



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

AN ABUNDANT SPRING IN THE OTWAYS

We are still in the midst of a beautiful springtime flowering season here in Anglesea. Thanks to good rains and generally mild conditions we've enjoyed some of the best displays in years, the various peas and orchids have been especially bountiful. With restrictions easing and vaccination rates growing, it has been great seeing our members and many others out enjoying the Park.

Please enjoy this edition of the newsletter detailing some of the interesting activities and projects the Friends have been working on, with updates on our weeding sessions, a celebration of our orchids, the CCMA grant at Moggs Creek, and new grant applications! Merry Christmas. Pete.



FROM THE
PRESIDENT
**Peter
Crowcroft**

GROUND PARROT AUDIO SURVEY ON ANGLESEA HEATHLAND



Above: Ground Parrot at Barren Grounds Nature Reserve NSW. Creative Commons.

At the start of November Craig Grabham and I accompanied volunteers from Angair and staff from Parks Victoria to set up audio recorders seeking Ground Parrots (GP) on the Anglesea heathland. The devices will be in place for two weeks and are programmed to record for 30 minutes before and after sunrise and sunset - thought to be the GP's peak calling times.

This latest search for the GP was stimulated by a re-look at old ParksVic remote camera images in the Anglesea Heath. In the frame below you can just make out the characteristic back feathers of a GP at the centre-bottom of the frame. You can see how it was missed 10 years ago.

Our team set up recorders in three locations along Haggart's Track. The positions represent three cohorts of regrowth from a carefully planned ParksVic regime, as GP are thought to prefer a mosaic, or patches, of heathland at different maturity levels.

For a time after the 1983 Ash Wednesday fires, the whole of the Anglesea Heathland was the same 'age', as earlier regimes burnt as much at a time as possible, maintaining this lack of 'heterogeneity' in the landscape. Greater variability will influence the availability of preferred foods and suitable nesting sites, as well as maintaining floral biodiversity.

It was apparent to us that the current burning program is part of a well-considered plan to create patches of smaller varied landscapes throughout the heath. This is likely to be a closer match with original land management by the Wadawurrung Traditional Custodians with whom the GP would have evolved over thousands of years.

The Ranger in charge of the project is Aaron Ledden in partnership with ecologist Grant Palmer of Federation Uni. **Peter Crowcroft.**



IN THIS NEWSLETTER



OUT DAMNED WEEDS!



Catch up with the PROGRESS of the 'saving *Caladenia maritima*' project.



Reports and photos from the WONDER FILLED Wildflower & 5 Mile Track walks.



BIOBLITZ SUCCESS - 2,000 observations of approx 700 species.



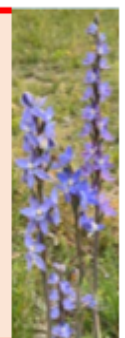
See what we're doing with EXCITING grants & applications.



WHAT A SHOW. The magnificent spring orchids in the Otways.



Ranger KATRINA brings news of the WILD OTWAY PROJECT.





Keith on the trail of Boneseed.

OUT WITH THE WEEDS ON O'DONOHUE HEATHLANDS

Our first two Spring sessions on 14 September and 12 October were very successful and most enjoyable as we concentrated on removing Bluebell Creeper and Boneseed from the coastal heathlands.

We had a wonderful turn up especially in October, and we managed to remove not only a great deal of Boneseed but also Sallow/Coast Wattle and some Hedge Wattle that is also turning into a weed in that area.

With the beautiful coastal backdrop, it was indeed a privilege to work in the area while remembering the efforts of so many people who saved the land from housing development.



Lynn and Ken enthusiastically attacking Bluebell Creeper.



TACKLING HAKEA SERICEA INVASION

Very concerned about the *Hakea sericea* seedlings that were invading our orchid areas on Forest Road, we decided to hold our third spring session on 9 November in that area and we certainly removed thousands of seedlings. The ground was moist so the seedlings pulled easily.

Thanks to the keen eyes of one of our weeders, Paul Wright, we have a new orchid record for the district, Bronze Caps *Caladenia iridescens*. It was amazing that Paul discovered the one plant growing in the area that we were weeding. It had two beautiful small flowers that Paul captured so well on his camera. It was as though we deserved a reward for our efforts and the orchids were saying thank-you. **Margaret MacDonald.**

Left: The first recorded sighting of Bronze Caps Caladenia iridescens in the Anglesea district.

