



FriendsNET

Newsletter of the Victorian Environment Friends Network

Number 66 February 2009

Groups in action

The Friends of Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands have a large membership and a team with special roles in their public activities.

Secretary Margaret Hunter explains how the group operates.

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Friends of Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands on duty in the 'double-decker' bird hide.

Photo: Geoff Durham

Big Friends team for Ramsar wetlands

The Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands are the remnants of the former Carrum Carrum Swamp which once stretched from Mordialloc to Frankston. They are Ramsar listed, and owned by Melbourne Water, who have supported the Friends group since its foundation in 1980.

The Friends group now has over 300 members. We manage the Edithvale Road bird hide (Melway 93 D8) which is open 1.00 pm to 5.00 pm on weekends, Wednesday evenings during daylight saving, and by appointment. We roster two volunteers for duty whenever the hide is open. In January this year, we were part of the DSE 'Summer By the Sea' program with free tours of the wetlands, and visits to the bird hide when visitors have the opportunity to ask our knowledgeable volunteers about the birds.

An exciting event in October 2008 was the observation of a single Painted Snipe, rarely seen in Victoria (see article on page 2). This led to hundreds of keen and enthusiastic visitors to the hide and an active interest in the birdlife that abounded at that time. This was a test of the resources of the group, managing the extra visitors to the bird hide, with cameras. The bird hide coordinator, Jacqui Shepherd, capably organised a large team of volunteers to monitor and manage the needs of these visitors includ-

ing safety, visitor control and providing information about our work.

For the Seaford section of the wetlands we have an active working group of 10-12 committed volunteers capably organised by Rex Chugg, and working with the Frankston City Council rangers.

Our current projects include the compilation of a history of the group, working with Melbourne Water.

At our well attended 2008 Annual General meeting, three new Committee members were elected. We have a President, Vice-president, Secretary, Treasurer, six other committee members, and designated members in the following positions: Seaford Working Bees, Bird Hide Roster, Bird Hide Coordinator, Guided Tours, Newsletter, Newsletter Collator, Membership Database, Grants Officer, Public Officer and Special Project Coordinator.

FriendsNET editor has followed up the matter of the group's range of administrative roles:

Unlike many groups, the Friends of Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands do not seem to have difficulty filling administrative positions. There is some doubling up, but altogether 16 members are involved. This suggests the group has got its act together. We asked President, Les Williams, to tell us how this was achieved:

'I made it clear that if we didn't have an active Secretary and fill all positions the organisation would flounder. We were fortunate that water returned to the wetlands with good publicity about bird sightings, particularly the Painted Snipe, resulting in increased visitor numbers and membership. People with specific interests were concerned and responded. Most of the people on the committee are busy people. Committee meetings are in my home and we have a friendly social atmosphere.'

[*Stop Press:* The water in the wetland dried up in early February, and the hide is now closed until water returns.]



From your Network Committee Convener



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

The fires have caused unprecedented loss of human life and suffering, and their impact on all of us will continue. What is their relevance to Friends Groups? We invite your contributions for the next issue of *FriendsNET*.

A sombre welcome back for 2009. It's shaping up as an interesting time as the world moves painfully slowly toward the Copenhagen conference on climate change, which many scientists say may be our last chance of avoiding a runaway greenhouse effect. On the local front the Victorian government is developing its white paper on biodiversity, which might be just a waste of so many trees unless money and determination are available to carry out its findings. So we keep working on our own patches of land, hoping for the best.

The VEFN Conference – *When the going gets hot ... Volunteering in a greenhouse world* – this year will be held on the weekend of September 11–13 at Grantville, near Phillip Island. We are developing a fascinating program which looks at some of the challenges ahead while incorporating the usual features such as tours, group talks and the Best Friend Award.

Do you have a likely candidate for a 2009 Best Friend Award?

There are many awards these days, but this one is of particular relevance to Friends Groups. It is special because it is recognition by one's peers; it is an award at the grass-roots level because it is selection by the colleagues of the nominee – by those really in the know. Only the relevant Friends Group can nominate a person for the award, and that person has to be regarded by the group as someone exceptional, who stands out as someone who has made an outstanding contribution as a member of the group over a long period – ten years at a minimum – and also someone who has demonstrated remarkable dedication as a member of the group. The award is group-focused.

