



# FriendsNET

Number 47 May 2004

## A successful Friends Forum ... and three Best Friends for 2004

Over eighty people participated in our Friends Forum held in South Yarra on Saturday 17 April.

There were four main segments in the program, with key speakers and open discussion:

- The Burning Issue of Fire
- Water in Reserves
- Resourcing
- General Forum

A summary of the main points from the first three segments is included with this newsletter.

A highlight of the program was the announcement and presentation of the 2004 Best Friend Awards. The selection of Best Friends is made by an independent panel, based on information provided by the nominating group and referees. The presentation was made by Don Saunders, former Director of National Parks.

Following are very abridged summaries of the citations (in order of presentation) for the three Friends whose outstanding contributions to their groups were recognised by their peers.

### Marion Taylor OAM

Marion is well known on the Mornington Peninsula where she has had a long association with *Coolart Wetlands and Homestead*. Her vitality, dedication and vision have been the inspiration for the development of this outstanding tourist attraction. As convener, chair and a volunteer since the group's inception in 1979, Marion has been involved in the many facets of its operations including arranging rosters, organising functions, being a guest speaker, guide, newsletter editor, writing submissions, tree planting and scone baking.

As a member of the Victorian Friends Network Committee, Marion was newsletter editor for many years. Everything has been done with grace, dedication and good humour. Her commitment has been truly extraordinary.

### Max Sargent

Max's involvement with the *Friends of Merri Creek* began in 1994. He led the group as president for almost 9 years and edited its newsletter; the group now has 480 members.

Max was the driving force behind the hard-fought and high-profile campaign against the Merri Creek Freeway, attending many meetings, writing letters, lobbying members of parliament and giving radio interviews. He was also involved in the protest against the gas power line and power station at Somerton which the Friends believed would ruin the habitat of the best colony of the endangered Growling Grass Frogs on Merri Creek. All the while he maintained the group's involvement in their normal activities of planting and litter clean-ups. His thoughtful, effective and persuasive way consistently and unswervingly brought to the fore the interests of Merri Creek and its communities, both ecological and human.

### Geoff Durham OAM

Geoff became a Friend of *Wyperfeld National Park* in 1976, and has been an initiator and tireless worker in its many projects ever since. His huge collection of slides helps him to promote this and other parks. A major achievement was his authoring of the much-praised book *Wyperfeld: Australia's First Mallee National Park*, produced to celebrate 25 years of the Friends.

Geoff's many related activities have included leadership roles with VNPA, membership of the National Parks Advisory Council, and assisting in the formation of countless Friends groups. For many years he has been a driving force behind the Friends Network Committee and *FriendsNET*. His special knowledge, care and good humour have won him universal respect.

Geoff's dedication and awareness of the many and varied needs for conservation in our State have been recognised in his gaining of this prestigious award which he helped to instigate.



Above: Geoff Durham

Below left:  
Max Sargent (left) with  
Don Saunders (right) and  
Friends of Merri Creek  
President David Redfearn

Below right:  
Marion Taylor  
with Don Saunders



# Network News & Events



*Sue Wright  
(Friends of Woodlands  
Historic Park),  
the incoming Network  
Committee Convener*

## Changes in Network Committee

In accordance with the Network Committee's usual practice, the position of Convener has been rotated, and Sue Wright has taken over from Bernie Fox who becomes Registrar of Groups. We thank Bernie for his dedicated leadership over the past three years.

The committee also warmly welcomes newly co-opted member Judy Hindle, convener of the Friends of Westona Wetlands (City of Bayside).

Reflecting on her first official duty as Convener in opening the recent Friends Forum, Sue says:

"I was the proudest person in Melbourne on Saturday 17th April.

"I had the privilege of welcoming over 80 representatives and presenters to the very comfortable facility at Fawkner Park. Please take some time to read the summary of sessions included with this newsletter. They were excellent, and the feedback we have received has confirmed all our convictions that the coming together and sharing of information through forums such as these strengthens the network because it strengthens the members. Those who

travelled a little or a long way to join us made it a very successful day.

"Looking out on the expanse of autumn parklands made reflection easy. I reflected on how I had come to this point. I remembered the day I first went to historic Woodlands – way back in 1982 when the Park had just been declared. I was captivated and wanted to be a part of it immediately. Now 20 years later I am still part of it and working with a wonderful Friends group and Rangers to make sure that Woodlands receives the recognition and volunteer support that it deserves".

The next biennial election of the committee will be held at the 2005 Friends Conference.

