



FriendsNET

Newsletter of the Victorian Environment Friends Network

Number 60 August 2007

Will your group be represented at the Network's 12th Biennial Conference? 'A Climate of Change'

7-9 September at Rawson Village (north of Moe)

Program, accommodation and transport information, and booking form, were sent with the last issue of FriendsNET, or can be downloaded from the Network's website home.vicnet.net.au/~friends/News

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO BOOK, BUT DO IT NOW!

REMEMBER - THE BENEFITS OF A CONFERENCE INCREASE WITH THE DIVERSITY OF GROUPS REPRESENTED

Groups in action

Our Friends groups operate in many and varied environments, and with diverse objectives.

From the coastal island groups featured in our last issue, we ascend to the mountains, where the Victorian High Country Huts Association tackle the challenge of rebuilding and caring for some 180 huts.

Secretary David Oldfield (9747 1411) explains how.

Caring for the High Country Huts

We were founded in February 2003 by Dianne Carroll and Fiona Magnussen in response to a blizzard of email traffic from community members dismayed at the potential effects of the 2003 bushfires on the huts in the high country. We think we lost more than 50 huts in those fires and about 12 in the 2006-07 fires.

Our mission is to care for huts on public land in the high country. That's easy to say, but when you look at the area covered, stretching from Marysville to the NSW border, with perhaps 180 huts spread over land managed by Parks Victoria, DSE and the Alpine Resort Management Boards, you can perhaps see the challenges we face.

One of our first actions was to register with Parks Victoria as a Friends group and to join the Friends Network. We don't believe in reinventing the wheel so we modelled ourselves on the Kosciuszko Huts Association who had been in this game for over 30 years.

Our ultimate aim is to put in place a system of caretaker groups to maintain and care for the huts. We could not have achieved anything without the assistance of Parks Victoria and DSE on the ground. We formalised our relationship with Parks Victoria when we signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Alpine District in September 2006 which includes an invaluable 52 page hut maintenance manual dealing with all the operational issues ranging from volunteer insurance, planning work parties (including Job Safety Analysis) to heritage management.

In the past four years we have clocked up over 2400 man-hours of volunteer work on huts, worth over \$36,000 at the rate of \$15/hr used in Parks Victoria Community Grant Applications. The key people are our Huts Maintenance Officers (HMOs) who liaise with Parks Victoria or DSE in each of our 11 HMO areas to plan and carry out work on huts. We built the Horsehair Hut Replica in April 2003, Roughriders Hut in Omeo in January 2004, McNamara's Hut Buckety Plain in April 2004, worked on CRB Hut Dinner Plain in April 2005, restored the north and east walls of Fry's Hut in April and November 2006 and would have rebuilt Roper's Hut this year if the fires had not started last December.

We publish our Newsletter *Echo from the Mountains* four times a year to keep our members in touch with future events and record past work parties. We also have a website www.hutsvictoria.org.au to present our window on the world.





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

From your Network Committee Convener

Biennial General Meeting

At the 12th Biennial Conference (see page 1), the Network will hold its Biennial General Meeting to elect the committee for the next two years, and to deal with General Business. The meeting will be held at 9.45 am on Sunday 9 September.

Agenda

- Convener's Report
- Treasurer's Report
- Constitution Amendment – Change of name to 'Victorian Environment Friends Network'
- Election of eight members for the 2007–09 Committee

Members of affiliated Friends Groups are urged to consider nominating for the two-year term of the next committee. It is not an open-ended commitment. The committee traditionally meets monthly in Melbourne. Office bearers are appointed by the Committee from its members. For further information contact any member of the present committee.

- General Business: Written notice of any proposed motion of a networking nature of general relevance to Friends Groups together with an explanatory memo of not more than 100 words must be received by the Secretary by 1.00 pm on Saturday 8 September.

The BGM will be preceded by Sunday Soapbox. Commencing 9.00 am we will discuss as many matters of general relevance to Friends Groups as time permits. A briefing note (to 100 words) to the Secretary by 1.00 pm on Saturday 8 September will enable a fair and orderly session.

Memorial Book

This book, recording Friends who have died since the start of the year 2000, will be on display at the Conference. For an entry in time for this occasion, forward the name of deceased, date of death and name of group to Sue Wright (9306 8124) by the end of August, 2007.

Best Friend Award

The 2007 Best Friend Awards will be announced and presented at the forthcoming Conference.

Nominations for the 2008 Best Friend Award close at the end of this year (December 2007)

Only groups can nominate and the nominee should have made an outstanding contribution through exceptional dedication as a Friend over a period of at least 10 years. An explanatory memo and nomination form are available from the VNPA office.

