



Secretary: Keith McLean, PO Box 502, Aireys Inlet, Victoria 3231  
Mob: 0448 810 646 Email: info@feo.org.au



FROM THE  
PRESIDENT  
Peter  
Crowcroft

Hi Friends,

I hope everyone has had an enjoyable and nature-filled summer holiday season. The fantastic conditions for growth of plants and insects continues, and it is really starting to show!

Butterflies are a feature of the environment at the moment, with many different species 'posing' for pictures, including this Ringed Xenica (*right*) which



had been on the top of my butterfly bucket list for ages.

Don't even get me started on the moths at night... I'm close to 600 species seen on the Surf Coast now, and every night I switch on the light there are new and unphotographed ones flying in. So, the biodiversity is out there, make the most of these incredible conditions while they last!



Two prevalent dragonfly species seen during the summer were the Blue-Spotted Hawker (top) and Australian Emperor (right).

The extraordinary number of dragonflies in the sky in early and late December was amazing to behold. Perhaps this is the reason there seem to be fewer mosquitoes.

The Friends AGM was a great event, thanks to all who joined us at the CFA to hear about the botanical studies occurring in the heathland from the Deakin University researchers and scientists.

Leaving the committee are Wendy Brooks, Gretel Lamont and Ross Davey. We thank them for their service to the Friends over the years. Ellen Doxey takes over the reins as Treasurer and Keith McLean steps into the Secretary role.

We were pleased to present Ross Davey with a Life Membership for his essential and excellent work for many years as our Treasurer.

In other news from the AGM:

- Our project to record the knowledge of our members and make it digitally available for visitors to the Park continues, with a website designer due to begin working on the project in April.
- Our March activity at Distillery Creek will help us plan what information will be most useful for visitors on that nature walk. I hope you can join us!
- Our new weeding tools (thanks to a Parks Victoria grant) are sharp and have been put to good use a number of times, most recently on the Bluebell Creeper at Moggs Creek. Cheers, Pete. See AGM reports pp 11-12.

## LA NINA PRODUCES BUMPER BUG SEASON

- With thanks to the Surf Coast Times and Tim Lamacraft for permission to reprint this article from 13 January 2023.



A Surf Coast biologist has confirmed what many in the region have been noticing: it has been a bumper season for the proliferation of insects.

Peter Crowcroft said the third consecutive year of a La Nina weather pattern that typically brought above-average rainfall was largely behind the phenomena that rivals any other he has witnessed.

'The writing was on the wall early on, because there's been a couple of good seasons with rain from La Nina...and with all the flooding the vegetation growth has been amazing.'

Among his observations were a mass dragonfly emergence event on December 27 that stretched for more than 15 kilometres east of Moggs Creek, which he said was stimulated by a heatwave that day.

'The sky was filled all the way through Aireys Inlet, through Anglesea; it was amazing. The sky was really thick with dragonflies – they'd probably been feeding on mosquitoes, but mating as well. *Continued on page 7.*





### TARGETING BLUEBELL CREEPER

Our two sessions for the summer program were held at opposite ends of the Great Otway National Park. The first one was at Coalmine Road, Anglesea where the main targets were Boneseed, Sallow/Coast Wattle and Bluebell Creeper. The second was at Moggs Creek focussed on Bluebell Creeper, but Coast Tea-tree and Sallow/Coast Wattle were also under attack. Both sessions were very successful.

It was great to have Pete join the weeding team at Moggs as he is now on long service leave, and we were also pleased to welcome Ann and Isabel (Alison's sisters). It was a great team. We will return to the Moggs site once snake season is over, as undergrowth is quite thick there once you leave the roadside.

We apologise for the wrong date printed for February in our Summer Newsletter, but as we had no complaints our volunteers must have realised. In addition, the site and activity were also changed as a contractor had carried out weed control on our chosen site. At both sites we were able to make good use of our new tools and gloves funded through the Parks Vic Volunteer Growth Fund.

