



FriendsNET

Number 52 August 2005

New Health & Safety Laws have come into effect — *and they affect volunteers*

There is a legal basis for the current emphasis on health and safety of volunteers.

Geoff Durham has looked into it and given us this summary in clear straightforward terms.

Friends are volunteers specifically within the ambit of the new Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 that came into general operation on 1 July 2005. A 'volunteer' within the Act is 'a person who is acting on a voluntary basis, irrespective of whether the person receives out-of-pocket expenses'.

The Act provides that an employer must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that volunteers are not exposed to risks to their health or safety arising from the conduct of the undertaking of the employer.

Risk analysis and instruction of volunteers are the responsibility of the employer. It follows that employers are entitled to give directions regarding volunteer work. Volunteers should expect to be adequately informed of the nature of the task and instructed in risk avoidance measures — they can then decide if they wish

to participate. The employer can stop the work if instructions, requirements and guidelines are not complied with.

JSA's — what are they?

One of the mechanisms that employers are using to comply with the Act (and demonstrate compliance) is the JSA — *Job Safety Analysis*. A well structured JSA form can be a useful safety checklist. Whilst volunteers may be involved in completing a JSA, the responsibility for the JSA remains with the employer.

More forms

Parks Victoria has introduced two 'Volunteer Activity Forms' — one for volunteer groups or organisations, and one for individual volunteers. If volunteers sign a group form they do not have to sign an individual form. The group form also serves as a record of the total hours of activity of the group.

Our September Conference — don't miss out!

It's not too late to register for the celebratory 11th Friends Conference in the Grampians on 16–18 September.

We can accommodate 100 at the Roses Gap Recreation Centre, and as there are still some vacancies further registrations will be accepted. A registration form was distributed with the last *FriendsNET* or it can be downloaded from our website: home.vicnet.net.au/~friends.

For the *Meet the Managers* sessions on Saturday we are fortunate in having the participation of the following representatives of management agencies:

- Municipalities: Darryl Argall, President, Shire of Hindmarsh;
- Parks Victoria: Brett Cheatley, Regional Manager West;
- Melbourne Water: Greg Bain, Team Leader Habitats, Waterways
- Trust for Nature: Natalie Holland, Property Manager

On Sunday morning, Charlie Sherwin, Director of the VNPA, will join South Australia's Dene Cordes as a lead speaker. Charlie's previous positions include Biodiversity Campaign Coordinator for the ACF and Box-Ironbark

campaigner for the VNPA. Charlie has been a member of the Australian Landcare Council, the Australian Committee for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and a range of other bodies.



What are these people doing? Find out on pages 2–3.

Groups in action

The Friends of Angahook-Lorne State Park have been monitoring regrowth after fire.

Margaret McDonald (5289 6326) explains.

Friends of Angahook-Lorne State Park monitoring post-burn regrowth in a quadrat on the Anglesea Heathlands, March 2005.

MONITORING means checking, observing and recording without interfering. *Here's how two groups go about it.*

Can fire work for us?

Since the 1983 bushfires, Coast Tea-tree and hybrid Coast/Sallow Wattle have invaded areas of heathland within the Angahook-Lorne State Park forming impenetrable barriers of vegetation. In an attempt to control this invasion, Parks Victoria, in November 2004, carried out an experimental project on a small area of the Anglesea Heathlands, adjacent to O'Donohue Road, Anglesea. The mature trees were knocked down by machinery, allowed to dry out, and then set fire to in a controlled burn.

The Friends of Angahook-Lorne State Park have been closely monitoring the post-burn regrowth throughout the area and are excited with what is happening. Despite the lack of rain, biodiversity has increased dramatically, due largely to the health of the stored seed bank below. While some plants, such as Silver Banksia, Prickly Tea-tree and Horny Cone-bush, are obviously resprouting, there are many tiny seedlings appearing in the three 2m x 2m quadrats that we are monitoring closely. Guinea Flower, Raspwort, Kidneyweed, Violets and Creeping Bossiaea are just some of the

species that we have observed to this stage. All our plant knowledge and observational skills are being called upon to identify the different species from the shape and texture of the leaves that are appearing.

Two surveys have been carried out to this stage, and we are looking forward to a spring survey when plant flowering will make the process of species identification so much easier.

Will we find terrestrial orchids that grow so well in other areas of these heathlands?

Unfortunately there is a problem with kangaroos, wallabies and rabbits being attracted to these young fresh orchid shoots, so monitoring is not a straightforward process.

However it was not only the indigenous species that were stimulated by the fire. While the burn has been effective in removing the mature environmental weeds, thousands of seedlings of Boneseed and hybrid Wattles have since emerged – the stored seed bank also triggered by the fire. To date Coast Tea-tree has not reappeared, but we'll be watching for it. It may just take longer for the seeds to germinate.