Right: One of many Hakea sericea seedlings. Below: Gathering for the fray at Forest Road.



SUMMER WEEDING

Tuesdays at 9.30am.

14 December

Continue *Hakea sericea* seedling removal.

Meet at parking area on Forest Road near Firetail Track.

January: No weeding.

8 February

Remove small Coastal Teatree in gravel pits on Mt Ingoldsby Rd.



Meet at start of houses in Harvey St.

Contact: Margaret 0412 652 419



FRIENDS' ACTIVITIES

WILDFLOWER WALK – 16 October

Once again due to the coronavirus pandemic we were limited to 10 participants for this activity, so we organised two groups and walked in opposite directions around the planned route. We chose the first section of the Yan Warring Mirr Loop, a short section on Bald Hills Road, and the area from Bald Hills Rd up Alcoa Boundary Track to the Bundjil Lookout. as this was the most floristic area. Although the sun did not shine for us there were plenty of flowers to observe.

The Silky Teatree *Leptospermum myrsinoides* was brilliant with its masses of white flowers mingling with the bright yellow *Aotus Aotus ericoides*, yellow and orange flowers of the Smooth Parrot pea *Dillwynia glaberrima* and the Dwarf Bush-pea *Pultenaea humilis*. Some beautiful sprays of pink Silky Teatree were greatly admired.

The Common Flat-pea *Platylobium obtusangulum* refused to cooperate and show their large orange-yellow pea flowers with red centres, and we had to be content with looking at their closed brown flowers - they need bright sunlight to open. The yellow flowers of the smaller Globe-pea *Sphaerolobium minus*, with their green globular seed pods just developing, were observed amongst the other flowers,

The Victorian Smoke-bush Conospermum mitchellii was a feature with its clusters of greyish-white flowers and bluish buds giving a smoky appearance. It was a new species for many of our walkers. The tiny Pygmy Sundew *Drosera pygmaeae* was found in some of the damper places. It is so small you need a hand lens to view it. Each rosette may bear tiny white flowers on slender stems to about 4cm tall.

We were excited to find our smaller Southern Bearded Greenhood *Pterostylis tasmanica* flowering on both tracks. After seeing so many of the larger species Unicorn Bearded Greenhood *Pterostylis unicornis* flowering around Anglesea over the last few months it was good to observe the difference between the two species. **Margaret MacDonald.**



Masked up & Covid compliant. So popular is the annual wildflower walk organisers this year split participants into two groups walking the planned route in opposite



Left: Eye-catching Victorian Smoke-bush *Conospermum mitchellii*: Above: bright yellow *Aotus Aotus ericoides*. Below: Looking at Southern Bearded Greenhood *P. tasmanica*, and an even closer view. Right: Pygmy Sundew *Drosera pygmaeae*. Both images from Paul's macro lens.





5 MILE TRACK - 20 November

Tall trees, birds calling, a koala, orchids, flowering plants, the permeating scent of Mint Bush, fairly gentle ups and downs, glimpses of the sea and good company made for a lovely walk in the forest behind Lorne.

Due to the Little Erskine River flowing well over slippery rocks at the Lorne end of the track, we decided for safety reasons to walk in about halfway and return the same way. Starting at the Deans Marsh Rd we crossed the bridge near some lovely flowering plants including swathes of purple Mint Bush (*below right*), Musk Daisy Bush, Tall Pimelea and tiny plants like the ground cover Forest Starwort.

The Mountain Grey-gums, Manna Gums and Southern Blue-gums were towering overhead with lots of regrowth of Hop Goodenia and Silver Wattle forming the understory. The Prickly Bush-pea was also flowering well. Not far along the track Rani found the rare Wrinkled Buttons in bud. This plant was believed extinct until discovered again after the 1983 fires.

On the edge of the track there was a nice patch of maroon-coloured orchids in bud which could have been Hyacinth or possibly Cinnamon Bells. The Cinnamon Bells buds tend to droop before opening and one of these buds was drooping. We also found Common Bird Orchids, mostly leaves but some flowers.