Our autumn sites have been selected in conjunction with Isabelle Kielbaska, newly appointed Ranger with Parks Vic who is managing weed control within the Great Otway National Park. Isabelle came along to the Moggs Creek session and is keen to be involved with the Friends' Group. **Margaret MacDonald.**



*Above: FEO environmental weeders with Bluebell Creeper, Coast Tea-tree and Sallow/Coast Wattle in their sights at Moggs Creek. Right: President Pete, on long service leave, joined the weeding team. Below: Gael & Keith searching for Bluebell Creeper off Coalmine Road near Anglesea.*



#### **AUTUMN PROGRAM**

**Tuesdays, March 14 and April 11**

Meet at corner of Gundrys and Forest Rd at 9.30am.

**Tuesday, May 9 Forest Rd**

Meet near Firebreak Track just before Gum Flat Rd at 9.30am

Sessions 9.30 - 11.00am followed by coffee at local coffee shop.

Contact: Margaret 0412 652 419





## FRIENDS' ACTIVITIES

### CELEBRATION AT MOGGS CREEK

With the unpredictability of the weather in early summer, we were so pleased when the day was perfect for the Friends and Angair members to enjoy the tranquil Moggs Creek environment for our annual celebration.

A group of 12 came along to the Picnic Ground at 10am and enjoyed morning tea before setting off to share the experience of walking the Moggs Creek Circuit Trail.

Starting the walk we could hear Gang-gang Cockatoos in the trees, and Paul was rewarded for his patience with a photo (*right*) of two immature birds feeding.

After the heavy rains there was plenty of water in the creek and gullies and although there were no bird experts in the group, we managed to identify 12 bird species as we walked the track.

The walk along the creek was just as beautiful as ever with mosses, algae, groundcovers, ferns, bushes and shrubs all growing together. The blue flowers of the Cut-leaf Daisy and the white flowering Prickly Starwort were admired.

The Rasp Fern was displaying its beautiful colours of red, orange and shades of green as it intermingled with the delicate Maidenhair Fern and the native geranium.

Unfortunately the Victorian Christmas Bush *Prostranthera lasianthos*, which is usually in full flower at this time, was just coming into bloom and we had to be satisfied with just a few flowers on the bushes.

Back at the Picnic Ground our numbers had swelled with another 21 members joining the celebration, bringing our total to 43, just one more than last year.

It was great to see the table of attractive salads and it wasn't long before the smells of the barbecue provided by ParksVic wafted through the air. We had certainly missed this aspect of the celebration with the covid restrictions of the past two years.

It wasn't long before people filled their plates and spread out to relax and enjoy their lunch in this great environment and share experiences with others. Another year of conservation activities had come to an end and people were looking forward to 2023. **Margaret MacDonald.**

*Above right: Intrepid walkers cross the 'Troll Bridge'. Right: the white flowers of the Prickly Starwort. Below right: The hues of the Rasp Fern. Below: Tucking into the shared smorgasbord of salads and sausages.*







### **GLIDER RESEARCH AT MOGGS CREEK**

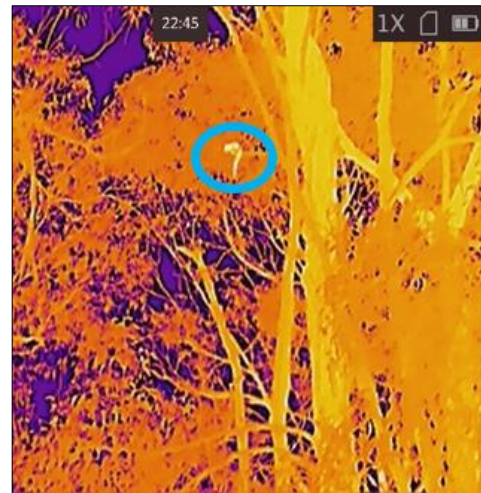
#### **Yellow-bellied Glider *Petaurus australis***

The Yellow-bellied Glider, also known as the Fluffy Glider, is one of six gliding possums that occur in Victoria. It is an arboreal, nocturnal gliding possum that lives in native eucalypt forests in eastern Australia, from northern Queensland south to Victoria. The species has a special skin called a gliding membrane from wrists to ankles used for gliding between trees, sometimes at distances up to 150m!!

