



# FriendsNET

Newsletter of the Victorian Environment Friends Network

Number 64 August 2008



— photo by Linda Rogan

*Why are these people so happy?* See page 4 to find out.

## Better than par — transforming a golf course

### Groups in action

The Friends of Salt Creek & Associated Parklands Inc has a range of interesting activities and some innovative approaches. It has two-hour week-day twilight working bees, participates in Clean Up Australia Day and National Tree Day, and has a lending library for members. President Joc Forsyth reports:

Rosanna Parklands represents a strip of land about 1.4 km long and between 100 to 200 m in width, comprising about 18.6 hectares (Melways 20: B9 to A12 ). The open space was preserved because it was a golf course until half the area was sold in 1968 for a housing

development, with the remainder declared as passive parkland.

For 35 years there was little coordinated park management. The golf club generation of trees is senescent, and a great variety of environmental weeds (including garden escapes) has become established. The Friends group was launched in 2003 and in partnership with the Bushland Management Unit of Banyule City Council it is striving to reverse the situation by weed control and planting. To our great pleasure, Melbourne Water has embarked on a program of improvement of the severely degraded creek.

The group has attracted grants for general support, for equipment and for indigenous plants. Most recently we have received a grant of \$1800 from the Banyule City Council to undertake a vegetation survey of the parklands. A consultant botanist will map significant clusters of remnant vegetation, building on work he has already done for the Council. Members will attempt to map significant weed patches. The relevant council officer has produced a suitable map for field recording and for the use of GPS to allow identification and monitoring.

— continued on page 3



Vera Whittington,  
member of the Friends  
of Salt Creek & and  
Associated Parklands  
removes graffiti after  
training by local Council  
— photo by Alan  
Whittington



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

## From your Network Committee Convener

In recent editions of *FriendsNET* we have highlighted the issue of working with children. This has been well received and we have become aware that many groups may well be running activities for children without an adequate understanding of their responsibilities under the law. A number of high profile cases have heightened public concern about child protection and now groups are required to be much more vigilant. **To help your understanding of this important issue we have organised a seminar on Saturday 13 September which explains the Working with Children check process.** As we say on the enclosed flyer, if your activities include children you can't afford to miss this seminar.

In the afternoon we have the presentation of the 2008 Best Friend Awards. Over the years these awards have become highly regarded – not least because they come from the Friends groups themselves. Come along and share this happy occasion!

Neil Duncan of Friends of Organ Pipes has been coopted to the VEFN Committee. Expressions of interest are invited regarding remaining vacancies.

### Memorial Book

To record a deceased Friend in the Memorial Book, email the name of the deceased, date of death and name of group to Sue Wright – [suewri@optusnet.com.au](mailto:suewri@optusnet.com.au)

## FriendsNET in the future?

After 5 years and 20 issues of *FriendsNET* in its present style, the VEFN Committee is reviewing its format, content and distribution. Have we got the frequency, size and content right? Does it assist Friends groups? Should it be discontinued?

Communication is what we are about – networking information, ideas and experience, and telling the world about volunteer Friends. We have a great story to tell and *FriendsNET* is the main way we do it. An aim of *FriendsNET* is to inform, encourage and enthuse Friends Groups through their leaders. We encourage recipients to make *FriendsNET* available to others, and our articles may be reproduced in Group newsletters with acknowledgement.

*FriendsNET* goes to the nominated contact person for each of our 286 affiliated Friends Groups either by post or email at their option. The email version of the May issue was also sent to 4500 individuals. *FriendsNET*, and the VEFN Web site, are the public face of VEFN.

The first *FriendsNET* in August 2003 was No. 44 because it succeeded 'Friends Network News', edited and produced by

Marion Taylor for 12 years. An index to *FriendsNET* Nos 44 to 64 is available on request. We invite your participation in the review. Enquiries are welcomed and suggestions appreciated. In particular let us know what you think about frequency, size and content.

**Write or email, or phone a Committee member or the Editor by 1st September. See page 4 for contact details.**

### Affiliation

*FriendsNET* is emailed to groups who have not yet formally affiliated with the Network. We urge them to do so. Affiliation is free. It involves no financial or other obligation – groups retain their autonomy and independence. Affiliation increases the profile and influence of a Friends group, and of the VEFN. Affiliated groups are listed on our web site – [home.vicnet.net.au/~friends](http://home.vicnet.net.au/~friends) – with contact and group website details. Application for affiliation is a simple matter of completing a one-page form, available on our web site or from the VNPA office. See the VEFN website for the Criteria for Affiliation.

## Parks Victoria's Working with Children Update

Parks Victoria has developed a *Working with Children* (WWC) checklist to identify if staff and volunteers who work with children (less than 18 years of age) are required to have a WWC check.

