

Narpulungup News

July 2019 Volume 1

2019 AGM experts meet our local native snail



Cory Whisson, Technical Officer, WA Museum, on the Native Snail Trail. Photographs courtesy Cory Whisson.



Lisa Kirkdale, Curator of Molluscs, WA Museum, meeting Bremer Bay's own Bothriembryon.

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Fitzgerald River National Park was held at the Twertup Field Studies Centre on the weekend of March 16th and 17th 2019. The fine weather was perfect for the 42 people who attended the meeting. There were some who attended for the day and others who slept overnight in the centre or who camped alongside.

The formalities began with a shared morning tea at 10am. The Centre's wonderful facilities were fully utilised. The main living area was able to accommodate and seat everyone for

the meeting.

Bill Thompson, the President, declared the meeting opened at 10:40am. All committee positions were filled, with a lot of returning members, plus one new member. Bill congratulated the new committee for continuing their positions. He also thanked out-going committee member, Sheryn Prior, for her time on the committee and welcomed Alison Lullfitz on board. The meeting concluded at 12:10pm. Everyone enjoyed their lunch

outdoors and a chance to socialise with old and new Friends.

After lunch, guest speakers, Dr. Lisa Kirkendale, Curator of Molluscs, and Technical Officer Corey Whisson, both from the WA Museum, informed us about the native land snail, *Bothriembryon*. Their enthusiasm and love of their subject was evident and provided a very informative and entertaining presentation.

A lot of people were keen to stretch their legs and walk in the great outdoors at the conclusion of the

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presentation. After a quick and productive Committee meeting, Bill and Libby, followed and were able to catch up with the group of walkers. Lisa and Corey were amongst the hikers. There was a general purpose of searching for evidence of land snails amongst the chatter of various topics. It wasn't until the group was almost back at Twertup that the first shell was found, by possibly the most novice bush walker! He'd made a last minute decision to join the walkers, wearing shorts and thongs and bringing up the rear of the group. Having only just realised that the intent of the walk was to find the land snails, he was then the first to see a snail shell!. The rest of the group then found quite a few shells.

Ric Pepper and some helpers made time to complete some construction and maintenance tasks; the 'study' (no longer will it be an 'archives' room) was set up with the herbarium, bench and map drawer. sealing of new concrete water tank roof to prevent bee incursion.

After the evening meal, Steve and Geraldine Janicke played their completed DVD of "Twertup Field Studies Centre: A brief history", and showed

the beginnings of a new DVD about the re-building of the new Centre. Sunday morning brought the opportunity for a walk with Andy Chapman.

Delys Harland

2019 Committee

President: Bill Thompson

Vice President: Anne Gadsby

Secretary: Delys Harland

Treasurer: Liz Utting

Committee: Louise Lodge, Libby Sandiford, Alison Lullfitz

Newsletter Editor: Leonie McMahon

Twertup Sub-Committee: Gil Craig
(Committee Representative), Ric Pepper,
Kingsley Vaux, Jack Cosgrove
(DBCA representative)

Friends members finalists in NRM medal

Congratulations to Friends members, Bill and Jane Thompson who were finalists in the recent Great Southern Development Commission NRM Medal awards. Bill and Jane were nominated for the landscape restoration work they have done on their 1500-hectare Yarrowayah Falls property in the middle of the connectivity pathway between the Stirling Range and Fitzgerald River National Parks.

They joined three other great finalists at the award dinner in June: marine scientist, Dr Harriet Paterson who works on plastics in the marine

environment, forester Darryl Outhwaite who initiated the formation of WA Biofuels in Albany with the aim of developing new markets for locally grown plantation forest biomass; and Cranbrook farmer, Ian Walsh for his work on reclamation of salt affected land.

Further congratulations to Ian Walsh who won the medal this year.

The evening was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the dedicated conservation and Land-care efforts of many people from all different walks of life in the Great Southern.



Bill and Jane Thompson receiving their finalists certificate from Mr Peter Watson, MLA, Member for Albany.



2019 NRM Medal winner Ian Walsh, right, receiving his finalist certificate from Mr Peter Watson, MLA, Member for Albany.

Upcoming events

Twertup officially now open to the public

Members of the public can now visit and stay at Twertup. Anybody wishing to stay overnight must book in advance through the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. Contact DBCA's Albany District front office on 9842 4500 from Monday to Friday between 8.00 am and 4.30 pm or email Albany@dbca.wa.gov.au.

The department's gazetted schedule of fees apply and are charged on a per-person basis. There is a minimum charge of \$80 per night, irrespective of numbers. To hire the building for a day-time meeting/event costs \$80 per day. For more information about the facilities available at Twertup go to www.fitzgeraldfriends.org.au/twertup.

Members Weekend 27th—30th September

The Friends Committee is pleased to invite all members to Twertup Field Studies Centre. As advised, the Centre re-build is complete and open to the public.