The Friends completed surveys for the Yellow-bellied Glider at Moggs Creek Picnic Ground on 21 and 28 January. We used a combination of survey techniques including feed tree searches, audio recorders and nocturnal searches using red-filtered spotlights, infrared binocular and thermal monocular.

We recorded 19 feed trees (with y/v shaped feed marks) consisting of eight trees with recent feed signs and two historical feed trees (which Marg dated back to 1994 from photos with Yellow-bellied Glider feeding on them). The remaining trees all displayed historical feed sign.

Six (probably more) trees with hollows appearing suitable for Yellow-bellied Gliders were also recorded. At least four Yellow-bellied Gliders were recorded during nocturnal surveys. We counted them by comparing the direction and timing of individuals calling and individuals observed (e.g. we observed two individuals interacting in the spotlight whilst hearing two others calling from different directions).



One individual was observed feeding on a Manna Gum for 55 mins. During this period it defended its feed tree and also took the time to stop and groom between feeding bouts. It was observed to forage underneath the bark for insects and also appeared to start gnawing at the bark, presumably to start sap flow.

Fortunately, we recorded most of these observations and more using the infrared binoculars. These will be uploaded to the FEO website. We also deployed three audiomoths (audio recorders) for six nights, however I am yet to review the acoustic data. Big thanks to Keith, Marg, Gretel and Oliver for assisting with surveys. **Craig Grabham.**

Of course, the Yellow-bellied Glider is not the only gliding possum in the Great Otway National Park and during the course of our monitoring we also observed Sugar Gliders.

#### **Sugar Glider *Petaurus breviceps***

They are considerably smaller than the Yellow-bellied Glider, and are omnivorous, tree living, and nocturnal.

Its common name derives from its feeding on sugar rich sap and nectar and we saw them eat at the cuts made on selected feed trees by the Yellow-bellied Gliders.

They are not the only forest dweller to take advantage of the tree cuts which also attract insects, butterflies and New Holland Honeyeaters.

We were lucky to observe a small family group of Sugar Gliders for over 40 minutes and also to see them gliding through the branches. This is a key ability, both to allow them to reach food and to escape the talons of predatory owls! **Keith McLean.**



*Above: An infrared image of a Yellow-bellied Glider climbing up a Manna Gum. Left: A thermal image identifies another about 40m from the observer.*



*Above & right: Sugar Gliders emerging from the safety of their hollows. Its common name derives from its feeding on sugar rich sap and nectar.*



## **MACKILLOP COLLEGE COASTAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT**

MacKillop College, a co-educational secondary school based at Werribee with a high intake of students from many cultural backgrounds, has been bringing Year 8 students for a camping experience at Moggs Creek as part of their outdoor education program for many years.

Since 2019 the Friends of Eastern Otways, Parks Vic Rangers and Friends of Moggs Creek have worked with the students and staff on a project of removing environmental weeds that have been invading the valued indigenous vegetation on the coastal heathlands at Moggs Creek.

The results have been very spectacular. Last year the students' involvement was extremely valuable to our Friends group as these enthusiastic youngsters helped to implement our program funded

through the Australian Government's Wild Otways Initiative to control weed invasions in the valuable coastal heathlands. The children formed magnificent teams dragging up vegetation cut by contractors on the steep hillside and stacking it in areas for mulching. We certainly would not have been able to complete this task without them and the students can be proud of their achievements.

It has been a delight working with them as we have been impressed with their enthusiasm and the co-operative relationships that they have extended to the volunteers, the different agencies and to their fellow students.

We are pleased to say that this project will continue this year, and we would like to invite anyone who is available to come along and share in the activity. There are two groups of approx. 25 students for a one-hour activity 9.30am-10.30am and a second group 11.00am to 12 noon.

