



# FriendsNET

Newsletter of the Victorian Environment Friends Network

Number 58 February 2007

## From your Network Committee Convener...



Maelor Himbury  
(Friends of Maribyrnong  
Valley) Network  
Committee Convener  
9374 1902 (h)

Welcome to another year of working for the environment.

*First – a special notice*

Please tell all your members and interested contacts that the VEFN Membership Workshop *How to Win Friends and Satisfy People* will be held on Saturday 14 April at the Green Building, Carlton. We want as broad a representation as possible, and particularly people to share their membership success stories. Numbers are limited to 100 and booking by telephone or email is 'first come – first served', so don't delay. See the accompanying flyer for full details.

The Rawson Village has been booked for the 12th Biennial Friends Conference *A Climate of Change* on 7–9 September. The village has been greatly improved since the 1993 Conference and several accommodation options will be

available, including camping. Local Friends Groups will be hosting a variety of activities. The program is not yet been finalised and suggestions for topics and speakers will be welcomed.

Adopting an idea from South Australia, the Friends Network Committee has decided to create a 'Memorial Book' to record group members who have died commencing the year 2000. (It is considered too difficult to go back beyond this.) The book will be on display at Biennial Conferences and on other appropriate occasions. Groups who would like to honour a deceased member in this way are asked to forward the person's name, date of death and name of group by email to: [friendsvic@hotmail.com](mailto:friendsvic@hotmail.com) or by post to The Victorian Environment Friends Network c/o VNPA, 60 Leicester Street, Carlton 3053.

## Dealing with the drought

For many of us, the drought and water restrictions are having special consequences and causing extra problems in our 'patches'.

Here are two examples. We invite other groups to let us all know how they are dealing with their particular situations.

### From the Friends of Dandenong Valley Parklands:

Our recent publicity for our Indigenous Garden aroused the interest of many people interested in gardening with local plants as a way of coping in these drought affected times. On our November Open Day an expanded team was kept busy showing people around. We were able to point out plants that had survived previous dry years, as well as show the benefits of pruning on shape and flowering. The visitors were also pleased with the handout material on the plant species. The day showed we are



Friends of Dandenong Valley Parklands Indigenous Garden

making progress towards our objective of using the gardens to encourage people to use local plants in their garden.

*Bryan Loft 9561 2381*

**The Friends of Edithvale–Seaford Wetlands** report the closing of the Bird Hide on the south side of Edithvale Road (Melway map 93 D6). For many years the Friends have staffed the hide on weekends. The hide has been closed until further notice and will re-open when the water and birds return.



The view of the 'wetlands' from the bird hide!

## Have you considered the benefits of latching on to National days and special events?

### *Two groups explain their experiences ...*

#### **Free publicity and insurance cover**

The Friends of Glen Fern Valley Bushlands regularly hold working bees to coincide with nationally advertised events such as Clean Up Australia Day, Weedbusters Day and National Tree Day. These 'days' provide the advantages of free publicity and insurance cover on the specific days.

Attendances at Clean Up Australia Day have dwindled over the last 5 years, from the first flush of local community enthusiasm with more than 50 people to most recently about 8! As we have reduced rubbish dumping significantly the amount to be removed has also dwindled, so less effort is needed and we advertise less. The campaign has been very successful with a total of 72 cubic metres of skip space filled over 6 years.

We combine Weedbusters Day with our Community Discovery Day and support it by letterbox delivery of 1000-2000 flyers and membership forms, as this is also our annual membership drive. Attendance varies between 50+ in the early days to about 30 lately. This year we included some actual weeding and tree planting as preliminary activities for the day, followed by expert-guided bird watching and weed identification tours. We have a lot more weeds than birds!

National Tree Day has always attracted more people; this year saw 48 enthusiastic planters of all ages. People like to plant rather than collecting rubbish or wrestling with weeds! We limit this activity to one or two events since most of the 40 ha reserve vegetation will regenerate once the main weeds are gone.

All are welcome to join our monthly working bees, on alternating 3rd Sundays and Saturdays (see our website for the calendar) as well as the big events.

Glen Fern Valley Bushlands was declared a reserve in 2004. Bounded by the lower reaches of Ferny Creek in the southern foothills of the Dandenongs it forms part of a Green Wedge including neighbouring Lysterfield Valley.

*Ian Rainbow (Friends of Glen Fern Valley Bushlands)  
9754 8425*



## **Big benefits**

The Friends of Scotchmans Creek and Valley Reserve in Mount Waverley/Glen Waverley have found that there are big benefits in scheduling some of their events to coincide with 'national' days. The ones that have been great successes for them have been National Tree Day and Clean Up Australia Day. It's all about getting 'free' national advertising and promotion.

For the last 5 years the group has held a planting day on National Tree Day. This event is worked out in close cooperation with the City of Monash. The council prepares the area by spraying to knock down the weeds and then provides and spreads mulch. The site is registered by the council on the Planet Ark National Tree Day web site, thus getting wide promotion.

