



# FriendsNET

Newsletter of the Victorian Environment Friends Network

Number 63 May 2008

## It's for the birds!



There is a fascination about birds. Of all animals, they must be the most observed, and as environmental indicators they are particularly relevant to climate change. In this issue we feature birds and some bird-specific volunteer groups.

*Male lyrebird displaying in Sherbrooke Forest – see story page 2.  
Photo – Alex Maisey*



*Don Saunders, past Director of National Parks, now Conservation Coordinator with Bird Observation & Conservation Australia (BOCA), urges Friends to get with the birds*

## Surveying Birds – how Friends can help

Many Friends are already involved in monitoring birds; for some it is a major focus of their activities. However all Friends are encouraged to take up surveying birds, which will not only enhance knowledge and enjoyment of their area, but also add to our understanding of Victoria's environment through contributing to a statewide database.

A few pointers to conducting surveys are listed below.

- The objective should be to collect survey data in a consistent way over the long-term. Bird numbers and occurrences are very variable depending upon seasonal factors, migratory patterns and changes to their habitats, which means that population trends can only be reasonably assessed using long-term data.
- Ideally, surveys should be conducted at least once each month, particularly in the first decade. This will give some indication of seasonal patterns. Importantly, it may also help to detect changes in breeding and migratory patterns due to climate change.

- There are a number of standard techniques for conducting surveys such as the 20-minute 2-hectare random search, the transect survey and the stationary count. Or you may wish to use a less formal method, wandering through your patch for an hour or more – this will almost certainly record more species than the time and space constrained techniques. Note that if you wish to contribute to Birds Australia atlasing project the 20-minute 2-hectare method is preferred.

- If possible your survey should also include the number of each species seen. However this can be very difficult in some habitats, such as tall forests. Some species, e.g. emus, are not difficult to count, whereas a mixed flock of rapidly-moving thornbills and pardalotes can be almost impossible for all but the expert. An easier way of indicating numbers for each species is to use the abbreviations: A = abundant (more than 30 birds); C = common (6–30 birds); U = less than 6 birds; F = flying over; B = breeding. Annotate your list with numbers wherever possible, especially where very large numbers are recorded.

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

## From your Network Committee Convener

The first VEFN seminar this year was a magical mystery tour through the labyrinths of federal and state environmental legislation. Our tour guide was Annette Jones of the Environment Defenders Office who carefully explained such arcane concepts as 'controlled action', 'net community benefit', 'significant impact', 'standing' and the ever-dubious 'flashing amber light'. There was a lot to cover in a very short time but attendees went away with a much greater understanding of the processes.

The EDO is happy to run regional sessions with Friends Groups, or sit down with a group to discuss action on a particular issue. To find out more ring the Environment Defenders Office on 8341 3100 or e-mail [edovic@edo.org.au](mailto:edovic@edo.org.au).

**The next VEFN seminar is scheduled for 13 September. We are still considering topics, although one issue that has been suggested is the 'working with children' regulations. If you have ideas about other topics, please get in contact with us.**

### Groups in action

Jan Incoll explains the tireless work of the Sherbrooke Lyrebird Survey Group over a 50-year period. Contact 9756 6977 or [bincoll@melbpc.aug.au](mailto:bincoll@melbpc.aug.au) for more information

### Sherbrooke Lyrebird Survey Group

Study of the lyrebird (*Menura novaehollandiae*) by the Sherbrooke Lyrebird Survey Group began 50 years ago – in 1958. It was considered that on-going changes to the lyrebird's habitat, predation by feral animals, and increasing human population pressure could lead to the extinction of the species in Sherbrooke Forest. There have been seven road-kill birds in the last nine months.

The group was formed to 'Elucidate the life history, ecology and survival of the lyrebird in

Sherbrooke Forest'. SLSG has been pursuing these aims through observing behaviour, movement, calls, population trends, mating, relationships and nesting. Identifying lyrebirds through a banding program is an integral part of the study. A written report is required from members for each visit to the Forest and in recent years these data have been stored in a database. The number of breeding males reached a low in 1988 and 1989 of 24 birds. Since then, the number has gradually increased to 43 males. Over the years 2002 to 2007 the number of individual females generally follows the trend for the males and the current number is in the high 40s. Also over the last 5 years, between 22 and 30 chicks have been banded per year. All these numbers are positive proof of an increase in the Sherbrooke Forest lyrebird population, which the group hopes will be maintained.

This year's surveys will be on 21 June, 5 July & 19 July. More volunteers will be welcomed.