We ask you to put the dates in your diary –

June – Friday 2 & 16, Thurs 22. July – Friday 28. August – Friday 4, Thurs 10. Sept – Friday 8

Further information will be available prior to the start of the project. **Margaret MacDonald.**



*Above: MacKillop College students, pictured here with staff and members of the Friends, last year helped control weed invasion in the coastal heathlands.*



## **COMING EVENTS**

### **DISTILLERY CREEK NATURE TRAIL**

**Saturday 18 March 9.30am**

This popular trail is the first location we will create a digital information experience for visitors. What information should we provide though? What do visitors want to know and where are the best places for it along the trail? Is there even phone reception? As part of the Geelong Foundation Grant, we are going to investigate this walk with an eye to planning a series of interpretive information stops. Our aim is for visitors to understand and appreciate more about the environment they walk through. Meet at the Distillery Creek Picnic area (northern side) and hang around afterwards for morning tea or an early BBQ or picnic lunch afterwards.



### **MOGGS CREEK BIODIVERSITY EVENING & BBQ**

**Saturday 15 April 7pm**

After the great success of last year's biodiversity evening at Moggs, we'll do it again this year! A night walk for the gliders and possums and light sheets for our diverse nocturnal invertebrates (like these Batwing Moths). It gets dark quite early, so if you're coming for a BBQ arrive about 5-5.30pm. We'll start walking the Moggs Creek loop at 7pm.

### **COALMINE CREEK TRACK – EASTERN VIEW**

**Saturday 20 May 9am**

This is a decent walk so pack your hiking shoes! Meet at the Aireys Inlet Hall and we'll travel in convoy and do a car shuffle.

***As usual look out for reminders and more details closer to the date in your email inbox.***







**HOODIE ACTIVITY WITHIN THE PARK**

Once again, the vulnerable Hooded Plovers chose Red Rocks near Pt Addis for their nesting site where 3 eggs were discovered on 9 January. Two of the eggs hatched on 5 February and two tiny chicks were sighted running on the shore and being brooded by their parents the next day. For the following two weeks the little family was closely observed.

But, on 18 February, it was very sad to hear that one chick disappeared overnight. Fox and suspected cat prints were seen, but there were no definitive clues as to what occurred. The one remaining chick may possibly have a better chance of survival as the parents will now be even more vigilant against the many threats confronting the young bird until, if it survives, it should be able to fly on or about 11 March. No photos have been taken of



*Hoodie parents BY (above) and PJ (right) keeping watch over their chicks last week.*

the chicks in line with BirdLife's new policy to help protect the young birds.

The female bird (BY), flagged as a mature adult by BirdLife Australia at Red Rocks in 2021, is the same parent that successfully raised one chick in February 2021, and then two more chicks in March 2022. The male bird (PJ) was flagged as a juvenile on Mornington Peninsula in 2020. He is a young new dad and was often seen frequenting many of the beaches along the Surf Coast prior to joining BY. We sometimes wondered was he taking his parental role seriously, roaming far from the nest and socialising with other birds, but he certainly seemed to take on the task of caring for his family once the chicks arrived.



**Protective signage**

Parks Victoria once again established a temporary Dog Exclusion Zone with signage from Pt Addis to Red Rocks, and the Friends of Hooded Plovers Surf Coast placed additional signage to alert visitors and develop their awareness.

Friends of Eastern Otways have been pleased to contribute financially to the Friends of Hooded Plovers signage boards that are so attractively kept up to date with information by Bron Ives. Parks Victoria rangers have frequently visited the site to enforce the regulations, while volunteers have been wardening and informing the public about these vulnerable birds.



*Above: Bron Ives attractive information signboard.  
Left: A Parks Victoria Exclusion Zone sign.  
Below left: A shelter provides protection for the chicks.*

**Second nest at Urquhart Bluff**

A second nest within the Great Otway National Park at Urquhart Bluff unfortunately failed just as the chicks were due to emerge early in February. It was suspected a fox or feral cat was the culprit. The parents at this site are two of our local birds. The male (WT) was silver banded as a chick at Moggs Creek in 2014 and recaptured and flagged in 2015, and the female (SZ) was flagged as a juvenile at Fairhaven in 2018. The good news as I write this report on 19 February, is that a new nest with one egg has been discovered at Urquhart Bluff. Hopefully more will follow and these brave little birds will have another try.

