken on a previous spotlighting walk.





SUBMISSION TO FAUNAL EXTINCTION INQUIRY

Last September, the Friends made a submission to the Senate Inquiry into Australia’s faunal extinction crisis. Our submission drew on the results of our 20 years of fauna monitoring activities. The data provided a picture of a clear decline in small terrestrial mammals in our area. For the first decade (1998-2008) we used hair tubes that analysed the hair structure of the animals entering the baited hair tube. More recently (2009-2018) we have gradually switched to remote cameras enabling direct and immediate identification of the animal that visited the remote baited camera site. Our current monitoring uses remote cameras only.



There are eight rare or threatened small terrestrial mammals found in the Great Otway National Park.

Six of these have been identified by our monitoring:

- Swamp Antechinus *Antechinus minimus*
- Spot-tailed Quoll *Dasyurus maculatus*
- Southern Brown Bandicoot *Isoodon obesulus obesulus*
- Long-nosed Potoroo *Potorous Ptridactylus*
- Smoky Mouse *Pseudomys fumeus*
- White-footed Dunnart *Sminthopsis leucopus*

In addition, 3 others whose current status is not rare or threatened have been observed by FEO, but sightings of these species are also in decline.

- Agile Antechinus *Antechinus agilis*
- Dusky Antechinus *Antechinus swainsonii*
- Long-Nosed Bandicoot *Perameles nasuta*

Our submission summarised our identifications in two graphs, one illustrating the small marsupial species identified over the monitoring period, and the other showing the decline in observations.

We drew attention to the disturbing decline in the variety and number of species we have observed and expressed our concern about the loss of mammalian biodiversity in the Eastern Otways, and we pointed out the need to continue feral animal control in the GONP, as is being carried out as part of Parks Victoria’s Otway Ark Project and the need for continued monitoring of environmental burning regimes.

Figure 1 (above). Y axis shows number of records. Hair tubes (1998-2008), cameras (2009-2018). The figure shows how the number of species has changed over time with some species not observed for many years.

Figure 2 (right). Y axis shows the trendline for the total number of mammals recorded. Hair tubes (1998-2008), cameras (2009-2018). Note that both figures show no small mammals were recorded in 2016 or 2017.

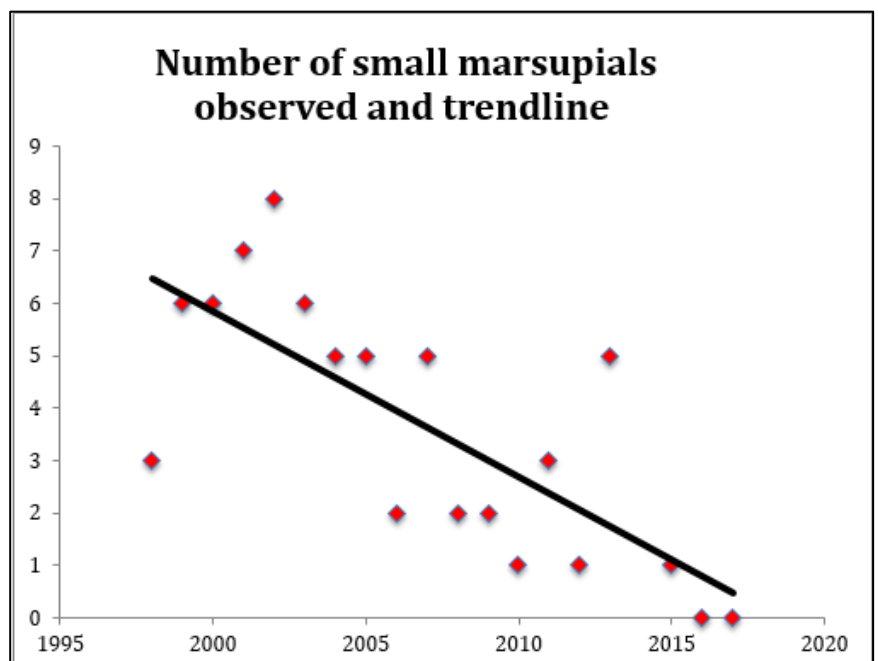
A total of 389 submissions from organisations and individuals were received by the Senate prior to the closing date.

If you would like to read the full submission, it can found in the Friends area of the ANGAIR website.

Alternatively, for a copy please email us at friendsofeasternotways@gmail.com.

Postscript: See the camera monitoring report on the next page for information about our recent Southern Brown Bandicoot sightings.

Patrick Flanagan.