**In its 50th year, the group is particularly interested in contacting former members.**



Members of the group  
examine a lyrebird nest  
– photo by Bill Incoll

**Surveying birds:  
how Friends can help**  
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- Obviously it is important to record the time and date of the survey, the location, habitat type and the weather, along with the name(s) of the survey participant(s).
- Generally the common names for birds used in the four or five main Australian field guides are consistent with the Christidis and Boles list of 1994. However Christidis and Boles have now (2008) published a new list and some common names have changed. The latest Pizzey and Knight field guide (eighth edition) uses some of these new names.
- The statewide database to which records can be submitted is the Atlas of Victorian Wildlife (2). This can be contacted by e-mail: [biodiversity.info@dse.vic.gov.au](mailto:biodiversity.info@dse.vic.gov.au)

- For anyone interested in starting a bird survey a good example of how to go about it and what can be achieved is published in the current issue of *Corella* Vol. 32:1 'Birds of the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne' reporting on 16 years of monthly surveys.
- Bird Observation and Conservation Australia (BOCA) can provide a package of information to the group including survey techniques, sample recording sheets and BOCA's Little Blue Birdlist. Write, with the name of the Group, contact person and address to BOCA, PO Box 185, Nunawading, 3131, or e-mail [conservation@birdobservers.org.au](mailto:conservation@birdobservers.org.au)

## Malleefowl Recovery Group

The aims of the Victorian Malleefowl Recovery Group are to promote Malleefowl Conservation and the enhancement of the environment for Malleefowl in Victoria, achieved through:

- implementing the National Recovery Plan for Malleefowl in Victoria;
- undertaking annual monitoring and field research;
- maintaining a close relationship with Parks Victoria;
- providing high level monitoring training for members.

The prime work of the VMRG is the annual collection of field data on mounds within monitoring sites located throughout the mallee in north-west and north-central Victoria. Each season, between October and January, 1200 Malleefowl mounds in 34 sites of approximately 400 hectares each are visited by volunteers. Comprehensive field data is collected using modern data collection techniques and satellite navigation (GPS). The data is then added to a national Malleefowl database for analysis and management development.



The methodology allows for the active participation of non-technically trained volunteers, whilst at the same time being repeatable without compromising scientific integrity. Field training for volunteers is conducted annually.

For further information contact Secretary Ann Stokie ([annos@iprimus.com.au](mailto:annos@iprimus.com.au)) or by accessing the VMRG website at [www.malleefowlvictoria.org.au](http://www.malleefowlvictoria.org.au)

## Groups in action

*Inspecting a Malleefowl mound.*

*Photo courtesy VMRG*

## Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater

Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve is a narrow linear 600 ha reserve surrounded by farmland. It is the last natural territory of the endangered Helmeted Honeyeater which requires a habitat of dense riparian vegetation in swamps or by streamsides. It is Victoria's avifaunal emblem and there are only 100 birds left in the wild. The Friends have their own nursery, open Tuesdays and Thursdays, that supplies indigenous plants to local landholders, Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water and local Shires. We employ part-time both a Nursery Manager and a Coordinator. The positions are funded from sales through the nursery and grants.

The Coordinator runs an education program for schools and conducts revegetation days for

schools and corporate groups using plants propagated in the nursery. Volunteers staff the nursery and are involved in the supplementary feeding program for captive bred birds released into the wild. Volunteers are our lifeblood.

Contact Sue & Bruce Tardif 5964 8341; [heho1@optusnet.com.au](mailto:heho1@optusnet.com.au)



*Release of captive bred Helmeted Honeyeaters. Representing major partner groups in the program are Mick Kealy (PV), Byron Manning (Healesville Sanctuary), Bruce Quin (DSE) and Bob Anderson (Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater).*

*Photo by Margot Craddock*

## Friends' submissions on Land and Biodiversity

The Environment Defenders Office has analysed the submissions to the State Government's consultation paper 'Land and Biodiversity at a Time of Climate Change'. In excess of 350 submissions were made, over 30 of them from Friends groups in the community-based conservation group category. The EDO summary of this category's submissions says all are sympathetic towards ecological principles and existing conservation efforts, but stress the need for further education in biodiversity and sustainability. Main themes are weed control and invasive species. Many submissions emphasise the need to support volunteer and Landcare organisations and to adopt a coordinated approach between

different stakeholders and agencies. There is a significant amount of criticism of fire management schemes. Other issues are the urgent requirement for additional funding and criticism that preference is given to economic considerations over environmental considerations. The analysis, 'Land and Biodiversity – a call for Action', is available on the EDO website – [www.edo.org.au](http://www.edo.org.au)

### Critical final stage

The next step in the process of developing the final White Paper on Biodiversity was the release in April of the Green

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Paper, available on the DSE website — [www.dse.vic.gov.au/landwhitepaper](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/landwhitepaper) — or phone 1800 122 969;  
e-mail [customerservicedse.vic.gov.au](mailto:customerservicedse.vic.gov.au)

The White Paper will guide State Government decisions in Victoria's biodiversity and land management for the next 20–50 years.

