



FriendsNET

Number 48 August 2004

Calling all Municipal Friends & Environmental Officers



Sue Wright, Network Committee Convener, extends this invitation to all groups.

Saturday 11 September is the date for our next seminar, planned to focus especially on issues concerning Municipal Friends groups. It is being supported by the Municipal Association of Victoria and the Melbourne City Council, and will be held at the Senior Citizens Centre, Fawkner Park, 65 Toorak Rd West, South Yarra. See the enclosed program and registration form.

Municipal Friends Groups - a very rich tapestry!

The concept of communities coming together as Friends Groups to promote and protect parks and reserves has travelled an interesting path since 1972 when the first Friends group—Friends of Organ Pipes National Park—was formed. In the following 17 years the number of Friends groups had grown to 27. In the years since then the number has risen to several hundreds, serving many reserves ranging from national parks covering thousands of hectares to small municipal reserves of just one or two.

The multifaceted nature of the different parks and reserves, and the corresponding variation in management authorities, gave rise to an exciting diversity on the one central theme of 'Friends'. Particularly at local government level, the rich tapestry was enhanced by the fact that Victoria has 79 municipalities, and Friends groups are listed in the majority of these.

The Friends Network has many affiliated municipal Friends groups and will dedicate the coming September Seminar to a special focus on the relationship between local municipalities and their Friends groups. The development, management and working models of several municipalities will be presented and a panel discussion will allow every member the chance to comment and contribute regarding their experiences.

The program promises to be a very full exploration of a Local Friends/Local Council focus and as the final touches are being confirmed, the Network asks all Friends in Municipal groups to mark the day in your calendar and spread the word among your local colleagues.

New Books from Friends Groups

Friends of Tarra Bulga National Park, in conjunction with Parks Victoria, have published 'Tarra-Bulga National Park: celebrating 100 years, 1904-2004' by Daniel Catrice. This was part of the park's Centenary Celebrations. The book was launched by Minister John Thwaites on 27 July.



Peter Bryan, President of the Friends of Tarra Bulga NP, with Minister John Thwaites at the launch of their history of the park

Friends of Angahook-Lorne State Park launched their attractive 40-page colour booklet 'A Guide to Walks in Angahook-Lorne State Park 2004' on 13 July. It gives details of 28 walks. Great value at \$6.00 posted. Contact Margaret McDonald 5289 6326.

How many groups have to bring in a helicopter for their weeding programs?
Well...at least one! Find out more on page 2.



A Miscreant Moss!

Last year, the Friends of Warrandyte State Park became aware of an invasive introduced moss discovered in the park by fungi and bryophyte expert, Bruce Fuhrer. Bruce has kindly contributed this article to *FriendsNET*.

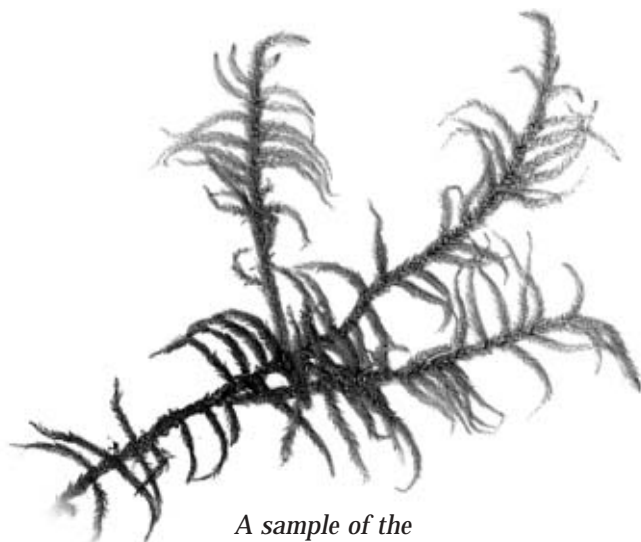
I first discovered *Pseudoscleropodium purum* in the mid-1950s by a walking track in the Otway Ranges. It was a lush colony of about a square metre forming a mat over low vegetation. It was a new moss for me and I sent a specimen to the National Herbarium of Victoria for identification. It was *P. purum*, a common European moss, introduced into Australia and at the time considered rare in Victoria, being known from very few colonies. It was still considered uncommon in 1976 (Scott 1979).

While involved in Bryophyte surveys from the mid-1990s it became evident to me that it was spreading, appearing in small colonies along forest roads and tracks, at least in southern Victoria. It is now becoming common in forests, parks and reserves, often remote from tracks. Colonies monitored in my area (Warrandyte–Healesville) are proliferating rapidly and new colonies are appearing where the moss was not seen only two years earlier. The growing moss colonies smother surrounding native mosses, liverworts, and small native plants and seedlings, and in moist forest situations will often form mounds over low shrubs and grasses.

If you suspect you have this invasive moss in your reserve, and need to verify a specimen, you can contact Bruce on 9893 1366 or bfuhrer@bigpond.com

S. purum rarely produces spore capsules and the means of distribution are unclear. It has been suggested that birds using mosses for nesting building material may be involved as the moss will readily grow from vegetative shoots.

