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**FROM THE  
PRESIDENT  
Peter  
Crowcroft**

### TICKING OFF THE BUCKET LIST

The seasonal shift to colder conditions, combined with the removal of travel restrictions, is seeing many of our members traveling northwards - we wish them well on their adventures!

Last month I also dusted off the travel pack and had a whirlwind trip to the mid-north coast of NSW to meet two naturalists I'd only previously met online. They had organised a 'Bioblitz', a citizen science survey of the biodiversity of the area around Dooragan National Park, to record and photograph all the plants, animals, insects and fungi we could find.

I ticked off a few new birds, including the Scarlet Honeyeater, which had been top of my list since FEO member Geraldine Harris photographed a rare visiting one in Anglesea a few years ago. I also saw Ghost Fungus glowing, another 'bucket list' experience, and wrangled a large Diamond Python off the road which was as exciting as it was scary. And ABC's Gardening Australia host Costa dropping in for an impromptu visit and promotion of the event was fun too!

My friends' expertise at identification was quite incredible, their ability to tell the name of hundreds of different mollusc species from the fragments of shell we found along the beach was like magic. It was inspiring and I'm back doubly motivated to learn and record all I can about the amazing biodiversity around the eastern Otways.

Records from the FEO camera traps have always gone onto the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas, but we are now also uploading them to iNaturalist where they are easily shared and automatically uploaded onto the Atlas of Living Australia.

There are some exciting opportunities to explore with the Friends coming up this year - I hope to see you out there soon!



*Top: Selfie with Costa. Centre: The 'crew' searching for mollusc on the beach.*

*Above: Whip snake.*

*Far left: Black-spotted Thwaitesia. Left: Brown Ringlet moth.*





## WEEDING WITH A VIEW AT MOGGS

The autumn weeding program at Moggs Creek was most successful with three good sessions concentrating on Bluebell Creeper on the hillside and a range of environmental weeds on the coastal heathlands including Bluebell Creeper, Coast Tea-tree, Coast Wattle, Giant Honey-myrtle, Red Honey-myrtle and Green Honey-myrtle.

The hillside area was indeed a challenge to us but we certainly felt a great deal of satisfaction for our efforts.

The weeding sessions complement the work being undertaken by Rob Hanna, who has been contracted to work in the more difficult sections. Rob's work is funded from the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority grant we received for this project.

The coastal heathlands are looking just magnificent, and as one of our Friends' volunteers said 'it is indeed a privilege to help protect this precious environmental area.'

Our sincere thanks to our team of weeders who support us each month with our various projects. New volunteers are always welcome. The sessions are most enjoyable and are followed with refreshments at a local coffee shop. **Margaret MacDonald.**

*Clockwise from top right: The April weeding group. So much Bluebell Creeper. The May weeding group. Mandy & Rob manage to ignore the coastal scenery. Lyn surveys her achievement. Patrick emerges from the weeds. Mandy tackles more Bluebell Creeper. And Keith tackles even more Bluebell Creeper!*



**WINTER WEEDING PROGRAM**  
**TUESDAY 14 JUNE, 12 JULY, 9 AUGUST**  
We will be weeding in the Forest Rd area, targeting any boneseed we can find as well as the Silky Hakea we worked on last year.  
Meet: In Forest Rd at the corner of Great Ocean Rd.  
Time: 9.30 am. Contact: Alison 0400 570 229



### DISTILLERY CREEK TO PAINKALAC DAM WALK - 19 March

Autumn is such a beautiful time in the Otways, and the day chosen for Friends' walk was just one of those perfect autumn days. We started at the Distillery Creek Picnic Ground with the first part being along a narrow forest track within the National Park with private farmland down below. The blackened trunks of the Ironbarks were a reminder of the 1983 bushfires and more recent controlled burns.

It is now a beautiful reserve that can be used by the community. The road passes through a variety of wattles and eucalypts with some fine views of the tree clad hills of the Otways.

There are gradual uphill climbs but if taken slowly they are no problem. We continued along the road until we reached the dam and the spillway. Despite recent rain there was no water coming over the spillway. We enjoyed some good views of the Painkalac Dam and surrounding tree covered slopes.