**All groups now have the opportunity to comment whether or not they did so on the consultation paper. Submissions close on 30 June and may be made through the DSE website or via hard copy. Regional community workshops are being held around the State in May and early June — see the DSE website for details. The Victoria Naturally Alliance urges all groups to make a submission. Their suggested Submission Form is a supplement to this issue of *FriendsNET*.**

## Experience Exchange

### How to contact us ...

By post:  
Vic. Envir. Friends Network  
c/- VNPA, 60 Leicester St  
CARLTON 3053

By e-mail:  
[friendsvic@hotmail.com](mailto:friendsvic@hotmail.com)

Convener:  
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9374 1902  
[maelor@melbpc.org.au](mailto:maelor@melbpc.org.au)

Group address database:  
Bernie Fox  
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Newsletter contributions:  
Geoff Durham  
9523 5559  
[gadurham@bigpond.com](mailto:gadurham@bigpond.com)

website:  
[home.vicnet.net.au/~friends](http://home.vicnet.net.au/~friends)

The Friends of Damper Creek have drawn attention to a report from the 'Far South Coast Conservation Management Network' of a severe reaction as a result of pulling plants of St John's Wort. The day following the weeding session the weeder suffered symptoms of dry mouth, aching joints, headache, dizziness, lack of energy, distorted sense of taste and lack of appetite. The weeder was bedridden for two days and did not return to normal until the fourth day. All this occurred in an experienced weeder who had previously pulled the same weed without ill effect. The lessons to be learned are that sensitivity to chemicals can build up over time, that gloves should be mandatory and that a little research will pay dividends in preventing such problems. St John's Wort is known to produce ulcers on exposure to light in cattle.

**We want to hear from you. E-mail your Experience Exchange crisp comment to [friendsvic@hotmail.com](mailto:friendsvic@hotmail.com)**

**Deadline for August issue:  
15 July 2008**

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



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## Group Grapevine

At the time of going to press, nurseries are replete with seedlings and there are many groups anxiously waiting for good rain so they can proceed with planting.

**Friends of Merri Grasslands** received a Certificate of Appreciation from the 2007 Victorian Weedbuster Week Awards for 'outstanding weed management' at Craigieburn and Cooper St grasslands.

**Friends of Walkerville** has been dissolved and **Friends of Cassilis Historic Reserve**, formed in September 1996 and affiliated by the VEFN in November 2007 has disbanded for lack of interest. In contrast, the **Friends of Wyperfeld** have their 32nd Annual Camp-out in the park on the Queens Birthday Weekend and invite participation — contact Jenny Harrington 9481 7381.

In keeping with the theme of this *FriendsNET*, here are some bird reports:

**Friends of Braeside** report a Wedge-tailed Eagle roosting in the park.

**Bayside Friends of Native Wildlife** report that Musk Lorikeet numbers and distribution in Bayside are greater than ever, but swallows, fantails and Willie Wagtails continue to be scarce.

**Friends of Dandenong Valley Parklands** held a successful public 'Breakfast with the Birds' at Jells Park — an early morning walk followed by breakfast at Madelines café. They recruited two new members.

**Friends of Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands** newsletter has a special section — 'Wingbeats' — with detailed reports on monthly bird surveys. The Carrum Garden Club donated \$400 to enable the purchase of new binoculars for their bird hide on Edithvale Road.

**Friends of Chiltern National Park** now have a tree-top camera to help in nest box monitoring.

**Friends of French Island** have always had a particular interest in birds with regular surveys, including wader surveys and King Quail searches. Contact Gerard Cook 5977 7539.

**Friends of the Grey-crowned Babbler** have three surveys planned:

25 May - Longwood district;

15 June - Murchison district;

29 June - Lurg district, near Benalla.

Contact Doug Robinson 0357 611 558 - [dougr@tfn.org.au](mailto:dougr@tfn.org.au).

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