An explanatory memo and nomination form are available from the VNPA office, or the form may be downloaded from our Web site – home.vicnet.net.au/~friends. Nominations must be accompanied by three written references, including at least one from a representative of the relevant management authority.

Nominations for the 2009 Award close 31 March.



David Oldfield
Photo Mike Shaw

More on filling committee positions

Our page 1 article highlighted the way one group operates with numerous members taking specialised roles. Another successful group with multiple members filling administrative positions is the **Victorian High Country Huts Association**. Its inaugural secretary, David Oldfield, has retired after five years, and we asked for his comment. David says: 'It seems that the best way to fill committee positions is by a personal approach. I was president of

Melbourne Bushies back in the mid-70s and we had an unwritten rule that if you wanted to leave the committee you should find a replacement, so I asked Bruce Dodson (9315 7423) if he would allow me to nominate him as secretary and he agreed. The way we got people interested enough to join the committee was to involve them in work parties on huts. Once members have been along and sat around a campfire they will often help *when asked by a personal approach*.'

Alison Kuitert describes an exciting event for the Friends of Edithvale–Seaford Wetlands

A rare visitor to the Edithvale–Seaford Wetlands!

A Painted Snipe was discovered at the Edithvale Wetlands in front of the hide on 22 October 2008 and became the focus of many bird observers and photographers for nearly two months.

Our special visitor was a young male, probably a year old and although spectacular in plumage, much less colourful than the females. The painted snipe took up residence beside the hide and nearly every one of the hundreds of visitors got at least a glimpse of this beautiful bird. For many people it was the first time they had ever seen a painted snipe and for others it would be the best sighting they might ever get in their lifetime. These birds live in the northern areas of Victoria, as well as NSW, Qld, SA, WA and NT. The sighting at Edithvale was only the eighth recorded in Victoria in ten years.

Emails alerted the birding world to the arrival of the snipe and people travelled great distances to view and photograph the bird. The Friends of Edithvale Seaford Wetlands kept the hide open well into the evenings to allow people to stay longer and occasionally observe the snipe preening or feeding.

During the day the Painted Snipe would generally rest under small bushes, coming out in the evening to bathe or pick amongst the mud for food. Generally they feed at night, moving out into the wetlands.

The last time the snipe was seen was a couple of days prior to the very heavy rains we had on 19th December when the wetlands were flooded. Now all we can hope is that he comes back next year with his girlfriend.

Have you considered the potential of the Web?

There is no doubt about it – the internet has produced a revolution in communication. Are you using it to best effect? Emails provide cheap, easy and instant contact, and the World Wide Web enables us to get our message across to anyone, anywhere, who wants it.

If your group does not have a web site, Maelor Himbury, of Friends of the Maribyrnong Valley and the member of the VEFN Committee responsible for the VEFN site, has provided some tips on developing and maintaining one – see box below.

To get ideas on creating a site for your group, you can spend many informative hours browsing the websites of Friends groups. Go to the VEFN site – home.vicnet.net.au/~friends – and follow the links to Group sites. We have 285 affiliated groups – over 60 of them with websites linked to the VEFN site.

If your group has a web site, check to see if it is on your Group's entry in the VEFN web site. If it's not, let us know and we will enter and link it. If your site does not appear it is probably because your group has not formally affiliated with the Network. To do so, download an Affiliation Form or get one from the VNPA office, and let us have it. Affiliation is free.

We would like to hear from groups who have a web site, so that we can publish suggestions to help other groups.

**How did you go about setting up your site?
Did you discover any pitfalls?**

How frequently do you update it?

How effective is it in attracting new members?

What other responses do you get to it?

PLEASE LET US KNOW (our contact details are on page 4).

