



FriendsNET

Newsletter of the Victorian Environment Friends Network

Number 65 November 2008

Celebrating Success!

One of the important things to do if you want a vibrant Friends Group is celebrate your successes.

For a totally volunteer group to sustain its activities for fifty years is quite an achievement, particularly when what the volunteers do is get out of bed at 6 am in mid-winter and venture into dark, cold, dank bushland where they stand around for hours. Yet this is the core of the Sherbrooke Forest Lyrebird Survey Group's activities, and they have done this every year since 1958. Current secretary Jan Incoll explains:

On 20 September we celebrated our 50th Anniversary with a party and display at Kallista Mechanics Hall, attended by 60-70 people.

Among the guests were Phillip and Joseph, sons of one of our founders, Ralph Kenyon. Also present was retired ranger John Lloyd, whose connection with the group goes back to its beginning when Sherbrooke Forest was Forest Commission territory and John became Forest Warden in 1964. John described Ralph – the first of only four secretaries in 50 years – as a person 'ahead of his time' whose vision was to have Sherbrooke Forest declared a National Park. Harold Bradley, secretary for 22 years, was succeeded by Norm Carter. John described the first surveys, which consisted of walking off the track in a line with red cloth pinned to each person's shoulder, trying to count lyrebirds during daylight hours. He compared this with the current dawn surveys, when Bill Incoll is able to input the compass bearings on his laptop computer within an hour of the actual survey. John said: 'We certainly have come a long way.'



The Friends of Westgate Park had much to celebrate at their 10th Anniversary Lunch in August and produced an impressive eight-page full-colour Newsletter. Tony Flude reports:

The group was founded by Naomie Sunner in 1998 and some of our achievements have been:

- Developing a revegetation plan based on locally indigenous species encompassing eight different plant communities representative of inner Melbourne.
- Revegetating approximately 9 hectares of weed-infested degraded land by spreading mulch (over 650 truck loads) and planting over 200,000 plants (approximately 300 different species) in accordance with the revegetation plan. Many plants we propagated ourselves in our on-site nursery.
- Conducting extensive bird and water surveys to monitor the success of our work and the health of the park's ecology.
- Developing a landscape plan for an additional half hectare added to the park in 2004; implementing the plan to form a Red-gum Woodland including a series of ephemeral lagoons. This involved expensive earthworks; the \$70,000 funds required was sourced from the corporate sector.
- Creating a heathland on approximately half a hectare of land.
- Working closely with Parks Victoria to utilise Green Corps and increase volunteer community involvement with the Port Phillip EcoCentre, 'work for the dole' participants, schools and the corporate sector. Volunteer hours have increased to a total of 13,374 for the period July 2007 to June 2008. Over a dozen people spent at least 12 hours working in the park each week.



Above: A bed by Island Crossing – recent revegetation work done by the Friends of Westgate Park (photo Naomie Sunner)

Left: Early members of the Sherbrooke Forest Lyrebird Survey Group, Fred Smith, Lionel Burgess and Helen Aston, cut the celebratory cake (photo Bill Incoll)



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

From your Network Committee Convener

I recently attended a Volunteer Coordinators conference on the Gold Coast where there were 500 coordinators in attendance. This is only a fraction of the total number of people in a profession that hardly existed a few years ago. In fact, one of my local councils which must have used volunteers for over a hundred years has only just appointed its first volunteer coordinator. I think two things are driving this change – much greater regulation of the volunteer sector and the increasing unwillingness of volunteers to take on administration duties. Many of our Friends Groups have complained that they can't get people to join their committees while others have commented on the hoops they have to jump through to get funding. As we head into the future we may need to make greater demands on our land managers to provide support structures, even to the extent of performing the jobs once done by our committees. Just a thought.

Our September seminar had to be cancelled due to lack of numbers, and the VEFN Committee would really appreciate ideas from groups on what they would like to learn about. The 13th Biennial Conference will be at Phillip Island in September 2009 on dates to be advised.

FriendsNET feedback

We received very little feed-back on our request for comment on the frequency, size and content of *FriendsNET*. Are we to assume that everyone reads it, and thinks it is perfect? A small random postal survey had a 50% response that indicated general satisfaction and support. The VEFN Committee has decided to continue *FriendsNET* as it is, but suggestions and contributions are always welcome.