The communities along the Surf Coast have taken a real interest in these delightful little birds and nearly everyone is taking care to make sure they are given every opportunity to succeed in raising some new birds to juvenile stage. We thank people for their interest and we stay optimistic that we will have some successes this season. **Margaret MacDonald.**





**RESIDENTS RETURN AFTER LONG ABSENCE**

We all understand that observing orchids is a complex, challenging game and we were thrilled that two orchid species not seen for many years in the district were found flowering in our section of the Great Otway National Park in late 2022. Perhaps it was due to the heavy rainfall during that year, but who knows the answer.



**Dark-tipped Greenhood *Pterostylis atrans***

Only documented from Moggs Creek in 1990 and not observed except for a few years following, we stumbled across this late flowering greenhood when we were exploring track walks for the Friends new edition of the Walk Book in December 2022. Only one flower was found, standing tall with its single green and white striped flower with the brown tips on the end of its dorsal sepal, petals and lateral sepals. Perhaps a spider had been taking refuge in it! A few tiny rosettes growing nearby indicated that there was a small population. A quick visit to Moggs Creek where the orchid had originally been observed and we were optimistic that we found a dried specimen and a few small rosettes. We will certainly return to both sites in December 2023.

**Black-tongue *Caladenia congesta***

I remember the excitement when we first discovered this striking orchid growing at Eastern View in December 1991. There were a number of these bright pink flowers on the side of a bush track. I remember Mary White climbing up the steep track from the Great Ocean Road and sitting and sketching the beautiful flower with its black tongue protruding like a resting bee. These orchids had not come to our attention again until this year when a single flower was found standing proudly on the side of the track saying 'Look at me!' It was further down the hill and on the opposite side of the track from the original small colony. A thorough search of the area was made in the next few weeks but we had to be satisfied with our one specimen. **Margaret MacDonald.**











**SAYING SOME THANK YOU'S**

*From left: At the AGM, President Pete and Ranger Matt thank Friends for a successful year in the Park, and Pete thanks Teah Coates for her presentation. Craig thanks organisers for the annual BBQ.*



**BUMPER BUG SEASON — from page 1.**

'It was one of those rare occasions where you can be surrounded by an abundance of wildlife, a story that's becoming a little less common these days.

'There was one earlier in December, maybe two or three before when we had the other heatwave, but it was eclipsed by the next one'.

Mr Crowcroft has also observed high numbers of black cicadas that similarly spawned with the warm weather, and identified moth species from the northern coast that until recently had not been recorded in the region. He is one of two keen insect observers in Anglesea to have seen more than 500 different types of moth in the town, 'especially since 2020' that he had photographed and documented online as a citizen science project.

'The frogs are having an absolute bumper year as well, all around Anglesea ... interestingly, the biting thrips we've seen in previous years don't seem to be around. It (the weather) hasn't lined up as perfectly for butterflies but they're still around and this season is the best chance you'll have spotting as many different ones as you can. It might never be this good again, in terms of biodiversity abundance, because the general trend is towards drought and rising temperature and conditions which are going to be unfavourable.

'I've tried to make the absolute most of it, travelling around Australia taking photos because we might not see conditions like this for years, or ever, really.'



## A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY

**Report: Sylvia Fogarty-Phipps**

It has been a wonderful opportunity to be able to join the community in helping to protect the Great Otway National Park this summer as a Seasonal Parks Ranger. Every day has been different, full of learning, and a deepening appreciation of this special place and the work that goes into helping look after it. I have enjoyed engaging with the variety of visitors that flock to the coast for the summer to enjoy this stunning place.

### Hooded Plovers highlights

One of the highlights of the summer has been working alongside the dedicated volunteers from the Friends of the Hooded Plovers to help protect this vulnerable species of beach nesting bird, of which around 700 remain in Victoria. There could be a TV drama series starring the lives of these little birds, which take you on a roller coaster ride of emotions as they face the challenges raising their young.

'Hoodies' are vulnerable not only to human related factors but also to extreme weather conditions, tides and predators – including dogs off lead which has been a compliance focus area from Parks. I have certainly embraced becoming a 'Plover Lover', and if you would like to get involved, please contact Friends of the Hooded Plover Surf Coast.