The Painted Snipe photographed at Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands (Photo by Steven Kuitert)



Some tips from Maelor Himbury 9374 1902

- If you have little web development expertise in your group, don't worry – tertiary colleges are crying out for projects for their students.
- Vicnet hosts community websites for free and can also help you with web development.
- You can use volunteer services such as GoVolunteer or goodcompany to advertise for web developers.
- Think about why you are producing a website. A good website should clearly show who you are, what you do and how to contact you.
- A good website should be easy to navigate and fast to load. Too much graphic content can cause frustration for people with slow connections.
- Some grant providers require you to publish reports on a website.
- Keeping your site up-to-date is important. Make this the responsibility of a Webmaster.
- A free program called Komposer is a good way of updating your website. It allows you to directly alter web content.
- Make sure you include a link to the VEFN website: (<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~friends>)

Uncluttered home pages, with clear, logical navigation buttons, and text reduced to essentials, will be most effective in catching initial attention.

Experience Exchange

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

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Bush Telegraph

'Bush Telegraph' enables Victorians to report behaviour on public land, including parks, that could damage the environment, is anti-social or is suspicious. Phone 'Bush Telegraph' – 13 2874 (or 13BUSH on your keypad). Callers can remain anonymous if they wish.

PV's Kookaburra Awards 2009

The deadline for nominations of an individual or group is Friday, 3 April 2009. See <http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au> for categories and additional information. Further information and a nomination form is available from Sjaan Field, Volunteer and Community Programs Coordinator, telephone 8627 4652.

Weed Spotters Wanted

Weed Spotters assist DPI by keeping an eye out for, and reporting, new and emerging weeds. We provide free training and resources to registered Weed Spotters so they can learn to identify State Prohibited Weeds and report them to us. If any Friends group is interested in becoming a Weed Spotter, information on registering with us is on our Weed Spotter's website:

<http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au> > Agriculture, Food & Forestry > Crops, Pastures & Weeds > Weeds > WeedSpotters

For more information contact Annie at Department of Primary Industries 40 Ballarto Rd Frankston | P.O. Box 48 Frankston | Victoria | 3199

9785 0109 / 0418 390 871 / annie.lamb@dpi.vic.gov.au

Australia Day Honour

Congratulations to Nhill naturalist Clive Crouch on the award of an Order of Australia Medal in the 2009 Australia Day Honours. Among many other community activities is Clive's involvement in the Nhill Swamp Boardwalk Committee.

Group Grapevine

Another year, and we start by listing some annual events to which all Friends are invited.

Friends of Bogong are celebrating their 25th anniversary on the 21–22 March 2009. Past and prospective 'Friends' most welcome. Contact Rod Novak 9561 2407.

The **Friends of Kurth Kiln Heritage Festival**, Sunday 19 April. Over 500 people attended last year's festival and this year promises to be better than ever. Contact Alfred Klink 5967 4201.

The annual weekend gathering of the **Friends of the Little Desert** will be on the second weekend in May, with the AGM at the Kiata camping ground on Saturday 9 May. Contact Les Smith 9874 2641.

The **Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater** are celebrating their 20th birthday on Sunday 24 May 2009. Past and present 'Friends' welcome. Contact Sue or Bruce Tardif 5964 8341.

At their 33rd annual Queens Birthday weekend the **Friends of Wyperfeld** will this year celebrate the centenary of the creation of the park with a special dinner on Saturday night and extra-special activities throughout the weekend. Contact Karen Fuller 0438 612 618.

The **Friends of the Collins Settlement Site** celebrated their 25th anniversary at the opening of the new Parks Victoria Information and Interpretation facility at the Sorrento site in October. The Friends are establishing a roster for the opening of the facility – particularly at the weekends.

Vale

Tom Salt OAM

Highly regarded naturalist Tom Salt died on 10 September 2008 aged 86 years. He had an involvement in many organisations, including the Seawinds Nursery Volunteers, the Friends of the Tootgarook Wetlands and the Friends of the Hooded Plover.

Alan Trevorrow

Alan, a recipient of the 2007 Best Friend Award for his contribution as a Friend of Nyerimilang, died on 24 February 2009, aged 78 years. Alan will be remembered for his enthusiastic involvement with a range of community bodies.

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