Barwon Water has erected some interpretive signs giving information about the dam and some of the wildlife seen in the area. The pleasant walk along the shaded track on the south side gave some lovely views of the water but unfortunately no bird life apart from one lonely duck.

We continued along this track until we reached its end. Unfortunately it does not link up with the track on the other side of the dam – would be great if a bridge could be built to enable a circuit walk.

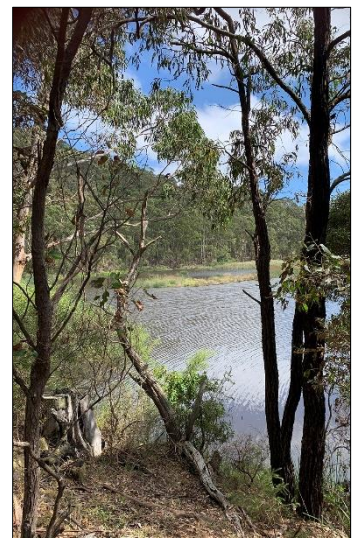
There was a nice spot on the edge of the dam that made a great backdrop for a group photo and enough seating for us to sit in this pleasant environment and enjoy our lunch while admiring some great views across the dam. **Margaret MacDonald.**



We were saddened to see a beautiful Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo had come to grief. But, rather than a fox or cat attack, we believe it might have been a Peregrine Falcon as the feathers had been plucked and strewn on the side of the track (*below left*). Its nature at work, and Peregrines need food!

After 1km we joined the unsealed Barwon Water 4WD access road that leads to the Painkalac Dam, which was formerly the water supply for the Aireys Inlet township.

*Above: Janet with a feather in her hat. Below: Enjoying the walk and views through the trees.*





## FRIENDS ACTIVITIES

### EASTER HOLIDAY SPOTLIGHTING

It was a fantastic night out at Moggs Creek Picnic Ground, with many families joining us for a BBQ and walk in the Park looking for the noisy (yet hard to spot!) Yellow-bellied Glider.

Before it got dark the kids all helped with a tree-shaker activity, where we place a white sheet on the ground and shake a branch above it.

All the spiders and other insects fall onto it and we get a chance to look at them up close.

This activity revealed an incredible insect I had never seen before! It's called *Ceraon tasmaniae* - in the insect order Hemiptera, in the 'Typical Treehoppers' Family. However, there's no way I'd call it typical! Let's name it, the 'Horned Treehopper' (*below*).



Then the moth lights were set up and I had hopes that a Batwing Moth might show up. Sure enough, as soon as it was dark, one flew in just before we headed out on our walk.

A large group of all ages explored the pathway and heard the gliders calling all around us, but they proved too difficult to see in the canopy, even with our new night-vision binoculars!

It was very exciting hearing them calling so close.

The UV light showed up a scorpion on the path too which was great for everyone to see (*left*).



When we got back, the moth sheet was covered in large male Batwing Moths, we counted at least 16! It was a great chance for everyone to have a close look at these spectacular creatures. Some of the kids gently handled them, making sure not to touch the wings. One moth even landed on a hat (*below left*).

Despite their fluttering all around us, none were harmed in any way. When I turned off the light a little later, they flew off into the night, hopefully to find a female! **Pete Crowcroft**





## FRIENDS' ACTIVITIES

### HARRISON TRACK WALK - 21 May

It was a small group that set out on a calm, sunny day. The first part of the walk included two steep hills which raised the heartbeat and warmed us up.

Then it was a lovely stroll along Ridgeview Track with swathes of pale-yellow Sweet Wattle, where we were pleased to find leaves and a few flowers of Fringed Hare Orchids hiding amongst Tassel Rope-rush making them very difficult to see.

Other orchids included Tiny and Brown-tipped Greenhoods and leaves of Red Beaks, Sun Orchids and Flying Duck Orchids. Common Heath was just beginning to flower and at the corner of Shiny-eye and Harrison South tracks we could see the heath will be looking amazing in a month or so.

As well as Scented Sundews we noticed the Tiny Sundew with their central area that breaks away to form new plants. Several large, attractive, White-stemmed Acacia Moths were found along the track. Both male and female were seen with the males having more obvious feathery antennae. Peter and Ollie were lucky to observe a small Tiger Snake quietly moving away from the track.