*Left: Dog Exclusion Zone signage helps protect Hooded Plovers between Urquhart Buff Beach and Hutt Gully.*



### Park maintenance ongoing tasks

Walking tracks don't stay open, clean and safe without many hands on deck. I have enjoyed many days out bush this season helping to clear tracks of fallen trees and overhanging branches, mowing and brush cutting. We also closed Sharps campground, an unreserved site out the back of Lorne, where the principle of 'leave no trace' had been long forgotten.

Other Park maintenance tasks included removing rubbish and graffiti (very therapeutic), fixing fences and leaking taps, topping up water tanks at public bathrooms, fixing landslips, and managing signage. Teamwork sure does make dream work when it comes to maintaining and protecting this place.

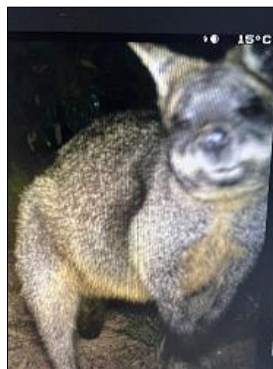
*Left: Ranger Caitlin efficiently getting things fixed and (right) Ranger Patrick makes track clearing look easy.*



### The fun of Junior Ranger activities

Another highlight was helping to run the Junior Ranger sessions, in which young people aged 6-12 years were invited along with their parents/guardians to learn more about the Great Otway National Park. In Caught on Camera participants learned about the impact of cat and fox baiting on other vulnerable Otway species such as antechinus, bandicoots, quolls, dunnarts, yellow-bellied sugar gliders and powerful owls to name a few.

We also ran a Nature Discovery walk, explored freshwater macroinvertebrates at Cumberland River at the Minibeast session, and found awe inspiring creatures in the intertidal zone during Rock Pool Rambles. One memorable moment was the impressed look on the faces of young participants after a helping father carefully lifted a big rock in a rockpool to reveal some enormous Elephant Snails!



*Above left: Elephant Snails. Centre: A smiling Swamp Wallaby is thrilled that predators are being targeted in the Otways. Right: Ranger Claire setting up a wildlife camera).*

I have truly enjoyed my experience working as a Seasonal Parks Ranger, and I am very grateful to have been supported by a wonderful and dedicated team at both Lorne and Anglesea, and by the Friends volunteer groups. Thankyou!



Hello Everybody,

I am very happy to present this Summer Ranger Report, it is always a great chance to reflect on our busy time in the Great Otway National Park. Also, thank you to all the Friends who attended the AGM and, once again, I would like to thank everybody in the Friends of the Eastern Otways for your valuable work and passion over the year. We have been able to complete some good projects together, and I am excited for the year ahead.



### Busy Summer Crowds

At the AGM I started off by sharing data from our track counter at Erskine Falls which sums up summer visitation in 2022/23. From 1 to 9 January 2023 we had 12,488 visitors access the top platform at Erskine Falls.

This number is staggering when you consider that we didn't have the Falls Festival next door. I can only imagine the numbers recorded at other popular sites.

This is the first time I have seen such large numbers of people enjoying national parks since bushfire and covid. Overall, we found that the majority of people were really well behaved.



### Maintenance

As you may remember we had a wet start to summer. While La Nina meant less fire danger, it also caused many minor flooding issues. As Sylvia mentioned in her Seasonal Ranger Report, our Rangers and Fire and Emergency teams did a wonderful job of keeping our sites and tracks safe.

### Phosphite Spraying

Through the Wild Otways Initiative an aerial application of the chemical phosphite was trialled in several locations in the Otways on 20 February, including Egans Track and Peppermint Parade in the Carlisle Heath, and Denham Track Anglesea to treat *Phytophthora dieback*.

I am sure Friends' members are well aware, but for those who need a quick catchup, dieback is a disease that causes the death of plants by preventing nutrients and water being absorbed by their roots.

Congratulations to Friends of Eastern Otways members Mark and Barb for getting this event 'off the ground' (pardon the pun). It has been a long time in the making with many hours of planning before the aerial application.

Iconic species like Grass Trees and Banksias are particularly susceptible to the disease, and these plants provide critical habitat and food for wildlife. The aerial application of phosphite is part of the management strategy that will help provide our sensitive flora and fauna with a fighting chance against *Phytophthora*.