Friends and the VNPA

The relationship between the VEFN and the VNPA is confusing for many Friends. Bernie Fox explains the situation. Bernie is a VEFN committee member, VNPA Councillor and immediate past-President, and a member (and a former office-bearer) of Friends groups.

The Victorian Environment Friends Network (VEFN) is 270 affiliated groups with a Network Committee formed of Friends elected at biennial conferences. The committee supports Friends Groups, represents Friends' interests to relevant parties: Local Government, Catchment Management, Parks Victoria, DSE, etc., organises the next conference and arranges seminars. The relation between VEFN and its individual Friends groups is one of cost-free affiliation. Groups are autonomous and independent – there is no binding relationship.

The Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) is a non-Government, member-based organisation formed in 1952 to champion the protection of natural habitat and species in a Parks system. It has a proud record of achievement of our largely comprehensive natural estate and works hard to ensure its proper management. More recently it has evolved as the champion of biodiversity in Victoria.

There is a neat agreement of purpose between Friends and VNPA whilst the groups work in different ways and at different levels. This is reflected by the fact the first Friends

group, Friends of Organ Pipes, was formed in 1972 as a Committee of VNPA. The success of this group led to the then National Parks Service approving the VNPA sponsoring groups of other parks. The idea spread beyond the state system of parks and, after the election of a Friends Network Committee at the 1987 Friends Conference, it was agreed this committee should operate independently of the VNPA.

The present relationship is that the VNPA hosts the Friends Network. It provides a postal address, a meeting place for the VEFN Committee, looks after its accounts and generally gives administrative support – all at no cost to the Network. VNPA continues to promote the formation of Friends Groups and its quarterly journal, *Park Watch*, welcomes articles from Friends Groups.

Whilst VNPA and the VEFN are each autonomous and independent, many individual Friends and some Friends Groups are financial members of the VNPA. Many VNPA members are members of Friends Groups, and the VEFN Committee and the VNPA Council traditionally cross co-opt a member.

I believe the link of 'similar purpose' between VNPA and VEFN and their individual 'land-carer' members will be strongly seen as the 'Victoria Naturally' project gathers momentum, with its role to formulate a government White Paper on Biodiversity. To learn more of this initiative, go to www.vnpa.org.au.

Experience Exchange (your space)

In our last issue, we indicated that a topic for this issue's Experience Exchange would be 'Children and Friends Groups', and we invited contributions. Colin Cook, of Friends of Brisbane Ranges NP, has some good advice based on his experience.

As the father of two small children (Owen, 7 years and Kristen, 4 years), and being the current President of the Friends of Brisbane Ranges, I felt I had to contribute to the Experience Exchange on getting children involved. Our two have been involved in FoBR for many years, with Kristen attending her first FoBR activity aged 2 weeks. Both look forward to the days when we get together with the Rangers and get into the park. First and foremost, the children enjoy the activities and want to get involved when they're having fun. You can make the activities more fun using the following guidelines. These have worked for us, but you may have to adapt them to suit your particular children.

Give them something to do! A bored kid is going to be unhappy, followed closely by cranky, whiny, noisy and pesty (sounds like the bad cousins of the 7 dwarfs). Even simple things will keep them occupied, like picking up empty tube pots, carting stakes, tree guards, buckets of water etc. As they get older, they can get into more demanding things like digging out weeds, as long as they know to check the identity with a grown-up before embarking on destruction of course! Small boys especially like doing this; it pays to harness their naturally destructive tendencies for good purposes whenever you can.

Praise them whenever you can for the work they're doing.

Allow them to get dirty, jump in puddles, climb trees, drive pretend cars etc. In short, allow them to interact with their environment and have fun. Wash their clothes the next day.

Always make time for the mental and physical detours that occur when working in the bush. Stopping to look at birds, flowers, fungi etc. and pointing these out will make for more interesting times for all concerned. Be prepared to drop tools for a few minutes to explain the ins and outs of mushrooms, ant holes, spiders, rocks etc.

Make the day a bit special by preparing an especially yummy lunch or including some treats. Reward them for their involvement.

Another thing that will make Friends days more enjoyable is interacting with other Friends. Our children enjoy talking with the other Friends in our group, especially when they get included in the conversations, not talked down to. A Friends Group is just a group of friends, so you have to ensure that the children are friends too, not just following along for the day.

Colin Cook (5286 1252)

Many groups involve children from schools or other groups in their activities, as in the photo below. In such cases, there are issues relating to responsibility, insurance, rights in publicity, and so on. If your group works with any such groups, please tell us how you deal with these matters. We will follow them up in the next *FriendsNET*.



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

Wanted: Happy Hosts

Do you enjoy meeting park visitors, offering advice on great walks or helping people better understand local wildlife? Share your love and knowledge of Victoria's most special parks through volunteering on the Campground Host Program.