After 4 kms we found a suitable lunch spot to sit (*above*). We found more Common Bird Orchids and Wrinkled Buttons. They both seem to be quite widespread along this track. We also noticed



some fungi including the luminous Ghost Fungus *Omphalotus nidiformis*. Above us a rather anxious looking koala was precariously hanging on in a spindly wattle (*left*).

On the return trip Phil and Chris found a Beard Orchid in bud, possibly Naked Beard. Despite searching, we found no evidence of glider activity on the tree trunks although we had expected to see the heart-shaped Sugar Glider cuts or the V-shaped cuts of the Yellow-bellied Glider.

It was lovely to catch up with people not seen for a while and meet new people and share the enjoyment and discovery of one of our lesser-known tracks. **Alison Watson.**





GREAT SOUTHERN BIOBLITZ RECORDS INCREDIBLE DIVERSITY

Over the weekend of the 22-25 October, 40 observers in the Surf Coast region took photos and recordings of our incredible local biodiversity. We contributed almost 2,000 observations of about 700 species to an all-encompassing 'umbrella' project for the whole of the Southern Hemisphere. This wider project has now recorded 180,000+ observations of 20,000+ species, an incredible effort from thousands of observers over the one weekend, a true citizen science initiative.

Local observations included 90 species of birds, with special sightings of the Powerful Owl, Little Grassbird, and Olive-backed Oriole. The Friends put out three remote sensor cameras, two focussed on grass tree flowering spikes. The images show birds and sugar gliders enjoying grass trees.

The project recorded 277 species of plants, our most biodiverse group, including 37 species of orchids.

Insects were the next most biodiverse group with 195 species recorded, mostly moths! Had the weather been warmer, this number could easily have doubled.

Look out around springtime 2022 to participate, and see if we can crack the 1,000 species mark! All you need is a camera or your phone and an iNaturalist account! **Peter Crowcroft.**

*From top right clockwise: Beautiful Leaf Moth *Gastrophora henricaria*; Forest Scorpion *Cercophonius squama* glowing under UV light; a shy Sugar Glider escaping the camera; Eastern Grey Kangaroo; Flying Duck Orchid *Caleana Major*; Prowling Spider *Mituliodon tarantulinus*; Blue-winged Parrots; 2nd ever Anglesea sighting of a Whistling Moth *Hecatesia fenestrata* and *Desis kenyonae*, a hard to find marine spider of the intertidal zone.*





"FRIENDLY" NEWS



EARLY BLOOMS, BIGGER NUMBERS

Our annual Angahook Fingers *Caladenia maritima* survey started early this year as many orchids were noticed in bloom on 14 September during the pandemic lockdown.

Two follow-up surveys were carried out on 24 September and 29 September. The results were very pleasing with

numbers being well up on last year's count of 738 *Caladenia maritima* flowers. We didn't count the hybrids this year but feel numbers were about the same as 2020 when we observed 210 hybrids of *C. maritima* and *C. carnea*.

Our results after the three counts were 1133

C. maritima flowers - we counted 1036 on the western side of the track and 95 on the eastern side. Two lone orchids were found along the firebreak.

The increased number on the eastern side from just 43 last year is interesting.

The total was our highest count since 2012 when 1272 orchids were recorded so it has been a very good season. Added to the results from the Cranbourne recovery program, it would seem that the future of our little orchid is promising.



Saving *Caladenia maritima* from extinction - chapter 3

Following the two stories regarding *Caladenia maritima* in our November 2019 and August 2020 newsletters, the third chapter of the story to save this highly endangered orchid that grows only at Anglesea within the Great Otway National Park brings exciting news.

As we stated in these newsletters, fungus and seed capsules had been collected from the site in 2019, and in August 2020 over 300 seedlings had germinated at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne. These tiny seedlings have been carefully nurtured in the RBG nursery over the last 12 months, and we were thrilled to receive photos from Richard Dimon, Research Assistant Orchid Conservation, sharing the news that the first two *Caladenia maritima*

orchids had flowered in the nursery.