Phosphite is a salt-based compound that can help to slow the spread of the disease by boosting plant immunity so that they can fight off the disease. A low-flying plane sprayed the Phosphite over targeted areas, and now the sites will be monitored. We hope that over 10 hectares will be sprayed and, if successful, will be a fantastic way forward. Thanks to Jess Miller from the CCMA for the wonderful pictures.

*Above and left: La Nina engendered some challenging and ongoing maintenance including clearing tracks of fallen timber and repairing creek crossings after flooding.*



*Right above: Despite the vast expanse of the Great Otways National Park, a trial site of 10ha has been sprayed with Phosphite. Right: A close up the aircraft releasing the Phosphite. Photos: Jess Miller CCMA.*



## Fuel Reduction Burning

The Friends members might notice that Fuel Reduction Burning is about to start again in the landscape. Depending where you are, you may have already been notified.

Like 2021 and 2022 La Nina means we have the weather conditions to safely conduct a fuel reduction burn earlier than normal. The team have several burns prepared and planned to be completed in the next few months, which may impact on recreational activities around townships in the Otways, especially around Lorne as this is the priority for the State of Victoria.

Added to this, there are a few burns planned in partnership with Wadawurrung and Eastern Maar which will focus on a cooler, mosaic type burning. On a personal note, our staff are really looking forward to this partnership as it is a good alignment of cultural practice and ecologically sensitive land management.

Last year I reminded everyone to give our crews a bit of space during the fuel reduction burn. While there might not be any visible fire and smoke around after the burn, our crews go to a great effort to make sure that the area is safe for park visitors. It is only when our crews feel the burn is ready for public access that the area is reopened.

If you would like to know more about fuel reduction burning, the website below is a great resource.

<https://plannedburns.ffm.vic.gov.au/>

Alternatively, if you google 'FFMV' and 'Planned burning' you can find this website. The information on this website may interest you, plus you can zoom in on your location and find out what fuel reduction burns are planned for your local area. And very importantly, it is good to remember these spots for future orchid locations!



*Above: a burning Grasstree Xanthorrhoea australis means we can expect beautiful flower spikes in coming months.*

## Changes to ranger roles

Finally, I would like to mention that some of our local rangers have taken up another job in Parks Victoria. Katrina Lovett is responsible for overseeing several excellent staff responsible for delivering ecologically focused projects across Western Victoria. Michael Mackenzie has also left the local team, however is not going far, Michael will be working on the Wild Otways Project.

We have also gained the services of Isabelle Kielbaska which is working on the pest plants through the Protecting Biodiversity project. Isabelle has already been to a couple of friends events and is keen to get to more weeding activities. Isabelle is excited about learning the plants in the Anglesea Heath and what better place to learn than a Friends of Eastern Otway weeding activity!

Thank you once again, see you at the next weeding activity.

[Matthew.russell@parks.vic.gov.au](mailto:Matthew.russell@parks.vic.gov.au) or 0439775880.



*Left: New PV ranger Isabelle Kielbaska removing Sallow Wattle.*



## FRIENDS OF EASTERN OTWAYS

### FIRST NEW MEMBER 2023

We welcome and congratulate Kaz Paton from Fairhaven, our first new member for 2023.



### ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP REMINDER

If you haven't renewed for 2023, we would appreciate your payment.

Membership is still \$15 and can be paid in the following ways:

1. Bank transfer - Anglesea Community Bank BSB 633 000 Account no: 150830826.
2. Cash deposit to account (150830826) at Anglesea branch.  
(For 1 and 2 please identify yourself on the transaction.)
3. Cheque to Treasurer, FEO, PO Box 502, Aireys Inlet 3231.





## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING WELL ATTENDED

The Friends of Eastern Otways Annual General Meeting was held in the Anglesea CFA conference room on Sunday 12 February and was well attended.

After Peter welcomed all guests to the AGM, he reflected on the past year's accomplishments with our many worthwhile projects and activities.