Friend's members possess amazing skills and knowledge about our parks which is really valuable in helping our visitors to understand how to better care for these special places. Based in a campground for 2 weeks, you would assist in providing visitor and park information during peak periods including guided walks, campsite activities or just providing general information.

In return, you will receive a free camp site, training, uniform, and the opportunity to apply your knowledge of

parks in helping others to appreciate our wonderful parks system.

If you would like to know how to be a part of this program call Drue Shultz on 8627 4672 or visit the Parks Victoria website www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

Upcoming wildflower shows

Angair Annual Show - Memorial Hall, Anglesea, 22-23 September, 10:00 am-5:00 pm.

Grampians Annual Wildflower & Art Show - Halls Gap, 5-9 October, 9:30 am-5:30 pm.

Friends of Brisbane Ranges Annual Wildflower Show and inaugural photographic exhibition & sales, Anakie Staughton Vale Hall (Vic Roads 77 G7), Sunday 14 October, 10:00 am-4:30 pm.

Group Grapevine

Parks Victoria 25 year Awards were made to Friends of Mt Worth State Park and to Friends of Nyerimilang at a luncheon at Nyerimilang on 22 June.

The Friends of Mud Islands have won the Community Group category of the Coastal Awards for Excellence 2007.

Following a joint representation by the Friends of Damper Creek and the Friends of Scotchmans Creek and Valley Reserve, the City of Monash has agreed to recognise the Friends groups as a 'third neighbour' for the purpose of planning objections to proposals affecting their reserves. The groups also sought to have the Vegetation Protection Overlay strengthened in relation to properties which abut the reserves, but this proposal was not accepted.

Very short talks about a weed, indigenous plant or animal or bird given by committee members are a new feature of working bees of the Friends of Glen Fern Valley Bushland. President Ian Rainbow says: 'These are a great idea to offer a bit extra to members. It fulfils part of our community education goal and challenges the committee members to swot up!'

Friends of the Cobberas have upgraded their website www.friendscobberas.com.au. Their next activity is over the Cup Weekend long weekend, 3-6 November which will be a campout at Native Dog Flat in the Alpine National Park with a working bee on the Mt Stradbroke Walking Track. New members and visitors most welcome. Contact Jenny Edwards 5157 5556

WILDCARE, the Tasmanian Parks Volunteer organisation, has extended an invitation to Victorian Friends to attend its 10th Anniversary National Conference at Hobart 22-25 November. For details go to www.leishman-associates.com.au/wildcare2007

And we welcome

Friends of the BKs

The Brahma Kumaris Centre for Spiritual Learning is at Frankston. This new group of about 15 aims to enhance the quality of the bushland at the Centre. Jacqueline Russell 5971 1599

Friends of Cydelia Inc

Cydelia is a Trust for Nature covenanted 400 ha private property adjacent to the Grampians National Park managed by the Cybec Foundation. This is a recently formed group. Alison White 5383 6263

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

Friends of the Glenelg River

The aim of this group is to raise environmental awareness in the Casterton community by conducting a mix of fun, educational and on-ground activities. Tim Burnard 5581 2250

Friends of Kooyoora

This group initially started in 1987 but after a lull re-started in 2000. It has 50 members. Kooyoora State Park is near Inglewood. John Morieson 9818 4125

Friends of Lake Purrumbete

This new group will have clean-up days and plant native trees at Lake Purrumbete near Camperdown. Arthur Carvill 5275 5548

Friends of Royal Park

Royal Park is the responsibility of the Melbourne City Council. This new group aims to protect the park's biodiversity and environment and provide practical hands-on learning activities and experiences. Gabrielle Stannus 9329 2801

Friends of the Terricks

Terrick Terrick National Park near Mitiamo has the best stand of white cypress-pine in the State and wonderful grasslands. The group will have its third annual camp-out on the weekend of 6-7 October and all are welcome. Simon Starr 5455 7116

Friends of Tyers Park

Tyers Regional Park, between Morwell and Rawson, has spectacular scenery. This new group is underway with 15 members. Jim Stranger 5191 8312

Friends of Walkerville

Protection and preservation of the natural environment and various features of the Walkerville Foreshore Reserve and environs is the main objective of this long established group. Jacquelyn Stump 9820 5530

Friends of Woodridge Linear Reserve

The narrow reserve about 1 km long is next to the Pauline Toner Butterfly Reserve in Eucalyptus Road, Eltham. Karin Diamond 9439 2753

Walhalla Heritage and Development League

The group was formed in 1945 and has 250 members. Their mission statement is: 'Conserving and restoring the historic gold-mining township of Walhalla while developing the town as one of Gippsland's premier tourist destinations.' Brian Brewer 5622 1442

How to contact us ...

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FriendsNET may be downloaded from the Network web site (<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 October 2007**

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FriendsNET

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