We are just so excited that this project between the Victorian Australasian Native Orchid Society, RBG and the Friends of Eastern Otways has been a success story, and we are very grateful to all who have been involved with the project. We are not sure at this stage what the plans for the reintroduction of some of these orchids into a new site within the Great Otway National Park will be, but we are thrilled to be part of the joint partnership to conserve this beautiful little orchid. **Margaret MacDonald.**



Above left: No. 142 in the annual Angahook Fingers survey. Above: Counters enjoying the rising tally.



Above: Alison at work.



FRIENDS OF EASTERN OTWAYS MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL 2022

Subscriptions for 2022 are now due. Renewal is \$15 for an individual or family. To pay by:

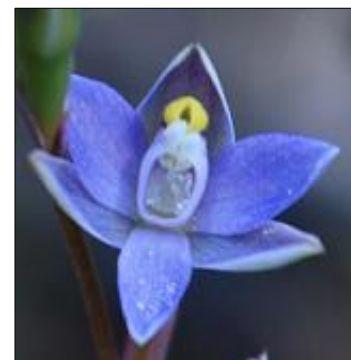
Bank transfer - **Bendigo Bank BSB 633 000, Account No. 150830826. Please use the reference field to identify yourself as the payee.**

Cheque to **Friends of Eastern Otways**. Post to PO Box 502, Aireys Inlet 3231.

Any donation to support the Friends' work will be greatly appreciated.

To check if your membership is up to date, email us at friendsofeasternotways@gmail.com





A FEAST OF ORCHIDS



Once again, the Great Otway National Park has put on a wonderful springtime terrestrial orchid display. Highlights were the discovery of two new orchid species for our area - *Caladenia iridescens* discovered by Paul and the Short Sun Orchid *Thelymitra exigua*, a small blue sun orchid discovered by Ross McCallum.

It has been observed in a number of sites where it often forms a small clump of flowers. We wonder just how many other secrets our Park holds, but in sharing our discoveries our orchid list continues to grow.

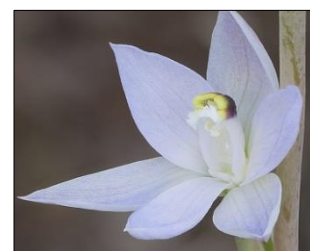
Recent burns saw a vibrant display of Hare Orchids *Leptoceras menziesii* and an extensive colony of Redbeaks *Pyrorchis nigricans*. The Leek Orchids *Prasophyllum sp.* have been very confusing and we have struggled to identify all the leeks flowering in the heathlands.

However Sun Orchids were once again very elusive. We had to be content with fleeting glimpses of colour on the few sunny days warm enough to tempt them to open.

There was a tremendous clump of Great Sun Orchids *T. aristata* on the O'Donohue heathlands and they had lots of visitors as word spread of their existence. The Rush-leaf Sun Orchid *T. juncifolia* was prepared to open often, and glimpses of blue could often be seen among the grasses.

Rabbit ears *T. antennifera* produced some great colonies with their bright yellow flowers cheering us all up. As the last month of spring came, the critically endangered pale blue sun orchid *T. pallidiflora* appeared in good numbers but, as with the Blotched Sun Orchid *T. benthamiana* the flowers self-pollinated due to the cooler weather.

It was once again the Spider Orchids that came to the party – flowering on and on and on. Large White Spiders *C. venusta*, Mantis Orchids *C. tentaculata* and some great hybrids between the two. Plain-lipped Spiders were also seen in large numbers. So many other species could be found as you wandered the tracks – Flying Ducks *Caleana major*, Small Ducks *C. minor*, Tiny Caladenia *C. pusilla*, Cinnamon Bells *Gastrodia sesamoides*. **Margaret MacDonald.**



From top right clockwise: Short Sun Orchid, Large White Spider Orchids and hybrids, Pale Sun Orchid, Blotched Sun Orchid, Pink Leek Orchid, colony of Hare Orchids, Redbeaks, Great Sun Orchid and the cheery Rabbit Ears.



WILD OTWAY INITIATIVE COMMUNITY GRANT UPDATE

Despite difficulties with restrictions and lockdowns during 2021, the Friends have progressed well with the Moggs Creek environmental weed control project funded by the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority's Wild Otway Initiative (WOI) community grants program.