The Committee has reserved the facility for an informal get-together for members. It will be an opportunity for bush-walks, socialising and enjoyment of the wonderful new accommodation facilities. Please register your attendance with admin@fitzgeraldfriends.org.au

by providing:

- all names of people attending.
- contact email and phone number.
- If a bed is required or making own camping arrangements.

In the event of weather preventing entrance to Twertup the weekend will be cancelled.

Park entrance fees apply.

If you haven't yet visited Twertup this is the perfect opportunity to do so.

INSPIRED BY TWERTUP

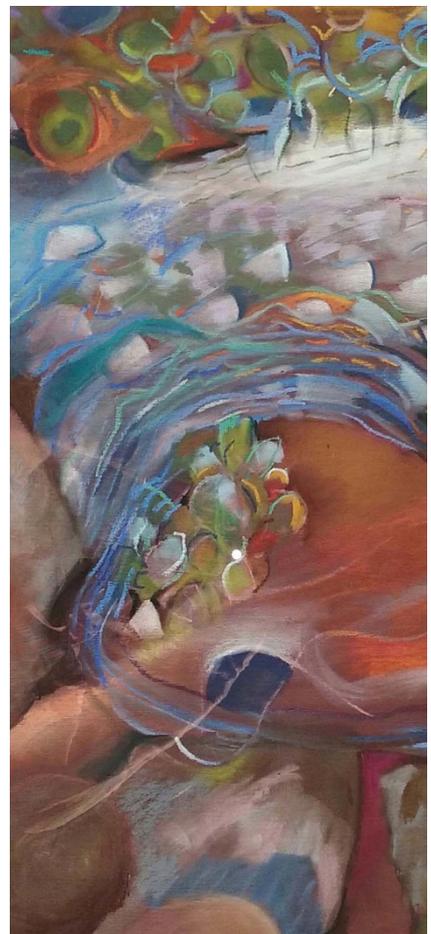
Two days of art activities - Saturday 19th & Sunday 20th October 2019

Members and artists who would like to spend time at Twertup Field Study Centre to draw and paint with like-minded people now have an opportunity to do so in October. There will be two separate days: one for sketching and drawing and one for painting. On both days people will be able to join an excursion outdoors, taking inspiration from the magnificent environment surrounding Twertup. Participants are advised to be prepared by carrying the basic materials in a day pack, taking a portable easel and chair if required and the usual - hat, sunscreen, insect repellent and water. Louise Lodge, artist and member, will lead the group/s and share her skills at working in a variety of media and for working outdoors. Each session will commence at 9.30am, returning to the Centre for lunch at 12.30pm, followed by free time in the afternoon. Participants can join either day or both days and if joining the Saturday event are

encouraged to arrive at Twertup Friday evening if possible so they can settle in and be ready to start Saturday morning. Saturday evening will be a time to share ideas and to show work.

There will be basic materials available but bring any art materials you have. Also bring your own breakfast and lunch and food to share on Saturday evening. A barbecue and basic kitchenware are available for cooking. Accommodation is shared rooms with bunk beds. Bring a sleeping bag. For bookings and more details such as directions to Twertup and what to bring contact Louise on 0427700613 or email louisemlodge@westnet.com.au

The cost per person will be \$30 per day which includes accommodation. Park entry fees must be paid separately. In the event of cancellation due to inclement weather, the workshop costs will be refunded.



Vale Friends' Life Member Kaye Vaux July 1921—June 2019

Ongerup conservationist Kaye Vaux was a founding member of the Friends of the Fitzgerald River National Park. Her Life Member story was written by her family some time ago and is published here in tribute to the enormous contribution she made to conservation in the area.

Kaye had a lifelong interest in the natural environment, greatly influenced by her father, Austin Faulkner farming in Porongorups during her childhood and then later at their Kelmscott orchard. She carried her interest through to running a cub group in Ongerup as leader Arkala, while her sons were young. During this time she often took her cubs out bush, teaching them all she knew about the plants and animals.

She revegetated trees around bare farm house/sheds and saline areas back in the late 1950s. At times she camped out with children in the bush on the farm at north Ongerup. No Ongerup resident dared tell Kaye if they were cutting trees down particularly after Kaye moved into town - generally she found out who had done it and dealt with them! Town road verges were saved from the grader and still provide a wildflower treat on the western town entrance past Yongergnow Malleefowl Centre.

Her awareness of the Fitzgerald Park started when mining was proposed in late 1960s and she, along with Ken Newbey, Judy O'Neill and others formed the Ongerup Conservation Group. This flowed onto the forming of the FRNP friends group, which became a big part of Kaye's life while living in Ongerup as an older single person. She proved the 4WD capabilities of her little Ford Laser in order to get to Twertup at any time.