Over the last few months a number of conservation and community groups have helped us out with the weeding process.

The Friends Group will continue to monitor and work in the area.

Flora and fauna monitoring is perhaps the most important aspect of The Friends of Angahook-Lorne State Park involvement. Annually we monitor a colony of koalas at Grey River, and a rare and threatened orchid species, *Caladenia maritima*, on the Anglesea Heathlands. Each year we also carry out five or six mammal surveys, using hair tubes, in various areas of the Park.

We learn so much from these activities, but it is also just fun to be with our members in the wonderful environment of what will soon be part of the Great Otway National Park.



Bayside Friends of Native Wildlife are monitoring various fauna species.

Michael Norris (9521 6879) tells how.

Conserving urban wildlife

Urban biodiversity is a great treasure in its own right as well as a source of inspiration, education and well-being.

But how can it be preserved? The first thing is to know what exists and to try to ameliorate the threats. The experiences of the Bayside Friends of Native Wildlife – FONW – suggest some ways of going about this task. The group

was formed in 1996 as an initiative of Bayside City Council and works alongside about 15 Friends and school groups.

In 1996, little was known about any vertebrates other than the birds. Since then FONW has worked to survey frogs, reptiles, bats and small mammals. Coast Action/Coastcare grants funded hair-tube surveys of the 17 km of foreshore and a cheap bat detector. Mike

Evans's student project showed us how to study skinks. Most notably we partnered the Council in surveys of the Rakali (*Hydromys chrysogaster*) along the coast.

Our computer database enables us to track trends which we endeavour to report to State-wide systems and use to respond to enquiries and alert the Council and other land managers to issues such as our declining population of Common Bronzewing. A project, recently launched by the Port Phillip EcoCentre, for monitoring coastal Blue Wrens from Altona to Beaumaris, will help us to share data and management ideas more widely.

Each year we report a summary of our monitoring work in the Council's award-winning environment magazine, the *Banksia Bulletin*. It includes the number of people contributing records but disguises the fluctuations in numbers taking part in surveys, interest from land managers, and 'wins' in policy debate. I wish we understood this better because in urban areas the social ecology – the connections between communities, government and organizations – is vital for conservation. Oh for a simple life dealing with just one park manager!

PAGE 1 PHOTO:
Amy Weir and
Christina Wilson
of Bayside Friends
of Native Wildlife
checking cage
traps for Rakali
on Sandringham
Breakwater
during the 2003
Rakali Survey.

Be on the lookout!

There is a potential threat to the Victorian environment from two pests from interstate.

Pest #1: The Bumblebee

The Large Earth Banded Bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*), with black and yellow bands, is established in Tasmania and there is a risk that it may find its way to the mainland via the Spirit of Tasmania.

Be on the lookout, and if you see it contact the Department of Primary Industries Customer Service Centre 13 6186.

Pest #2: The Fire Ant

Red Imported Fire Ants (*Solenopsis invicta*) are in Queensland and have made it to Victoria but are believed to have been exterminated. They could arrive here again.

Fire Ants are 2–6 mm long, reddish-brown with dark brown rear segment, very aggressive with a fiery sting and have no obvious opening to their dome-shaped nest mound.

If you suspect a nest, do not touch it. Phone DPI's Felicity Wardlaw, 9210 9334 or mobile 0400 967 161.

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

Geoff's Group Grapevine

Group newsletters contain many interesting ideas and thoughts.

For example, from the Friends of the Koalas winter Newsletter: 'Six of us achieved a lot in a morning; with more helpers we could free up even more Ranger time'. It is a challenge to all groups to try and ensure that their involvement 'frees up' rather than 'ties up' Ranger time. And another idea: 'To avoid confusion among members' the Kananook Creek Association have amended their Rules to change their financial year to the calendar year. Remember, if you are incorporated and change your rules you must advise the Registrar of Associations at Consumer Affairs Victoria.

Melbourne University student Sian Smith is writing an Honours thesis on the history of the Friends of Merri Creek.

The newsletter of the Friends of Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands is printed by the office of Ann Corcoran, MHR for Isaacs, and that of Friends of the Prom by the office of Ron Bowden, MLC South Eastern Province. This form of practical support may be worth exploring by other groups.