We were awarded a total of \$13,157.75 to contract weed removal by Conserv-Action Environmental Services to assist with ongoing weed removal in more difficult to reach and unsafe terrain in the Great Otway National Park adjacent to residential areas at Moggs Creek. So far, Conserv-Action has carried out approximately 32 hours of work.

This has been supported by approximately 350 volunteer hours from Friends of Eastern Otways and Friends of Moggs Creek members, Parks Victoria staff along with approximately 350 hours from staff and year 8 students from MacKillop College which you would have read about in both the Winter and Spring newsletters this year. The collaboration with MacKillop College has had excellent educational and environmental outcomes for all involved.

We still have work to do in 2022. Conserv-Action will carry out further weed removal work and we will hopefully see the MacKillop College students and staff back in 2022 to continue our work together. There is also a small amount of revegetation to rehabilitate an informal track next year.

The CCMA has recently closed a second round of the Wild Otway Initiative community grants. The Friends have applied for two grants in this second round. One is seeking further funding to the current project that would enable us to employ traffic management on a small section of the Great Ocean Road that will then allow weed removal and mulching along a steep section close to the road.

The second grant is to close off an informal walking track that is developing on the hillside at Fairhaven/Moggs Creek, compromising the heathland habitat. The application includes a proposal for a new lookout with interpretive signage. Fingers crossed for success with these two grants. **Ellen Doxey.**



Above: Conserved coastal heathland at Moggs Creek.

REMINDER: NEW WORKING WITH CHILDREN RULES

All volunteers working within the Parks Victoria Estate must hold a Working with Children Check (WWCC). This is part of Parks Victoria's, and more broadly, the Victorian Governments Child Safe Standards and commitment to ensuring safety of children. If you volunteer with Friends of Eastern Otways, whether 'once off' or in an ongoing capacity, you are required to hold a Working with Children Check. For volunteers the WWCC is free. To apply for the WWCC go to the website <https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/> To ensure you are not charged for the check, when applying select the *Volunteer* option and use these Parks Victoria details:

Parks Victoria, Level 10, 535 Bourke Street, Melbourne VIC 3000. Phone 131 963

For further information regarding this new requirement by Parks Victoria visit this website and see the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) <https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/get-into-nature/volunteering>, or contact the Parks Victoria Volunteer Team volunteer@parks.vic.gov.au



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Tipping (Moggs Creek) as new members of the Friends. Keith and Lesley also made a welcome donation to the Friends. Cecily and Laurie Mason (Aireys) and Joyce Kerry (Macedon) have renewed their membership recently and made generous donations to support the Friends' work.



COMING EVENTS

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

We welcome Keith McLean and Lesley Cadzow (Fairhaven), Susan Bennett and John Fairhall (Kew) and Ethan

Saturday December 11 from 10.00 am - 2.00 pm at the Moggs Creek Picnic Gound. If you would like to share and enjoy a short, guided walk around the Moggs Creek circuit track to see the wealth of flora and listen to the calls of the birds join us in the carpark at 10am. Otherwise just join us for lunch at noon. BYO lunch, plates, glasses, cutlery, chair and folding picnic table. Contact: Kaye 0408 551 667

END OF YEAR PICNIC

WILD OTWAYS INITIATIVE

As Matt mentioned in his Ranger Report in the last Newsletter, I have been seconded to the Regional team to work on the Wild Otways Initiative (WOI) for the next two years. So what is the WOI all about?

The Australian Government has provided \$6million to the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CCMA) to deliver the projects identified under the WOI until June 2023 when the Initiative concludes. The Initiative’s intent is to provide demonstrable conservation outcomes, particularly for Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999 listed species such as the Southern Brown Bandicoot and Swamp Antechinus, and improve the trajectory of threatened species targeted under the Australian Government’s Threatened Species Strategy.



There are six sub-projects as part of the WOI under two investment streams.

Stream 1 funded the Community Grants Program that FEO have participated in.

Stream 2 will be delivered by project contractors and are the projects I am working closely with.

The three subprojects in Stream 1 are Rewilding, Small Mammal and Community Environment. In Stream 2 the subprojects are Pig & Deer Eradication, Fox & Cat Management and Phytophthora Management.