Best Friend Award

The 2008 Best Friend Awards were announced and presented at the VNPA's *Caring for Nature Day* at Brimbank Park on Sunday 23 November. Those recognised were Robert Irvine and Maelor Himbury of Friends of Organ Pipes National Park – see insert for full details.

There has been a change in the closing date for the 2009 Awards. Nominations may be made up to **31 March**. Explanatory details and an easy-to-complete nomination form are available from the VNPA office, or may be downloaded from our Web site – home.vicnet.net.au/~friends.

Winners of Spot Weeder Competition

Congratulations to the winners of the Parks Victoria sponsored spot weeders competition, publicised in *FriendsNET* No. 64. The lucky winners listed below will benefit from this innovative tool invented by Howard Hodgens, President of the Friends of Wattle Park.

- Friends of Grampians Gariwerd and Halls Gap Botanic Garden
- Friends of Gembrook Park
- Friends of Salt Creek & Associated Parklands
- Friends of the Southern Otways
- Also, Montrose Environmental Group, with this entry:

*There is a great group from Montrose
Who kill weeds with sprays, saws and hoes.
But their sore backs and knees
All groan and say, "Please...
A Spot Weeder could solve all our woes."*

If you are interested in purchasing a spot weeder for your group, contact Howard on 9833 4732. The cost to purchase **ten** weeders is \$880.00 including GST, however costs could vary for different quantities.



Henry Burley, Secretary
Friends of Salt Creek &
Associated Parklands
Inc. and Sjaan Field,
Volunteer Coordinator,
Parks Victoria at the
presentation of the spot
weeder

Increase in Parks Victoria Volunteering

Over 191,000 hours of voluntary work in over 160 parks and reserves were recorded in 2007-08. Last year's figure was 177,000 hours. Over 50% of the volunteer hours were contributed by 127 friends groups across the state. 63.8% of the volunteer contribution focused on natural resource management projects; 28.2% on visitor service related projects; and 8.1% on cultural values management.

Have you considered using corporate volunteers for projects?

An increasing number of large corporations are encouraging staff to spend time each year in community activities, including conservation. It is one way in which corporations enhance their green credentials.

Three of our Friends groups outline their experiences with Corporate Volunteers.

Friends of Warrandyte State Park

We held our first joint workday with ANZ Bank volunteers after a member notified us about her neighbour, Mick Havill. He works for ANZ and has been actively involved in their community volunteer program doing some work with revegetation in the Dandenongs. As a Warrandyte resident he was keen to organise something more local with FOWSP at Warrandyte State Park. The enthusiastic group of volunteers from ANZ bank assisted the rangers and FOWSP with a planting day in June 2008. The plants were grown from local provenance stock by FOWSP at the indigenous nursery at Pound Bend and the site at Boys Road was previously part of a soldier settler property very close to the Yarra River banks. Now a part of Warrandyte State Park, this revegetated area provides critical habitat and augments the riverside vegetation. Our thanks to the ANZ volunteers who helped us complete a large section of this project in a single day.
– Linda Rogan 9435 5806

(Editor's note: A photo of this activity was featured on the front cover of August *FriendsNET*. It was supplied by Linda but was taken by Ranger Jodie Godfrey.)

Friends of Westgate Park

The group has averaged a Corporate day every second week during the last financial year. Most have been a full day and have occurred on a week day when employers were willing to release employees for a day to undertake environmental work. Not only were companies willing to provide volunteers but they also assisted with financial support to offset our costs.

It is not always easy to find such generous corporations. We look to our neighbours and are fortunate in that regard since we are in the middle of an industrial area. We have also had fantastic support from Landcare Australia in targeting possible companies.

Volunteers from the corporate sector provide a great supplement to our own dedicated volun-

teers and have resulted in us being able to tackle much larger revegetation projects than would otherwise be possible.

We apply a few simple rules:

1. Provide a safe environment. Our team leaders are experienced in safe work practices and have all attended a safety workshop such as that offered by Conservation Volunteers Australia called 'In Safe Hands'. We always have at least one team leader for each 10 corporate volunteers.
2. Thoroughly prepare for the event. We make sure we have everything in place well in advance and that there are enough tools, plants etc. for everyone.
3. We offer a variety of interesting tasks. Volunteers from the corporate sector want to be challenged and kept occupied from start to finish. Don't spend the entire time planting. Provide other tasks such as moving mulch and weeding.
4. The Friends group needs to be available when the corporation wants to volunteer. That can be difficult especially during the working week when most companies want to have their corporate day.
5. Have fun!