If you answer 'yes' to ALL questions below then you will require a WWC check.

- Does the position primarily involve contact with children?
- Does the position involve direct contact with children?
- Does any person performing the position mainly work with children unsupervised?
- Does the position involve regular work with children?

As of 30 June, Parks Victoria rangers will no longer authorise volunteer activities involving all of the above conditions

unless all volunteers participating in the activity have a current WWC check. Not all people who work with children will require a WWC check, however for volunteer groups regularly working with children (e.g. school groups), it may be advisable.

The WWC check is free for volunteers. Application forms are available from Australia Post outlets or by submitting the Application Forms Request form on the website.

For further information visit <http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren> or call the WWC Infoline on 1300 652 879 or Sjaan Field, Parks Victoria on 13 1963.

**It will all be explained at the VEFN Seminar of Saturday 13 September.**

# Don't stop at the birds!

Since **Friends of Chiltern** began 16 years ago, collection of data of various kinds—not just of birds—has been part of our monthly tasks. Fauna, flora and fungi are all subjects for recording. What do we do with the records? Why do we collect data? Flora and fauna records go into the Victorian Database where they are used by many people. Collecting data is a way of learning what is on 'your patch'. It is a way to introduce others to the flora and fauna of the area.

Over the years we have graduated from hand-written report forms to computer reporting. Data collection does not have to be onerous. We walk in our park as part of our monthly meeting days and on the afternoon walks we note down anything of interest. Although most of the records just update the database, some of them have proved significant. The discovery of a plant never before seen in Victoria, the lovely *Senecio garlandii* and another, *Swainsona recta*, thought to be extinct, has had its X removed. Both are now being propagated to ensure their survival. In these times of change in climate, records are very important as they may indicate change by way of decline or increase of species.

It's easy to make a bird list and there is an electronic form available to lodge it. Martin O'Brien at Flora and Fauna branch of DSE will be happy to assist would-be recorders. It's a great way to involve people and contribute to the knowledge base of our state, so why not be in it?

[In 'Group Grapevine' in our last issue we reported that Friends of Chiltern NP had acquired a 'tree-top' camera. We asked 'What is a Tree-top Camera'? Here's their answer.]

A tree top camera is a miniature colour camera with a flexible gooseneck arm, mounted on an extendible pole. The wireless camera transmits its video signal which is viewed on a compact hand-held monitor. We will use our camera for nest box monitoring to remove the need for opening the box and causing disturbance. It will also remove the need for climbing a ladder. The tiny camera is placed in the box entrance and the contents are viewed on the hand-held monitor. We are having to modify our box entrances for easier access. If you would like to read more about the camera go into <http://starweb.com.au/TT-Cam.htm>.

## Experience Exchange

**Eileen Collins (5726 1484) urges us to consider the value of recording a variety of the natural aspects of our reserves.**

## Congratulations to Vivien Freshwater OAM

We congratulate Vivien Freshwater of the Friends of Sherbrooke Forest and recipient of the Best Friend Award in 1999 on the award of an Order of Australia Medal in the 2008 Queen's Birthday Honours, for conservation, particularly through the identification and control of weeds in Sherbrooke Forest.

Vivien told *FriendsNET*: 'It is a great honour, and it is recognition for all volunteers who give their time to improve the natural environment'. Vivien has vast experience of weed management, in particular with her twenty-eight years

experience with the Friends, and we asked her to classify some environmental weeds in Sherbrooke Forest. Here's her brief list:

- The most pernicious – English Ivy
- The most stubborn – Cape Ivy
- The most resilient – Cestrum
- The most time consuming – Holly
- The most foul smelling – Tree Tobacco

Vivien's final comment was: 'It is essential to control weeds to maintain and restore natural habitat. There is no more rewarding activity for Friends.'



Vivien with another one of the forest's environmental enemies – *Pittosporum undulatum*!

– photo Simon Freshwater

## WIN a Spot Weeder!

Win one of TEN spot weeders by writing in 50 words or less why your group could benefit from this innovative tool.

Howard Hodgins, President of the **Friends of Wattle Park** invented this tool which has helped virtually eradicate *watsonia* in Wattle Park. In uncultivated soil the spot weeder is a robust weapon against woody-weeds and tough plants like thistles, agapanthus, blackberry, sedge. The operation of the tool allows you to eject the weed with a roll bar to prise it out without the need to spend time on your knees.

Send your entry including your contact details to Sjaan Field, Volunteer and Community Programs Coordinator, Parks Victoria L10, 535 Bourke Street Melbourne VIC 3000 or email to [sjfield@parks.vic.gov.au](mailto:sjfield@parks.vic.gov.au). The closing date is 30 September. The winners will be notified then announced in the next *FriendsNET*.