Community weeding in February 2022 involved members of the community and recreational groups working with the Friends removing boneseed from a large area behind the Parks Victoria Office.

We successfully applied for a grant from the Geelong Foundation to enable us to make a start on the digital form of the Walk Book, as well as an update of the printed version. Another grant from Parks Victoria enabled us to purchase new weeding tools.

Following the Surf Coast Century ultra marathon event in Anglesea in September the organisers, Rapid Ascent made a sizeable donation to the Friends to thank us for our assistance. As volunteers we were able to help direct the runners on the day, and we provided information posters along the route.



*Above: Members of the Friends of Eastern Otways gather at the Annual General Meeting at the CFA rooms in Anglesea to mark a year of successful activities.*

Mackillop College Year 8 students again joined with the Friends in removing weeds from a hillside at Moggs Creek. And we continued with our regular program of walks and research projects, and enjoyed an evening slide presentation by Peter Crowcroft and John Lenagan.

A Life Membership Award was presented to Ross Davey in appreciation of his service as Treasurer since 2013.

Ranger Matt Russell reported on a busy year for Parks Victoria. We are always grateful for the support given to us by the rangers who attend most of our activities throughout the year.

Three members, Ross Davey, Gretel Lamont and Wendy Brooks, retired from the Committee. We thank them for their valued contribution.

Keith McLean has taken on the role of Secretary and Ellen has switched to a new job as Treasurer.



*Above left: Ross Davey receives his Life Membership Award for his decade as Treasurer from President Peter Crowcroft.*

*Above: A delicious afternoon tea gave Friends' members a chance to catch up and chat after the AGM.*

### Office bearers and committee members for 2023 are:

- President - Peter Crowcroft
- Vice-President - Craig Grabham
- Treasurer - Ellen Doxey
- Secretary - Keith McLean
- Asst Secretary - Kaye Traynor
- Committee - Margaret MacDonald, Alison Watson, John Lenagan

Following the meeting, we heard from two guest speakers, Dr Tricia Wevill, Senior Lecturer in Ecology and Environmental Science at Deakin University, and Honors student, Teah Coates.

More about their work on the next page. **Kaye Traynor.**



## AGM 2022 - GUEST SPEAKER

### ALTERED FIRE REGIMES IN THE ANGLESEA HEATHY WOODLANDS

Dr Tricia Wevill (Senior Lecturer) and Teah Coates (Honours student)

We had two guest speakers at the 2023 AGM, Dr Tricia Wevill, Senior Lecturer in Ecology and Environmental Science at Deakin University, and Teah Coates, one of Tricia's honours students. Tricia spoke about her research and that of her PhD and Honours students who are investigating various aspects of the altered fire regimes in the Anglesea heathy woodland.

Tricia set up her research program with two main aims:

- To generate a longterm data set monitoring potential changes over time in composition, richness and functional group richness
- To provide research training and comprehensive plant survey skills to honours students and provide plentiful opportunities for interested undergraduate students to learn through volunteering.

Her research is supported by Parks Victoria and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA).

One of Tricia's students, Sam Chalmers, is looking into a number of elements related to how heathy woodlands respond to fire. For example - how fire influences species composition, vegetation structure, the abundance of key fire-response and fire-sensitive species.

Yet another of her students, Mitchell Johnston, is looking at the impacts of different fire regimes on the diversity of fungi and vascular plants in the Anglesea heath.

Finally, Teah Coates, who is completing her honours project, spoke about her research on the timing of burning on seedling recruitment in heathy woodlands.

Teah told us about typical late-summer burn regimes which promote germination through autumn and winter, with seedlings becoming more established by the following summer with more chance of persisting through this drier time. Teah's research is focused on looking at the current management strategy of winter burns on seedling recruitment.

Keep your eye out for publications by these researchers for results on these very interesting and relevant studies. **Ellen Doxey.**



Above: Dr Tricia Wevill makes a point during her presentation, while (below) Teah Coates discusses the influence of fire on seedling recruitment.



Below left: FEO President Peter Crowcroft presents Tricia with a thankyou gift. Below: A chart showing the fire cycle/life cycle in a heathy woodland.



#### Fire cycle/Life cycle