The moss is obviously becoming an environmental pest and control methods are being trialled by the Manningham City Council. Diluted herbicide, very carefully applied is being tested. Physical removal when practical should be effective in small areas such as parks, gardens and reserves.



A sample of the moss at actual size

Groups in Action ...

Friends of Baw Baw National Park are working with Parks Victoria staff to remove Grey Sallow Willows

Aerial attack

Most of us have to find our own ways of tackling weed problems, depending on the type of weed, the site and the available resources. The Friends of Baw Baw National Park had a particularly challenging situation. Maurice Poulton explains:

'I had no idea there were Grey Sallow Willows (*Salix cinerea*) on the Baw Baw plateau until about 1998 when Ranger Andy Gillham produced maps of willow locations derived from helicopter GPS observations.

'Parks Victoria established a Willow Control Strategy and suitable control methods. Volunteer members of the Friends group and Strzelecki Bushwalking Club were trained in the safe use of Glyphosate and began ground-truthing with overnight camping at a couple of the more accessible sites 3–5 hours walk away. As most sites were inaccessible

by foot, the only access was by helicopter to beautiful little swampy snow plains. Andy developed the excellent idea of helicoptering in teams of three – one PV staff-member and two Friends.

'Have no illusion – this is bloody hard work! This is not like the pictures you see on TV. The pervasive *Richea* is a tough unforgiving opponent. Cutting and painting some willows is easy, but many are multi-stemmed, tough, heavy old buggers.

'But it is a rewarding, satisfying and morale-building exercise, as a fly-on-the-wall would observe as we share experiences at the end of a helicopter day.'

Andy Gillham, the Parks Victoria Ranger also expresses his satisfaction:

'Since January 2000, a staggering 664 willows at 195 different locations have been treated. Volunteers have contributed an impressive 1276 volunteer hours to the program. This has also been supported by staff from the Baw Baw Alpine Resort and the Department of Sustainability and Environment. We think we have now treated 80% of all known willow sites in the park.'



Experience Exchange (your space)

In our last two issues, we asked groups to report on some of the hazards they encounter while working, and how they deal with them.

Mike Beamish, of Friends of Morwell National Park, reports on one of their problems:

Wasp Worries

'The normal activities of the Friends of Morwell National Park, such as weed removal and tree planting, have brought members of the group into serious jeopardy with European Wasps. The wasps will aggressively defend any perceived threat to their territory, and have the capacity to inflict multiple, painful stings. Extra vigilance is now required to make sure that the wasp nests are noticed before attempts are made to cut and paint that willow, or remove that tree guard.

'On warm days, a steady stream of wasps coming and going from their access holes in the ground or tree hollows makes the presence of a nest obvious, but on cool days when the wasps are not so active they may not be noticed until too late. Luckily, this has only happened a couple of times on very cool days when the wasps were very sluggish, and only single stings to the unfortunate Friend resulted.

'When a nest is discovered, it is reported to the Ranger, who marks the vicinity with bright tape and notes its location. If only a small number of nests are found, the Ranger will usually treat them himself, but more than half a dozen will justify hiring a professional exterminator.

'Individual treatment should only be done at night (the cooler the night the better), when the wasps are inactive and all are present in the

nest. The treatment involves approaching the nest and covering the access hole and surrounds with enough insecticide powder (such as cabbage dust), about a cupful, so that the wasps inside cannot exit without contacting the powder.

'No attempt should be made to disturb or open the nest unless full coverage protective clothing is worn. Some advise that light sources should be covered with red cellophane (wasps see in the ultraviolet end of the spectrum) so that the wasps cannot see you if they should be in a position to attack. However in my experience this has not been necessary. It is advisable, though, that you have an escape route organised should you require a quick getaway, such as a nearby vehicle with door open and windows wound up!

[Editor's note: An well-illustrated leaflet entitled *Living with European Wasps* (Department of Primary Industries) is available from your local Council, or DPI Customer Service Centre, phone 136 186; www.dpi.vic.gov.au/notes]

We also asked for more of your ideas on keeping Friends interested.

The Friends of Sherbrooke Forest have been pulling Ivy for 25 years. *Vivien Freshwater* says:

'Don't think of it as pulling weeds but protecting the bush. Focus on what you have achieved, not what remains to be done. We now have lots of lyrebirds in the areas we have cleared.'

Judy Jack of *FOLKLAW* thinks 'Working Bees', 'Work Days', or even 'Project days' are off-putting, so they have 'Habitat Days' – a name long used by Friends of the Koalas.

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

Geoff's Group Grapevine

How's this as a definition of a successful Friends Group?

A successful Friends Group is a viable group of volunteers with a mutual interest in a conservation reserve, historic place or native species, happily involved in supporting the management authority. What do you think?