Some of Kaye's highlights of the group:

- The area being named a national park
- Twertup cottage set up for field studies
- Two day walk from north side of park through to Roe's Rock and onto Twertup next day with an enthusiastic young botanist Libby and a few others in 1988
- Visiting experts/group members doing workshops and courses
- Park being declared international biosphere and the process to get there
- Treasurer and committee person for a few years 1982-91 and 1995-96
- Close friendships that developed from being part of the group
- ABC film crew and doco of group's activities "Heartlands"

She was instrumental in the Ongerup-Needilup museum starting an annual wildflower display in



1980. Kaye photographed many flowers for reference books. Amateur botanists have created their own local herbarium of in excess of 400 specimens within 50 km radius of the town and the spring display is still held now in 2019.

Photography became a huge interest – just taking everyday events or getting up close and personal with the natural world. Being a member of the FRNP group gave her the support and confidence to speak out about local environmental issues – two key achievements were a) stopping the construction of a grain bin, thereby saving the salmon gum area at the entrance of Ongerup so that a more suitable space was found south of town; and b) reporting and recording the number of still births/miscarriages during heavy aerial chemical spraying of locusts in the area. Kaye was always keen to learn, and accepted people for who they were and was always happy to impart her knowledge and enthusiasm to all regardless of others' level of knowledge. She involved her children and grandchildren in her enthusiasm and love of the bush and wildflowers, and always very encouraging for anyone to get into the Fitzgerald Park and experience its beauty and uniqueness, especially being right on our doorstep. She was also involved in such events as an international Conservation Conference in Cairns in the early 1980s, "Bush Comes to the City" seminar and book and "Million Acres A Year" documentary. She participated in as many Landscape camping trips to outback areas as possible, helping with whatever research was happening to further her knowledge of creatures and the environment and to camp outdoors!

Kaye also liked to pen a poem or two and has a number about Twertup and the Fitzgerald in her collection.

OAM awarded to Friends' Merle Bennett

Long-time Friends member, Merle Bennett, was awarded an Order of Australia Medal in the 2019 Queen's Birthday Honour list for service to conservation and the environment.

Merle, who has lived around Hopetoun and Ravensthorpe since 1965, is an original member of three long running conservation organisations in the area: Friends of Fitzgerald River National Park, the Ravensthorpe Regional Herbarium and the Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show.

Merle joined the Friends when the group formed in 1980. She, like Kaye Vaux, was also a member of one of the precursor organisations to Friends, the Ongerup Conservation Association. An active member and loyal supporter, Merle contributed her knowledge and clear insights to assist the group to make a significant contribution through education and stewardship.

Merle has been involved in the annual Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show – now one of the most significant displays of local flora in WA - since its inception in 1982. Over the years she became one of the main organisers and contributors and is still one of the most active and important collectors. She loves seeking out plants she knows about and being in the bush quietly going about the business of selectively picking. Her knowledge of plants and where to find them and her commitment to staging a high quality display are an inspiration to younger members of the group.

She was the first co-ordinator of the Ravensthorpe Regional Herbarium, holding the role for 17 years from 1997 until 2014. While in charge she oversaw the training of a group of enthusiastic locals to enable them to make proper botanical collections.

The aim was – and still is - to collect and catalogue every plant species occurring within the Ravensthorpe Shire, and lodge duplicate specimens in the WA Herbarium.

The Ravensthorpe herbarium now has 3000 collections relating to about 1500 species; almost all of which were made under Merle's supervision. She, herself has collected over 1300 specimens: about twice as many as the next most active collector. Merle is still an active member and makes many collections per year, diligently

searching out those species that remain outstanding. She also provides highly valued support and guidance for the group. The continuing enthusiasm of herbarium members is a testament to the foundation that Merle laid, and her ongoing influence.

The Herbarium is now an integral part of the Wildflower Show because it greatly facilitates the correct naming of all the specimens on display. Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show members also produced the video *Wildflower Wonderland*, for which Merle wrote the text and provided a very professional narration. This video presents some of the iconic wildflowers of the Ravensthorpe Shire and the extraordinary features that produce them. They also produced the very professional and informative book *Native Plants of the Ravensthorpe Region* authored by local botanist Gillian Craig, but ably assisted by a team of Wildflower Show members, including Merle. Merle has always been an advocate for nature conservation. In addition to her knowledge of the environment, she is a valued member of each of these organisations because she is politically astute, her commitment is unwavering, she insists on the highest standards and is forever encouraging others to new possibilities. In summary, Merle has made a most important contribution to conservation and community by taking time to apply her considerable intellect and passion to understanding her local surrounds, sharing it unselfishly and inspiring others.

With thanks to Rosemary Jasper for information supplied and Kim Bennett for the photograph.