*Transforming a golf course – continued from page 1*

The parklands are heavily used and, while this has an ameliorating effect, littering, vandalism and graffiti are still problems. When the Council launched a pilot program, 'Adopt your Space', in which communities take a hand in graffiti control, some members of the Friends led the group to become involved. The Council provided a demonstration and training, and followed-up with kits and guidance. A sub-committee reports on graffiti at each monthly committee meeting, and members constantly remove graffiti on signs, bridges, trees and so forth as it occurs (see photo on page 1). Graffiti on electricity transformers are reported to the utility. If the new legislation concerning paint spray-cans is enforced, it is possible this problem will be reduced.

But there are no quick fixes. The battle will go on virtually indefinitely. Along with all of the Network, the people of the present are working for those in the future.

# Group Grapevine

## How to contact us ...

By post:  
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Newsletter contributions:  
Geoff Durham  
9523 5559  
gadurham@bigpond.com

website:  
home.vicnet.net.au/~friends

Two groups received Awards in the 2008 *Keep Australia Beautiful Sustainable Cities Awards* – the Dame Phyllis Frost Award for outstanding commitment to the principles of Sustainable Communities went to **Friends of Toolern Creek**, and the Biodiversity and Conservation category Award went to **Friends of Wilson Reserve** (see *FriendsNET* No. 62).

The **Friends of Lower Kororoit Creek** have received the 2008 Banksia Community Award. President Geoff Mitchelmore says: 'A fantastic result ... due to the fantastic support given by all the members and the contribution made by all our partners/sponsors over the past seven years.'

We have three 'once-a-year' groups. **Friends of Terrick Terrick National Park** have their annual gathering on 3–5 October camping at the Davies Homestead with Plains Wandering night spotting, morning Bird Tour, construction of exclusion plots, and for excitement, barbedwire and cactus removal. All welcome. Contact Fred Belli 5455 7410. The **Friends of Little Desert** were at the Kiata camp ground on Saturday 24 May with about 25 participants, half of whom were locals. More than 250 trees, shrubs and ground covers were planted. Next year's working bee will again be on the fourth weekend in May. **Friends of Wyperfeld** had a most productive Queens Birthday weekend – their 32nd – and are planning special activities to celebrate the centenary of the first park reservation next year.

Various groups participated in National Tree Day on 27 July. It was the sixth successive year for the **Friends of Frog Hollow** who have planted more than 40,000 trees and shrubs.

**Friends of Sherbrooke Forest** have reprinted their excellent book *Sherbrooke Forest – its flora and history*, available from the Book Barn in Belgrave, William Ricketts Sanctuary and the kiosk at Grants Picnic Ground (where Parks Victoria have removed Mountain Ash for safety reasons).

Geoff Lacey of the **Friends of French Island** has another book, *Reading the Land*, on the dynamics of landscape, with particular reference to Central Victoria and French Island, available \$39.95 (including postage) from Australian Scholarly Publishing, PO Box 299, Kew, 3101.

We believe that the **Friends of Organ Pipes**, established in 1972, was the first Friends Group in Victoria, but as reported in the May *FriendsNET*, the **Sherbrooke Lyrebird Survey Group** began in 1958. The explanation for the apparent anomaly is that the Friends of Organ Pipes was the first volunteer support group for a National Park, and the first to call themselves 'Friends of'.

Deadline for  
November issue:  
15 October 2008

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

## And we welcome ...

**Friends of Edna Walling at Bickleigh Vale Heritage Village**  
The village is at Mooroolbark and includes roadside reserves which residents look after.  
Lois Dolphin 9728 4019

**Friends of the Marine Discovery Centre**  
This group supports the activities of the Marine Discovery Centre at Queenscliff. Noel Emselle 0411 755 743

**Southern Otway Landcare Network**  
The Network supports four Landcare groups involved in environmental activities. Kristen Lees (B) 5237 6904

## Grants

Many grants are on offer – too many to include in *FriendsNET*, but details are readily available on the Port Phillip and Westernport CMA web site – [www.ppwcm.vic.gov.au](http://www.ppwcm.vic.gov.au)

## 2008 Wildflower Shows

**Angair:** 20–21 September, Anglesea Community Hall.

**Kooyoora:** 20–21 September, Rheola Hall, Kingower/Rheola Road.

**Grampians:** 2–5 October, Halls Gap Public Hall.

There is no Brisbane Ranges show this year.

## Why they are so happy ...

On 19 June, six Friends of Warrandyte State Park, Warrandyte Rangers and eleven corporate volunteers from the ANZ Bank planted more than 650 plants in the Boys Road Block at Warrandyte. Obviously everyone was highly enthusiastic. In our next issue Experience Exchange will feature 'Corporate Volunteers'. Let us have a report on your experience.

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**FriendsNET**

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