Minister John Thwaites had this to say about the Friends of Morwell National Park in his second reading speech on the National Parks (additions and other amendments) Bill: 'Like many parks, Morwell is strongly supported by an active Friends group. The additions [to the park] include part of Billys Creek, where the Friends have contributed many volunteer hours over more than a decade to a major revegetation program.'

Ken Harris reports that the park's lizard list started with three entries. The Friends have identified 11 species.

The Friends of Arthurs Seat State Park (formed as Friends of Nepean Parks in 1976) has been absorbed into the Seawinds Nursery Volunteers. The former was the second Friends Group (after Friends of Organ Pipes) and it operated successfully for 25 years. It was a great group – Nesta Gilmore, Doug Sharp, Stewart Backhouse, Eric Allen, James Grant, Col & Bon Lewis, Barbara & Bill Nicholson and Don & Jocelyn Horton are some of the names that come to mind. By example, the group contributed much to the development of the Friends concept.

Friends of Woodlands Historic Park will host 200 cub scouts for a regional environment day in September.

The sponsorship of Loy Yang Power has enabled the Friends of Tarra Bulga National Park to produce a full-colour folded A4 membership brochure. A Parks Victoria grant has enabled Friends of Kooyoora State Park to produce a full-colour A3 poster.



Geoff Durham is the Network's Group Liaison Officer

And We Welcome ...

Some of these are new groups, and some we formerly recognised and now formally affiliate.

Cootamundra Walk Advisory Committee

A committee of the City of Whitehorse, this group has been operating since 1978 and its Convener, Margaret Witherspoon, received a Best Friend Award in 1994. Cootamundra Walk is a linear park extending from Williams Road to Elm Street, Blackburn Melway 48 A/B/C 8. Margaret Witherspoon 9878 5998.

Friends of Craigieburn Grasslands

Their aim: 'To preserve and restore the Craigieburn grasslands, including Cooper Street.' Formed last year. Wendy Moore 9354 2270.

Friends of Eumemmerring Creek

They aim to maintain the indigenous vegetation and improve the amenity and habitat along the creek. Jennie Chisholm 9774 0474.

Friends of Glass Creek Parklands

Glass Creek is in East Kew, Melway 45 J/K1-4. The group is hard at work every Wednesday morning. Ann McKenzie 9819 7512.

Friends of Hookers Road Nature Conservation Reserve

Hookers Road is at Nyora in the Shire of South Gippsland. Formed late last year. Ian Hodges 5659 6455.

Friends of Kororoit Creek

This group in the municipality of Brimbank was formed in 1999. There was an earlier but now defunct group with the same name. Linda Roberts 9310 1262.

Montrose Environment Group

This long established group aims 'To energetically conserve the natural attractions of the Montrose area...' Friends of Bungalook Conservation Reserves, who are part of the Montrose Environment Group, have working bees on the second Saturday of each month. Dr Graeme Lorimer 8711 3474.

Friends of Salt Creek & Associated Parklands

This new group already has over 50 members. Their territory is the parklands along Salt Creek, Rosanna, Melway 20 A 9/12. Dr J R L 'Joc' Forsyth 9459 3033.

Friends of Taylors Creek

Taylors Creek is a tributary to the Maribyrnong River. Indigenous plant protection and revegetation for use and enjoyment of the Keilor community are the objectives of this group. Cassandra Twomey 9331 7746.

Friends of Timboon Rail Trail

This group supports the Committee managing the Camperdown to Timboon Rail Trail. Shirley Duffield 5566 2319.

Friends of Wallan Creek

Wallan Community Park in Mitchell Shire is the focus of this new group. Graham Whelan 5783 2400.

Greenlink Box Hill

Working bees for the nursery weekly and general working bees monthly. Formed in 1988. Peter & Shirley Dwyer 9890 5362.

How to contact us ...

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home.vicnet.net.au/~friends

Invitations

To experience the wildflowers of the Little Desert in spring is something special. The Friends of the Little Desert have their annual adventure on September 25 and 26, camping at Kiata Camp Ground. Activities include fencing, planting and meeting some local characters. All invited. Bernie Fox 9741 9859 or e-mail: hayburn@bigpond.com

On Saturday 27th November, the Friends of the Prom are celebrating their Silver Anniversary with a barbecue and 'the odd little drink' at Stockyard Camp, near the Yanakie entrance gate at Wilsons Promontory. There will also be a few (short!) congratulatory speeches and good music around the campfire. A small charge will be made to cover the catering – BYO choice of beverage. Proceedings will begin with a 'Happy Hour' at about 5 pm.

Members of other Friends groups are invited to attend the celebrations on Saturday evening (remembering that it is 200 km from Melbourne) or camp with the FOTP for the weekend. Alternatively, there is roofed accommodation in Tidal River (book VERY early) or private accommodation on the Prom Coast (ring 1800 630 704 for the local booking service).

Please contact the FOTP and book if you are attending – we need to know numbers for the catering.

Hon. Secretary Don Jewell (03) 5998 7734 or e-mail: dhjewell@surf.net.au

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