– Tony Flude 0400 770 254

Friends of Wanderslore

We have had groups of 10–20 from Goldman Sachs JBWere on each of the last four years spending the best part of a day weeding at Wanderslore Sanctuary, a 10-hectare Trust for Nature property at Launching Place. The company approached the Trust which arranged for the Friends to host the visits. Most of the work has been removal of Panic Veldt Grass from a defined area – a tedious job tackled with enthusiasm. The participants bring their own gloves and the Friends provide the tools.

– continued on page 4

Experience
Exchange

The Friends of Westgate Park's founder, Naomie Sunner – still passionate after ten years (photo – Richard Brockett)



Using corporate volunteers (contd) –

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

How to contact us ...

By post:
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c/- VNPA, 60 Leicester St
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By e-mail:
friendsvic@hotmail.com

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

Deadline for
February issue:
15 January 2009

The company pays for a catered lunch arranged by the Trust. It is a great encouragement for a small Friends group like ours to have such support.

– Geoff Durham 9523 5559

For Parks Victoria groups, the People and Parks Foundation will manage all statewide corporate volunteering through the 'Green Connections' program. All requests by companies for corporate volunteer involvement will be referred by park staff to the People and Parks Foundation.

Volunteering Victoria has a registration process for groups that want to unite with Corporations, and can give general advice. Phone: 9642 5266 or email: info@volunteeringvictoria.org.au. This service is provided at no cost to Friends Groups. The website is www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au.

How to go about organising corporate groups . . .

Consult with your management authority and select a suitable task.

Arrange for the involvement of a corporate group.

Ensure that the necessary facilities, materials and tools are available.

Ensure adequate instruction and supervision.

Do a Job Safety Analysis and ensure all health and safety requirements are met.

Thank the group verbally on the day and formally by letter.

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

Group Grapevine

The winners of the 2008 Port Phillip & Westernport Landcare Awards were announced at a function at Federation Square on 6 September. There were eleven categories. Congratulations to **Friends of Chinamans Creek** for 'Caring for Waterways', and **Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater** for 'Community Group Caring for Public Land'.

Group newsletters continue to be a fruitful source of information. For example, there is a range of membership fee structures: **Friends of the Yarra Valley** have introduced three options – 5-year membership for \$50, \$12 per annum (single/family), or \$6 per annum concession; **Friends of Baw Baw National Park** membership fee is \$5 per annum. Some groups have no fee.

There are two interesting reports of biological weed control. **Friends of the Yarra Valley** say the gorse spider mite is thriving causing yellowing and dying foliage, and **Friends of Warrandyte State Park** quote Gael Danby who says Smilax rust 'really works'. **Friends of Koolunga** report that one user of the park calculates that he collects 6 kilo of 'dog shit' (quote) in a week!

Friends of Royal Park participated in the National Waterhole Count on 11 October. This involved bird watching at Trin Tam-boore waterhole for three hours from sunrise. The **Friends of Ocean Grove Nature Reserve** now have 14 volunteers on their Information Centre roster, and hope to have the centre open almost every weekend.

And we welcome...

Friends of Blind Creek Billabong

Blind Creek is at Ferntree Gully – Melway 64:H11. For six years this group has been planting, spot herbiciding, weeding and cleaning up litter in Blind Creek. Fay Rimmer 9758 4802.

Friends of Darrabi Reserve

Darrabi (meaning 'Awaken') is an Aboriginal Bush Food & Reconciliation Garden at Fergusons Paddock, Hurstbridge – Melway 263:A7. Susie Walker 9719 7170

Vale Jack Lyale

The ebullient Jack Lyale died on 4 October, aged 84 years. Appointed Ranger in 1970 of the new Organ Pipes National Park, he appreciated volunteers and worked in close partnership with Don Marsh in establishing the Friends of Organ Pipes – the first 'Friends of' group. Their success led to the formation of groups in other parks.

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