The Friends buy the plants and, on the day, handle the registration of volunteers. The council provides members of their 'bush crews' to lay out the plants and instruct the volunteer planters. The Friends also help with the planting and clean-up afterwards. Some years other community groups have joined in by providing a BBQ.

Each year the event has got bigger. In 2006, around 160 volunteers participated, planting 7400 plants. There were individuals and families from around 25 suburbs of Melbourne including places as far afield as Aspendale, Coburg, Lalor, South Yarra, Dandenong, Ferntree Gully and Skye. There were volunteers from the council, schools, local businesses, Monash University and a number of community groups.

Clean Up Australia Day has also been successful through national promotion. In this case the Friends register the site on the Clean Up Australia day website. The Monash Council has coordinated activities at sites throughout the City of Monash providing tables, umbrellas, bins and some refreshments at the registration points. The Friends handle volunteer registration and instructions about the areas to be targeted. The Council has collected the bins of rubbish at the end of the day. Individuals, families, local MPs, community groups and local schools have joined in to Clean Up Australia.

We have picked up some members through these events. People ask us what other activities we have and, if they wish, we add them onto our mailing list and a number of them become financial members (although it is very difficult to get new committee members!)

*Ted Mason (Friends of Scotchmans Creek and Valley Reserve)  
9802 3481*

The Australian Government Department of the Environment & Water Resources web site has a comprehensive Environmental Events Calendar [www.environment.gov.au/events/index.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/events/index.html)

**Clean Up Australia Day** - First Sunday in March 1800 282 329  
[www.cleanup.com.au](http://www.cleanup.com.au). Contact Stephanie Spathis 9333 2406.

**World Environment Day** - First Sunday in June.

**National Tree Day** - Last Sunday in July 1300 88 5000  
[www.planetark.com/treeday](http://www.planetark.com/treeday)

**Weedbusters Week** - Second week of October 5226 4957  
[www.weedbusterweek.info.au/vic](http://www.weedbusterweek.info.au/vic)

# Experience Exchange (your space)

We received the following letter in response to a contribution to the last Experience Exchange:

*I do not wish to display my ignorance and therefore request that I remain anonymous. In FriendsNET No. 57, Michael Norris warned of the danger of Friends pulling up native plants, mistaking them for weeds. I am concerned about flat weeds. I note from Environmental Weeds – a Field Guide for SE Australia by Kate Blood (p.178) that there are two invasive flat weeds in Victoria. Flora of Victoria (vol. 4, pp. 709–10) describes Smooth Cat's-ear Hypochaeris glabra, and Cat's-ear (Flat-weed) H. radicata – as 'probably the most ubiquitous weed in the State, occurring even in near-pristine vegetation'. Are there look-alike natives, and how do I distinguish them? Is there a problem with Dandelions? When I use my daisy-pronger to prise up a leaf rosette without flowers, how do I know it is a flat weed and not a native such as the Yam Daisy? Help please!*

Wary Weeder

We referred this request to Kate Blood who has kindly supplied the following:

The short answer is to obtain some good field guides and check all plants carefully. Attend plant identification courses and seek advice from others who are experienced naturalists or botanists. I remember pulling out indigenous White Elderberry (*Sambucus* sp.) early in my career because it looked so 'weedy' it must have been one!

To try and differentiate between a range of daisies in 150 words is very difficult so I won't. There are so many and superficially, many look the same. Different growing conditions add to the confusion.

Apart from the common flatweeds, there are many other invasive daisies such as Hawksbit (*Leontodon* species), Hawksbeard (*Crepis* sp.), Sow-thistle (*Sonchus* sp.), Gazania and the like. Dandelions (*Taraxacum* species) are common too in bushland and more recognisable to the experienced gardener. However, beware, there are indigenous Dandelions too.

Some of the new daisy weeds that threaten the State include the yellow-flowering Mouse-ear (*Hieracium pilosella*), King Devil Hawkweed (*Hieracium praealtum* ssp. *bauhinii*), and the Orange Hawkweed (*Hieracium aurantiacum*).

The beautiful indigenous Yam Daisy (*Microseris* sp.) growing in my part of the State (near Beaufort) usually has one yellow daisy-head per stem and it often droops over near the top while it is in bud.

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



The indigenous Dune Thistle (see FN 57)



The common garden flat-weed

## After the fires...

### Cooperative attack

After the 2006 Grampians fire removed the undergrowth at Zumsteins the spread of Arum Lilies was noted and two working bees were organised involving the Friends of Grampians Gariwerd, Friends of Zumsteins and twenty young people from the Lutheran group at Tandara.

Two tip-truck loads of lilies were dug up and removed by the Park staff. With the additional assistance of the Laharum Landcare Group this was followed by extensive spraying of all remaining lilies that could be found.