Further along a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles was sighted soaring along the valley.

A right-hand bend led us to the new crossing with large stepping-stones surrounded by flowering Yellow Rice-flower and Coral Fern and up the steps to the new table, a perfect place for an early lunch. Not far from the lunch site we looked for Southern Emu-wrens in low vegetation, but they were not seen this time.

Towards the end of the walk is a well-placed seat with lovely views of the Anglesea valley and a place to contemplate the peaceful scene.

With tired legs it was satisfying to reach Gum Flats Rd, the end of our almost 10 km walk. Harrison Track may be an addition to our updated Friends Walks Book.



**Alison Watson**

*Left: An old eucalyptus overlooks the valley.*

*And from top right: The new river crossing with stepping stones; Yellow Rice-flower; White-stemmed Acacia Moth and some Scented Sundews.*



## NEW MEMBERS

The Friends of Eastern Otways welcomes new members Paul Bates and Sandy Palmer and daughters, as well as Sally Dennis, Dan Lester and family.



## "FRIENDLY" NEWS



### WHO'S HIDING IN THE BUSHES?

In February the Friends placed remote sensing cameras in the coastal reserve at Airey Inlet, between the Clifftop Walking Track and the cliff near the Aireys Inlet Lighthouse. Cameras were in place for 14 days.

Environmental weeds were recently removed and some places look quite bare. The good news is that we saw Long-nosed Bandicoots, *Perameles nasuta* and, not surprisingly, very photogenic Rufous Bristlebirds *Dasyornis broadbenti*, White-browed Scrubwrens *Sericornis frontalis*, and Swamp Wallabies *Macropus bicolor*. The bad news was that we also observed, foxes, rats and rabbits. **Gretel Lamont.**



At left, Craig places the attractant in just the right place. Below: a cautious Long-nosed Bandicoot, posing Rufous Bristlebird and a frustrated Swamp Wallaby. Cute but unwanted, and even less wanted - but perhaps this fox fancied rabbit for dinner!



### GRANT FOR WALKS BOOK



We been awarded \$10,000 from the Geelong Foundation to update our existing *Walks of the Otways* guide and to make an accessible digital version. This large ongoing project will help visitors to the park learn about and appreciate the special flora and fauna of the eastern Otways. Thanks to Alison and Ellen for representing FEO at the Geelong Foundation function. We are the first environmental project to ever be funded by this philanthropic group! Thanks to ANGAIR for auspicing our application.

### COMING EVENTS

#### KOALA COUNT

**Saturday 18 June**

Meet at the Aireys Hall at 9:30am to convoy to Kennett River. Bring morning tea and lunch and raincoats. Finish around 2pm. Contact Kaye to book - 0408 551 667

#### TREE PLANTING DAY

**Saturday 16 July**

Tree Planting Day at Urquhart Bluff - Parks Vic have recently cleared some Hakea and other invasive weeds along the Urquhart access road (see Ranger report p8). Let's replant that area with indigenous species! Meet at Urquhart's top carpark at 9:30am. Contact Pete - 0412 044 127

#### WATERFALL WALK

**Saturday 20 August**

Location TBC (email will go out closer to the day) Contact Keith 0448 810 646





**MACKILLOP COLLEGE RETURNS TO OTWAYS PROJECT**

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

Since 2019 the Friends of Eastern Otways, Great Ocean Road Coast Committee, 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, and the results are very spectacular. It has been a delight working with the children and 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.

Following a few difficult years as a result of the COVID pandemic we are once again working with the school on this project. There are approximately 360 students in Year 8 with 12 classes. Each class has the opportunity to

spend three days at Moggs Creek (two classes at a time) carrying out a variety of outdoor activities. Our part of the program usually takes place on a Friday morning for approximately two hours.

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 had our first session on Friday, 13 May and we have scheduled the remaining sessions on Friday 3 June, 17 June, 24 June, 15 July and Thursday 28 July.

We are hoping that some of our members will be available to assist on some of those dates and times. It is a very rewarding experience.