Pig and Deer Project - Conservation Ecology Centre

Deer and pigs have become an increasing problem across the Otways landscape for a number of years. This project aims to:

- assess populations of pig and deer across the Otways through utilisation of camera grids
- attach radio collars to feral pigs across separate populations to allow understanding of the resources pigs are using
- identify areas where management is necessary to preserve EPBC list fauna and flora, and vital assets (eg water catchments)
- develop a strategy to mitigate the impact of pigs and deer across Otways

Over 100 pigs, many of which were pregnant sows, have been controlled using traps monitored through the Hogeys camera system since the start of the year. The majority of these pigs were trapped on private property adjoining Great Otway National Park in Gerangamete.

The focus for deer management has been to work with private landholders and engage them with field harvesters – ie commercial operators who will control deer on their land and have the appropriate permits to utilise the meat.



Above: Bruce the Boar, one of the radio-collared feral pigs in the project. (Photo CEC).

Fox and Cat Project - Conservation Ecology Centre, with assistance from Barbara Wilson Ltd
 This project has been focusing on fox and cat control in planned burn landscapes around the Carlisle Heath area. The project is seeking to determine population density of cats and foxes through radio tracking, camera grids and scat analysis, in three areas managed to reduce bushfire risk. Field work is currently underway to trap foxes and cats so radio collars can be attached, and fox scats are being collected through walking 16km transects. Pre and post fire control efforts are scheduled to commence in autumn 2022. (Continued next page).



Above: Cat captured on Otway Ark camera (Parks Vic).

Below: Swamp Antechinus detected on remote camera at Urquhart Bluff in the dune system. (Mark Garkaklis)



Barbara Wilson Ltd is also assisting with this project, by trialling different designs of artificial refuges in the post burn areas. Other linkages with this project include Otway Ark, the WOI small mammals project and PhD research on potoroos by Mark Le Pla.

DELWP and CEC intend to work closely with Eastern Maar to explore and incorporate cultural values into the burns program for this project.

Small Mammal Project Barbara Wilson Ltd
Barbara Wilson and Mark Garkaklis are the leads on this project which aims to determine the critical factors that support remaining refuge habitat for small mammals in the western Otway Ranges and establish required management prescriptions and guidelines to support small recovery in other areas, including the eastern Otway Ranges.

In other words, why does Carlisle sustain such high abundance of small mammals whilst Anglesea heathlands small mammal numbers are dwindling? The team are using historical data and current data to determine the status of species, the distribution and relationship to habitat and refuges and factors that support refuges.

Working with the CEC on the fox and cat project, there have been trials using different designs of artificial refuge, as well as reviewing the diet for any trapped or euthanised cats.

Phytophthora Management - Barbara Wilson Ltd
The Phytophthora Project aims to prevent the introduction or minimise spread of PC into uninfected areas and reduce the impact at infected sites by applying objectives of the National Threat Abatement Plan. Workshops identified Priority Protection Areas using a structured decision-making process.

To date the project has been informed by field-based survey results, agency data and spatial mapping. The next step is to determine what management actions to utilise to help mitigate the impacts of PC, including the trade-offs associated with these actions. One of the proposed actions is aerial and hand spraying of Phosphite treatments in Carlisle Heath and Anglesea Heath, though approval from the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority will be required to undertake this work due to the proposed rates of application (process currently underway).

The final component of this project will be the development of Standard Operating Procedures in consultation with land managers, and hygiene training conducted for land managers and community groups.

Rewilding Project – Natural Decisions P/L

The Rewilding Project was required to design and create a rewilding program for threatened small mammal species in the Otways and develop a roadmap and costed implementation framework for rewilding. A report, which included a list of candidate species of all small (critical weight-range) mammals known to be found in the project area, assessed these species against habitat suitability, preliminary threat assessment and availability of individuals for potential reintroduction.

The report also looked at methods for rewilding, such as predator proof fencing. Recommendations have been provided to the Project Steering Committee, however at this stage there has been no decision on the next steps of the project.

Katrina Lovett, Regional Planning Manager, Wild Otways Initiative.



Above: Site visit to Edwards Creek Track to observe the impacts of Phytophthora.