The President of Friends of Grampians Gariwerd, Pru Pike says: 'It is going to be very important to follow up this work next year even though the regrowth is going to make the job more difficult'. Arum Lilies are out of control in southwest Western Australia and are spreading

in suitable areas in Victoria. Vivien Freshwater of the Friends of Sherbrooke Forest says their group has found the best way of removing them is to use a sturdy garden fork.

### New Volunteer & Community Programs Coordinator with Parks Victoria

The Community Participation Unit at Parks Victoria has recently appointed Sjaan Field as the new Volunteer & Community Programs Coordinator. Sjaan has a background in Parks Management and enjoys volunteering with various community groups. She has been working at Parks Victoria for the past eighteen months as an Executive Officer and has joined the team which includes:

Kerry Murphy - Manager Community Participation  
Drue Shultz - Volunteer Officer / Campground Host Coordinator  
Anthea Dee - Community Participation Coordinator  
Jo Hopkins - Community Relations Coordinator  
Sjaan Field - Volunteer & Community Programs Coordinator

If you need to contact any of the above, please contact Parks Victoria 13 1963.

# Group Grapevine

## Network Committee Liaison members Jenny Harrington and Geoff Durham report.

An attractive and very useful colour 'EnviroFriends of Hobsons Bay Calendar of Events 2007' has been produced with the support of Hobsons Bay City Council. For a copy email Michelle Gooding: [mgooding@hobsonsabay.vic.gov.au](mailto:mgooding@hobsonsabay.vic.gov.au)

The Victorian High Country Huts Association 2007 Calendar features photos of huts by 6 members. The calendar is available for \$10 including \$2 for postage and handling by ordering through website [www.hutsvictoria.org.au](http://www.hutsvictoria.org.au)

Friends of Damper Creek Newsletter has a report of a lady who was concerned when she was confronted by a male person in the creek bed area. It turned out he was an innocent council worker removing weeds. Perhaps this is another reason why volunteer vests are a good idea.

Seven volunteers from the Kananook Creek Association and two Victorian Museum staff carried out the first in a series of fish surveys funded by Melbourne Water on 11 October. Netting at three sites produced two species of Goby, Yellow Eye Mullet, Black Bream, Hardy Heads, Flounder, and some Galaxias - along with crabs, shrimps, worms and lots of other invertebrates.

On 27 November four Friends of the Koalas helped Phillip Island Nature Park Rangers with a Koala Count in the Oswin Roberts Reserve. After 2 1/2 hours only two Koalas were located. President Patsy Hunt reports that Koala numbers on Phillip Island are 'now extremely low and declining'.

## And we welcome ...

### Friends of McMahon Ball Paddock

This reserve of about one acre at Eltham is named after W McMahon Ball (1901-1986), the founding professor of Political Science at Melbourne University and ABC broadcaster. The group usually attends to the reserve on the last Wednesday in the month, 3.30-5.30 pm. Jann Darvill 9439 7342

### Wombat Forestcare Inc.

A community group dedicated to protecting and enhancing the natural ecosystems of the Wombat Forest and surrounding areas, this group is affiliated as an Associate Member pending clarification of the Department of Sustainability and Environment policy on Friends groups.

Many of the items for Group Grapevine come from Group Newsletters. Please make sure the Network Committee receives your newsletter. We note that some newsletters do not have any contact person details. This complicates things for people like us who wish to contact you.



## Nightlife of Australia

Have you ever heard the 'falling bomb' call of the Sooty Owl, the garrulous gurgling shriek of the Yellow-bellied Glider or the infamous 'screaming woman' call of the Barking Owl? *Nightlife of Australia - South-eastern Forests* is a new CD with 53 sound recordings of nocturnal birds and mammals that can help identify the mysterious night sounds of our forests.

Ed McNabb is a wildlife ecologist with a special interest in nocturnal fauna. He began recording wildlife vocalisations in the 1970s during his long-term study of the Powerful Owl in Victoria's Dandenong Ranges. Ed became intrigued by the many mystery night calls he heard during his long hours in the bush at night and he found the best way to learn the calls was to record them.

In 1996 Ed published his popular *Nightlife of the Dandenongs* tape, which has assisted landowners, biologists and naturalists in identifying nocturnal wildlife by their calls around the Dandenongs and beyond.

*Nightlife of Australia - South-eastern Forests* focuses on nocturnal calls of the Dandenongs and also includes a number of species from elsewhere along the Victorian Great Dividing Range.

The CD can be purchased via Ed's website [www.ninoxpursuits.com.au](http://www.ninoxpursuits.com.au) for \$25-00 plus postage.

## How to contact us ...

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FriendsNET may be downloaded from the Network web site ([home.vicnet.net.au/~friends](http://home.vicnet.net.au/~friends)) and emailed to group members. Articles in *FriendsNET* may be used in Group Newsletters with acknowledgement.

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15 April 2007**

If undelivered, return to:  
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