**Margaret MacDonald.**

*Please let Margaret know if you are able to help. Contact: 0412 652 419.*



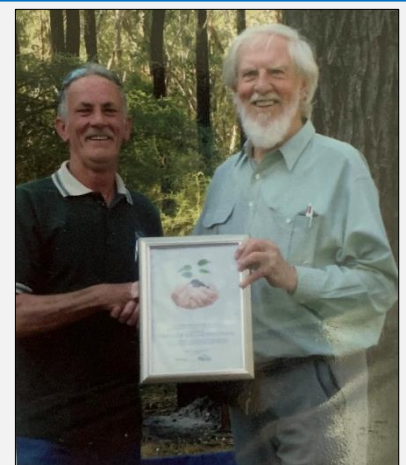
**DENNIS LEAVESLEY**

We were saddened to learn of the passing of Dennis Leavesley. Dennis has been a valued committee member of the Friends of Eastern Otways since 1999. In 2003 he became Vice-President and President in 2011.

Dennis was always well respected and extremely well-liked by his many friends and colleagues. His contribution to the Friends of Eastern Otways is greatly appreciated. He brought to the group a great deal of knowledge and experience of ecological issues affecting the local environment. In recognition of his substantial contribution over many years, he was awarded an Honorary Life Membership.

Although in later years he spent more time away from Friends' activities, we will certainly miss seeing him at some of our special occasions. We send our very best wishes to Barbara and the family.

*Right: Lindsay Murnane (Parks Victoria) presenting a Certificate to Dennis marking 20 years of volunteering with the Friends of Eastern Otways.*





Hello Friends,  
Autumn has always been my favourite season, and I especially enjoy the transition to the first part of winter. If you have good footwear, maybe even gumboots, and a warm jacket, I recommend heading out into the Great Otway National Park, particularly the wet forests of Lorne where the mosses, lichens and fungi are really beautiful in the misty Otway weather.



Seasonal track closures are coming soon. On 16 June we will shut the gates to our lesser used 4WD tracks and give them a much-needed rest for the winter. Staff from Parks Victoria and Office of Conservation Regulator

will follow up with compliance and enforcement of the National Park Regulations. If you notice any damage to gates or misuse, please send me an email so we can follow up.

Autumn has been a very busy time for Parks Victoria and DELWP staff, with many fuel reduction burns completed in the Otway landscape. I was extremely impressed by the professional nature of the burns, particularly with the focus on leaving unburnt or 'patchy' areas within the burn boundaries. As a lot of members of the Friends will be aware, current understanding suggests less uniform fire behaviour leads to better seed production, hollow formation and habitat for our small mammals.

From an operational point of view, this type of burning is hard to achieve when everything is dry. However, with wetter than average conditions experienced in 2022, it meant that the period of good weather conditions for controlled burning was longer than usual. As the weather gets much cooler there is more fuel reduction burning planned for late winter, however this will be smaller scale in the open heath.



We have a new staff member, Camille Acuna, filling in for Carlie Bronk who is working on an exciting deer control program. Camille (*at left*) has been working in Parks Victoria for a couple of years now as a seasonal ranger and on the Anglesea fire team and will be with us on the Parks team for a year.

A tree planting activity is coming up at Urquhart Bluff. Recently, a hardworking crew from Naturelinks Landscape Management removed a large amount of Sweet Hakea *Hakea drupacea*. Largely untreated since the Ash Wednesday bushfire, it had taken over the bush west of the entrance track, and was one of the heaviest infestations of weeds I have worked on. Funding was provided by the Wild Otway Project. Work will continue in the next few years to further reduce it and, hopefully, with the tree planting, we can restore this area.

Lastly, an update on the new Anglesea Campground which has been in the planning stage for many years. It won't be long until work starts with the team just waiting for the final approvals. I would like to thank Alison, Phil, Margaret and Neil for coming out to help us identify any fauna and flora impacts from the proposed development. Finally, I think it is important to call the campground by its new name, Tali Mirr.



We thank Wadawurrung for the name which means twilight sun, fitting for a special spot.

Thank you once again for helping us to look after the Great Otway National Park.

**Matt Russell,  
Ranger, Lorne.**