"FRIENDLY" NEWS

BANDICOOT IS STAR PERFORMER

Since we showed off the Southern Brown Bandicoot on the O'Donohue's heathland in our last newsletter, we have kept one camera in place, periodically changing the memory card and/or batteries. We continue to get pictures of the Bandicoot and, in January, it appeared in over 100 frames. She is very active at around midnight and has visited the site 11 times over the 25 days the camera has been in that location.

This week we are putting another four cameras in the area, and hope to get a better idea of her movements. We are certain she is resident in the area and want to try to get a better idea from the camera clocks what direction she is coming from and travelling in. It's been pleasing to get such sustained visits to the sites, as our previous experience with the Southern Brown (and Long-nosed) Bandicoot is they can be quite elusive and timid and haven't in the past made multiple visits to a site.

At the AGM Julian di Stefano pointed out the suitability of the kind of burn that took place in the area, where burnt and unburnt areas adjoin, as in a fire mosaic as habitat for the Southern Brown. He also mentioned that the Southern Brown is exclusively found in dry forest. Both of these conditions describe the habitat where she has taken up residence.

Finally, although we've concentrated on the Bandicoot, the site continues to be visited by kangaroos and wallabies, both Red-necked and, as pictured above, this Black Wallaby and her joey. A fox is an occasional visitor. **Patrick Flanagan.**



Summer RANGER REPORT

SUMMER INTERPRETATION ACTIVITIES

Another beautiful summer gone by and as always, many visitors have travelled from all over the world to visit our stunning Surf Coast and Great Otway National Park. As summer rangers, we were delighted to have the opportunity to deliver interpretation activities throughout this busy period, with the support and guidance of the wonderful Parks Victoria team at Lorne and Anglesea.



Junior Ranger activities this summer filled up quickly with much popularity from such great sessions delivered previously. From rockpool rambles by the coast, to minibeasts at Cumberland River, there was always lots of enthusiasm from both kids and their parents, all actively joining in. We were even lucky enough to find a nudibranch at a Pt Addis rockpool ramble, and had one parent happily state, 'This is the best rock pool ramble I've ever been on!'

With lots of popularity for Junior Rangers we thought we would bring the National and Marine Park to the caravan parks, to get kids out of the games room and into nature.

A 'dry foot snorkel safari' ran as our first activity at Pisces Holiday Park, Apollo Bay. This created a good opportunity for kids who have never been or are afraid to go snorkelling and proved to be a fun interactive way to show what we had in our 'marine treasure box' or what can be seen in our Marine National Parks. The box was also popular with big groups attending both of our sessions at the Anglesea Big 4 Caravan Park.

For the first time we also ran a session each at Wye River Holiday Park and Kennett River Holiday Park, both sessions involved a walk surrounding the parks, keeping our ears and eyes open for what surrounds us. Our only participant for the Kennett River Holiday Park had been counting down the days until the walk, with lots of enthusiasm, knowledge and awareness already. We were fortunate to be able to encourage her passion for the outdoors and conservation, she even brought her own bag to pick up rubbish during the walk!

It has been a great opportunity to share and experience The Great Otway National Park with so many different people, encouraging and educating the community, especially the next generation. This experience has allowed our appreciation to continue to grow, for the team at Parks Victoria and the surrounding community protecting this area. Extremely grateful for the experience and opportunities that we've been given.

Missy McArthur and Camille Acuna, Summer Rangers.





Above: Matt Russell, the Friends Liaison Ranger reports to the AGM.

I am very happy to write this extended annual Ranger Report, it has been a great chance to reflect on the Surf Coast. Thank you to everybody in the Friends of the Eastern Otways for your valued work over the year.

Firstly, it has been a good year for Parks Victoria on the Surf Coast. Our team has been very lucky to maintain stability and have managed to hold onto new additions to the team. With more hands we can 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.

Jamieson Campground and Walking Track

After a busy season and a particularly busy Australia day weekend, we have closed the Jamieson Campground ready for the upgrade and new walking track. This is funded as part of the Wye River Recovery Project. The walking track will connect Separation Creek and finish up at the Jamieson Campground. The walking track will have some good views of the ocean and is connecting some old tracks that the team have been finding in the bush. The upgrade to the Jamieson Campground is going to formalise sites which will cater for both walk in camping and vehicle based camping. There will be a new toilet, firepits and platform which will take in the view.

Junior Ranger

This year we have been very lucky to have two seasonal rangers with us Missy McArthur and Camille Acuna, and they put together a busy summer holiday junior ranger program. The Surf Coast team were able to deliver a variety of fun activities that we hope to expand on next season. This year we had activities like the high energy ‘All Fired Up’ activity where the kids get to use our fire equipment, safety, and what we do to manage fire in the landscape.

