

Friends of Brisbane Ranges

Incorporated

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February
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*Grevillea
steiglitziana*

Next Meeting

Sunday
12th February

Meet at;
Anakie Community Depot.

Activities;
General catch up and chat.
Discussions re Groups possible involvement in the ongoing rehabilitation works within the fire effected area.

What to bring;
All the usuals, enthusiasm, sense of humour etc, especially required now considering the circumstances. Gloves and hats etc could also come in handy.

Next Month

Next months activity is yet to be decided. A decision on what we will be doing will depend on the rehabilitation program and what activities the "Group" picks up in relation to this.

Editors Piece

Hi all, our newsletter is fairly brief for this edition due to the recent events in our little part of the world. As all would be aware the Brisbane Ranges, along with several other parts of Australia, has been affected by bushfire. Approximately 40% of the park was involved which makes up about 45% of the total fire area. Within this burnt area the degree of devastation varies from extreme to what can best be described as resembling a fuel reduction burn with some areas relatively untouched. So where to from here, well I am sure with everyone's help, some TLC and Mother Natures' ability to self heal the park again will be a haven for all things wild. A special mention should also go to all our neighbours who have been personally affected by these events.

The Presidents Piece

Sheesh, what a mess! You read about it, see the pictures on the news and in the papers, but you never expect to have to drive through it on a regular basis, or to have some favourite little corners of your world turned into blackened debris.

The fire started on the 21st of January near the Stony Creek reservoirs at Durdiwarrah. The fire burned south into Anakie with extensive damage being caused. Following a wind change, the fire burned east through a large section of the park and Barwon Water catchment land. The total area of the fire was 6946 ha, but figures have not yet been released on what proportion was National Park. The area burnt has almost bisected the park, and there has been extensive loss of facilities and infrastructure, with Anakie Gorge and Stony Creek picnic areas both being burnt out. Elsewhere in the park, track signs, bridges, gates and interpretation signs have been destroyed. Some parts of the park look as though they have just had a fuel reduction burn. In other parts, the fire crowned and caused a total loss of all vegetation. We can only wait to see if these areas will naturally regenerate.

As well as the impact on the park, the fire affected people who have been a part of the Friends group for many years. Chris Worrall and his family lost their house in Anakie. Many Friends have contacted Chris already to offer support, and we will continue to do so as they rebuild their home and their lives. Just up the road, Natures Paradise Wildlife Refuge was engulfed by the fire, but managed to save their house. However, a lot of their facilities and supplies were destroyed, at a time when they were needed most. We have been helping to organise some of the required materials while they have been selflessly rescuing and caring for wildlife injured in the fires. We will continue to provide support over the coming months until the animals have been returned to the Park, and hope to continue working with the refuge and others like it over the years to come.

However, all is not totally bleak. At the time of writing, it is two weeks since the fires. A week after the fires, when it was possible to drive through the park, we went out and photographed some of the devastation. A few stumps were still smoking and the air smelt smoky, but a few birds were out and about. This weekend we returned to some of the same sites, and found small miracles happening already. There was no smell of smoke. A few blades of grass, a skink, reeds growing in a small swamp with a dragonfly hovering over the water, a beetle on a burnt tea tree, patches of bright orange fungus which seems to like burnt ground, and some of the grass trees with green leaf bases pushing up the burnt leaves.

When I became president, I think someone was being a bit foxy when they told me that the duties were mostly ceremonial. I think we might have to rewrite the job description for the next year or two!

I can only appeal that everyone makes the effort to turn up to the next meeting to provide support and discuss the Friend's activities for the future. As an added incentive, I'll be making the muffins and chocolate is definitely on the agenda!

Wendy, Owen, Kristen and I, as residents of the area, would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to Boxy and Judy, all the DSE firefighting crew (including my boss would you believe!), CFA volunteers and all the other people who pitched in to help control the fire and provide support for everybody affected. This includes all the people involved in rescuing and caring for our precious wildlife.

It has been suggested that the Friends group purchase a good digital camera for use during their activities and to help record the recovery of the park. Probably looking at 5 mega pixel and up, with ability to take macro shots as well. Specific photo transect points could be set up and photos taken on a regular basis. We would also be interested in simple software that would allow us to keep the photos organised, as well as recording information about where and when they were taken. If you have any interest or expertise and could help select a suitable package for the group, please come along to the next meeting or contact me directly.

At the time of writing, all of the Brisbane Ranges National Park is declared closed, even those areas unburnt by the fire. This also includes the Steiglitz Historic Park. Areas and tracks will gradually be reopened to the public as they are inspected and declared safe. Updates will appear on the Friends group website (<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~fobr/index.html>) and the Parks Victoria website (<http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/index.cfm>).



Above – The start of something big

Below – The scene on Sunday