## Our next Seminar will be on Saturday, September 11

This seminar will focus on issues particularly relevant to Municipal Friends Groups, and suggestions for items and speakers will be welcomed. The venue will again be the South Yarra Senior Citizens Centre.

## Groups in Action (1)



*Bill Goodall, Convener  
of Friends of the Point*

## Shovelling sand for history

Not all Friends groups direct their energies to the living environment. Over the last 15 years Bill Goodall, aged 82 years, his wife Shirley and other members of what is now Friends of the Point, have manually removed many tonnes of sand from the historic fortifications at Point Nepean.

They continue to shovel away on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month, usually from early afternoon until sunset.

Bill, a retired Civil Engineer, served at Queenscliff Barracks in the Second World War as his father did in the First World War.

Point Nepean Ranger Maxim Wood explains: "Exposing and cleaning out the Point Nepean fortifications is labour intensive and physically demanding, requiring determination and stamina. Without the Friends these areas would not have been opened to the public".

Bill goes on: "The Friends' efforts assist in making places of interest accessible in a safe manner for visitors. Max defines the work program and with the assistance of the younger members personally undertakes the heavy manual tasks. The most recent project has been Eagles Nest – exposing a buried dual machine gun post and the nearby 1888 Disappearing

Gun emplacement complex, and constructing an access track".

In September 1989 the Friends of Point Nepean National Park was formed with Stuart Sherren as Convener. This group has since evolved into two groups – Friends of the Point, and Friends of the Moonah who are involved in vegetation enhancement at Point Nepean. Bill Goodall (9589 1987) is the Convener of Friends of the Point, and Ian Bell (5988 9561) is Convener of Friends of the Moonah.



*Photo right:  
Fort Pearce cleared of  
sand in 1990–93 with  
Stuart Sherren in the  
centre of the photo*

# Experience Exchange (your space)

## The scourge of spurge

Well, perhaps a bit strong, but it makes the point. Introduced spurges (members of genus *Euphorbia*) present some groups with two problems – they are troublesome weeds, and the milky latex can cause skin reactions.

Steve Fernee's piece on allergic reactions (*FriendsNET* 46) brought these two contributions, relating to two spurge species.

*Millie Howell (Friends of the Prom)* writes:

Back in 1982, some of the Friends of The Prom discovered the hard way that the milky sap of the environmental weed Sea Spurge (*Euphorbia paralias*) can produce an extremely irritating skin reaction; none more so than one small boy who must have had some on his fingers when he ducked behind a bush for the usual reason. It was some hours before he was comfortable again with the help of an antihistamine and careful washing. Nowadays the park management provides protective gloves for us in our continuing battle with this invader from the Mediterranean region.

[Editor's note: Unfortunately this troublesome weed has now spread along most of the Victorian coastline.]

And from *Eileen Collins (Friends of Chiltern NP)*:

We have the unpleasant job of pulling Caper Spurge (*Euphorbia lathyris*). The plant exudes a milky sap which is extremely irritating to the skin and eyes. Some people come out in nasty blisters and weals. We learnt of its nasty ways years ago and now insist that everyone wears gloves and washes their hands after the work.

Has anyone else got advice on such hazards, and methods of avoiding or treating them?

Share your questions, experiences or ideas – contact a Committee member (see page 4)

## Keeping Friends interested

Eileen also writes: Our Group's practice is to work in the morning, enjoy a shared lunchtime at a pleasant venue such as a dam where we can birdwatch, and then spend the afternoon hours socialising and learning about our park's flora and fauna values. We find this has worked very well for 11 years and is most appreciated by our members.

How do other groups maintain interest and involvement in what are often repetitive jobs like weeding? (Finding the best ways for groups to operate on work days will be one of the topics at the Seminar for Municipal Groups on September 11.)

## Feral bees give Arapiles Friends a challenge

*FriendsNET* 46 mentioned the removal of feral bee nests in bushland. Unlike the Mullum Mullum Creek group, the Friends of Mt Arapiles/Tooan State Park cannot simply contact the local council, as the bee nests are perched on rock faces 20 metres or more above the ground!

Friends group convener Louise Shepherd (5387 1558) explains how they tackled the problem.

"With support and advice from Parks Victoria, we abseiled down the cliff fully clad in a bee suit and with a backpack full of petrol containers! (Obviously it wasn't a total fire ban day, but heavy clothing on a 30 degree day felt hot.)

"Petrol was poured into the entrance of the hive (generally a fairly small hole in the rock face), and the entrance blocked up with a petrol-soaked rag; it is the fumes which do the job. An inspection some weeks later looked promising; there were no bees anywhere to be seen in the vicinity.