We also had several of our established Junior Ranger activities such as ‘Rock Pool Rambles’ and the popular ‘Wildlife Detective’, which our Otway Ark Ranger Claire Miller has perfected. In this activity Claire guides the kids through what we do to protect our small mammals from pests. The kids always have fun and come away from the activity with the ability to name several of our threatened species. One of my highlights has been conducting walks in the Cumberland River, where we have kids that are third generation who spend every summer at the caravan park.

We also thank the Friends for helping with several of our Junior Ranger activities, and we hope that we can continue to hold these activities. The Friends were able to help with a wildflower walk in the Anglesea Heath and a popular Moggs Creek spotlight tour. I met a family over the summer who went on this tour and apparently the kids have been really inspired; the two boys are always asking to go for a spotlight and have studied every living thing in their backyard.



Above & right: Participants in Junior Ranger activities during the recent Summer Ranger program.

Dirt bike Compliance

One of the biggest achievements for our surf coast team was the compliance operation we conducted targeting off road motorbike behaviour. Our team targeted riders that were using illegal tracks and the tracks that are closed to the public. Also, we were educating riders on the correct use of motorbikes in the National Park.

During these compliance weekends we had the assistance from the Police, DELWP, and our Parks Victoria Remote Pilot Aircraft team. Our compliance operation became national news with articles on Fairfax websites in each state, and an article in the Herald Sun. We also had one of our executives interviewed on channel 10 news. There has been a dramatic decrease of illegal riding in Great Otway National Park, which we are observing from our cameras, and looking at how much use the tracks are receiving. As a team we hope to continue our focus on illegal riding into the future.



Anglesea Heath inclusion into the Great Otway National Park

The Anglesea Heath inclusion into the Great Otway National Park has been a fantastic win for the conservation, and I would again like to thank all the Friends for having their say. Our project coordinator Saul Vermeeren is busy going through all the ideas that have come out of the community consultation, and is looking forward to getting some solid plans together.



Barb Wilson is still moving ahead with a *Phytophthora cinnamomi* (at left) study in the Anglesea Heath and we look forward to these recommendations. There is hope that we will all do some ID sessions so we can stop the spread of this pathogen.

Our team has been working with our traditional owners to include them in the process and we are moving towards creating a cultural heritage plan for the area. We aim to include some of the traditional stories and land management into looking after this new patch of the Great Otway National Park.

Otway Ark Project

It has been a big year for the Otway Ark Project, with an expansion of the program, which we were able to deliver as a result of increased funding and with the help of Conservation Ecology Centre. Our Ark team will coordinate fox baiting across a wide area of the Otways, which will also include the Otway Forest Park and significant private allotments.

This is alongside our other major component to the Otway Ark program, our camera program, which we run in the park periodically. This camera program continues to provide valuable data that helps us to understand which animals are living in the Great Otway National Park.

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. The Otway Eden Project is a large weed program looking at actions on a landscape level. The main drivers that shape the Otway Eden project are the protection of high value sites, works that will have positive affect without damaging diversity, and targeting pest plants that have potential to really impact on diversity.

Biodiversity On-ground Action

Patrick contacted me recently and suggested the Friends would like to know more about this project. Biodiversity On-Ground Action (BOGA) project has been ticking away for a while now, and is part of the reason we have been able to employ Claire Miller. Basically, the project focuses on impacts to the Anglesea Heath, and is a tenure blind project that focuses on both private and public land. The project is particularly focused on the National Park interface.

There are four species that we are focusing on Bluebell Creeper, Boneseed, Coast Teatree, and Sallow Wattle. Some of the sites that Claire has been focusing on is:

- The Wormbete Station Road area where we have been assisting landholders to control Bluebell Creeper (at right).
- Tanners Road Sallow Wattle, where contractors have helped control infestations in the Otway Forest Park.
- The Harris property - I am sure that the Friends will be aware of the amazing work that the Harris family have done to stop the spread of Coastal Teatree (below) from the Great Ocean Road. Claire has recently had contractors helping with some of this weed work.
- Removing weeds along the 'mad mile' on Anglesea Road.



Otway Bio-Scan

The Otway Bio-scan has been a big highlight for the year with scientists from Museum Victoria, looking at several interesting aspects across the Great Otway National Park. These projects will be presented to the public, and I'm sure that many in the Friends group will find them interesting.

Many of our Parks Victoria staff have been busy helping with many of the projects providing valuable local knowledge and helping with fieldwork.

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.

Matt Russell, Liaison Ranger.