Two Friends newsletter editors have produced their last edition. On the 20th anniversary of the newsletter of the Friends of Organ Pipes National Park, Robert Bender has 'decided it is time to retire from this very absorbing and demanding activity and pass it onto somebody else'. A feature of Robert's 121 bi-monthly newsletters has been their detailed content and prolific illustrations. Robert

will continue to publish the newsletter of Friends of Wilson Reserve. Eric Mitchell has retired as editor of the Friends of Braeside monthly newsletter after 15 years. Eric writes: 'All the newsletters since the first one in February 1990 give a great historical perspective of the way in which the Park has developed since it opened in 1986'. The only Friend I can think of who is in the same league is Marion Taylor of Friends of Coolart who has been producing their quarterly newsletter for a remarkable 23 years. Are there others?

Some successful Friends Groups have activities once or more a week, many once a month, and a few only once a year. The Friends of Wyperfeld traditionally meet in the park over the Queens Birthday weekend and this year planted 2000 cypress-pines. The Friends of the Little Desert will also be planting on their annual working bee based at the Kiata camp ground on the weekend of the Friends Conference, 16–18 September. Contact Les Smith 9874 2641. The Friends of Bogong, who have two or three work/social events each year, are celebrating their 21st Anniversary with a big weekend at Mt Beauty on 19–20 November. For more information contact Fred Gerardson 9434 3078.

The Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater have published *Hilton Hunts for a Home*, an A5 20-page children's booklet with text by Sheena Geysen and colour illustrations by David Williams. Available for \$13.00 from Margo Craddock, 15 Sarah Court, Montrose 3765.

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Geoff Durham
is the Network's
Group Liaison Officer

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Geoff's Group Grapevine — continued from page 3

Wildflower fanatics and others will be interested in three forthcoming wildflower displays: the Friends of Brisbane Ranges, the Anakie Tree Planting Group and the Brisbane Ranges Landcare Group have a display at the Anakie Community Depot (the former Parks Victoria depot) on Sunday 11 September, 10.00 am – 4.00 pm; the annual Angair show is at the Anglesea Community Centre on the 17–18 September (the same weekend as the Friends Conference), and the annual Grampians Wildflower Show at Halls Gap is on 30 September to 4 October.

Mark Tscharke, the Ranger-in-charge of Terrick Terrick National Park is inviting those interested in forming a 'Friends of Terrick Terrick NP' to meet at the park from Friday night 30 September through Saturday and Sunday 1–2 October. In addition to the formalities of forming the Friends group there will be opportunity for hands-on contributions, VNPA 'Walk, Talk and Gawk' activities – including a night walk to see the Plains Wanderer, and visits to the grasslands (in the springtime!). There will also be an opportunity to participate in the setting up of a long-term assessment

of the condition of the park under the VNPA's Park Mates program. For more information, contact either Sue Hayman-Fox or Bernie Fox, 9741 9859, or email hayburn@bigpond.com.

And we welcome ...

Friends of Colley Street Bushland Reserve
The group assists the City of Casey in the maintenance of the 4 ha remnant bush reserve (Melways 140 H6) with monthly working bees.
Contact Helen Beaver 5978 6083

Friends of Mt Evelyn Aqueduct
The Mt Evelyn Aqueduct, a 6.4 km section of the 1912–13 O'Shannassy Aqueduct that passes through Mt Evelyn, is now a linear park of great beauty and historic interest. The group aims to preserve its historic features and enhance its native vegetation.
Contact Rick Weickhardt 9736 2189.

Friends of Swipers Gully Creek
This new group will 'protect and enhance the natural environment of Swipers Gully Creek' – a small creek at Research in the City of Nillumbik that does not appear in Melways. Contact Marian Weaving 9437 1954.

Weedbuster Week

Weedbuster week this year is 8–16 October (*not 15–23 October as stated in our last issue*). Last year the Friends of Glen Fern Valley Bushland in conjunction with the Southern Dandenongs Community Nursery held a Sunday morning event during attended by more than 60 people. Darcy Duggan was there to tell everyone about weeds and indigenous plants and there was weeding and planting. *Fourteen new members joined the Friends Group!* Publicity was provided by the Shire and by a letter drop of 2000 leaflets.

To take advantage of the support offered by the State coordinators, visit the Weedbuster Week website to register on-line — www.weedbusterweek.info.au/

Deadline for
November issue:
15 October 2005

Matching volunteers

In the newsletter of Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority, Doug Evans advises that the following have websites for online matching of volunteers and not-for-profit groups.

- Volunteering Australia — www.govolunteer.com.au
- C'wealth Dept of Employment & W'place Relations — www.volunteersearch.gov.au
- SEEK Communications — www.volunteer.com.au
- Pro Bono Australia — www.volunteermatch.com.au/default.asp
- ACF — www.acfonline.org.au/volunteergreen

How relevant are these to Friends Groups? What is your experience and recommendation? Please let us know.

If undelivered, return to:
Friends Network Committee
c/- VNPA, 60 Leicester Street
CARLTON 3053

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