"We hope that feral bee eradication will eventually enable the rock holes to be colonised by native species, once the whiff of petrol has gone. Striated pardalotes, crimson rosellas and

possums have been seen utilising rock hollows at Mt Arapiles. A side benefit for rock climbers is that several popular rock climbing routes are now much safer with the threat of a bee sting removed.

"We have also been involved in some community tubestock-planting, watering and weeding activities in the district. Assisting the Friends are school students visiting Mt Arapiles for rock-climbing".

*Rock-climbers on the classic climb Agamemnon at Mt Arapiles. A feral bee nest in a rock hole part way up this route is one of several to receive the treatment by Friends of Arapiles volunteers Louise Shepherd and Clive Curson.*



## Groups in Action (2)

Geoff Durham  
is the Network's  
Group Liaison Officer

## Geoff's Group Grapevine

You meet the most interesting people through involvement with Friends groups.

Peter Curtis of the Friends of the Warbys has achieved his PhD for his research into the Austral Grass-tree *Xanthorrhoea australis* in the Warby Ranges.

Ilma Hackett of the Friends of Coolart has produced an excellent activity book for young visitors who are interested in the 'Junior Ranger' project. It contains word games, puzzles, drawing, colouring, nature spotting and a woodland walk game, all based on the natural environment at Coolart. It is available at no cost from the Coolart Visitor Centre.

Marion Le Chaminant, one of the founders of Friends of Nyerimilang and author of books on the park, died in Queensland in February. Another February death was Dr Len Smith, former Director of National Parks, aged 94 years. The Friends of Organ Pipes April Newsletter includes a most interesting interview with Dr Smith by Robert Bender.

### And We Welcome ...

Friends of Bay Road Heathland Sanctuary  
The Friends meet 10-12 am on the 2nd Saturday of the month - Melway 77, B11. Michael Norris 9521 6879.

Friends of the Grey-crowned Babbler  
The group promotes awareness of the Grey-crowned Babbler and works to improve the conservation of this endangered species. Doug Robinson 5761 1676.

Friends of Koolunga Native Reserve  
This group has a web page:  
koolunga@melbournewater.com.au.  
It is concerned with the revegetation and maintenance of the Reserve under the guidance of Knox City Council. Kathleen Loxton 9758 3112.

Friends of Margaret Lewis Reserve  
The reserve at Coldstream was bequeathed by Margaret Lewis for passive recreation use by the community, and the group aims to maintain its environmental integrity. Morris Maxwell 9739 1809.

Friends of the Moonah  
Moonah is *Melaleuca lanceolata*, and this group works to return bushland at Point Nepean to Moonah Woodland as described in the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. Ian Bell 5988 9561.

The Friends of Inverleigh Flora and Fauna Reserve report that the local Treehome Nursery has offered them enough propagation space and potting materials to grow 1000 plants annually from indigenous seed they collect under permit.

Friends of the Prom have undertaken Sea Grass monitoring in the newly created Corner Inlet Marine NP.

Val Tarrant, of The Friends of George Street and the Urban Forest, reports that controlled burning has resulted in regeneration of heathland with fine flowering of what are now rare species in the district.

Congratulations to the Friends of Diamond Creek - Falkiner Street Reserve on being selected as a finalist in the 'Environmental Leadership in protecting Bush, Land and Waterways' category of the Banksia Awards.

Most of the items in this grapevine are distilled from group newsletters. Please check that the Network is on your newsletter mailing list.

Friends of Pallister's Reserve  
Pallister's Reserve is a 250ha Trust for Nature property at Orford. Since 1990 the Friends have worked for the betterment of the flora and fauna in the reserve and surrounding area. Peter Carrucan 5562 6179.

Friends of Plenty River  
Formed in 1995, this group's focus is restoring indigenous trees, shrubs and grasses to the banks of the Plenty River. Alice Ley 9435 3840.

Friends of the Point  
'The Point' is Point Nepean and for 15 years this group has been removing sand from the historic fortifications on the Point. Bill Goodall 9589 1987.

Friends of Watkins Bay  
Watkins Bay is between Ricketts Point and Table Rock Point, Melway 86, C-D9. The group's objectives are to conserve and enhance the indigenous coastal vegetation, particularly as habitat for the locally endangered Superb Blue Wren. Diane Rex 9589 4575.

Friends of Westona Wetlands  
Since 1993, this group has 'facilitated the co-ordination, co-operation and education of the community in the preservation, restoration and protection of the Truganina Swamp and surrounds'. Judy Hindle 9398 4402.

### How to contact us ...

By post:  
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