Conserving Cocanarup and its Carnaby's

Over the last two years a conflict has been brewing in what is arguably one of the most special places in the Ravensthorpe area – Cocanarup. It is an area of great significance to Noongar families; it is also the site of the first farm in the district, it contains an extensive mature Salmon Gum woodland and it is one of the three most important Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo nesting sites in Australia.

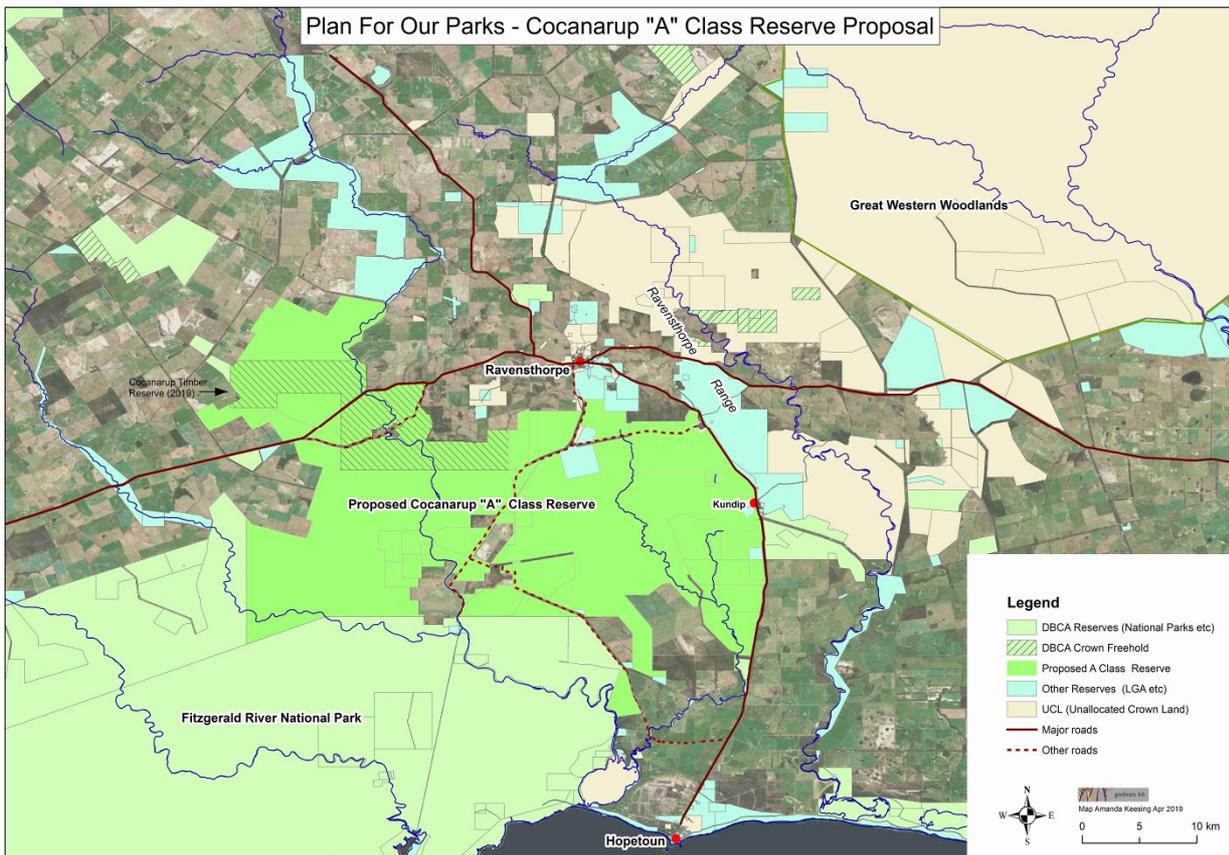
The wider Cocanarup area is covered by mining leases, and there are three approved Clearing Permits for the purpose of lithium exploration within the Cocanarup Timber Reserve itself. In 2017, Lithium Australia carried out exploration activities on two sites, but in the process may have breached tenement and/or clearing permit conditions. Investigations into these activities are currently being undertaken by the WA Department of Mines (DMIRS) and the Federal Department of Environment. The outcome is not available yet, but we note that in recent weeks rehabilitation of the disturbed areas has begun.

A group of concerned local residents recently formed the Cocanarup Conservation Alliance Inc. (CCA Inc.) to advocate for the conservation of the area and defend it from mining and other threats. There are two aspects to conserving the wider Cocanarup area – the immediate need to prevent any further mining and exploration activity and the

longer term goal of securing the area for conservation. CCA Inc. recently wrote to the Minister for Mines (Hon. Bill Johnston) requesting an immediate moratorium on all exploration activity in the wider Cocanarup area until all of its many values have been fully evaluated.

The overall area at issue includes the Cocanarup Timber Reserve and extends south to the Fitzgerald River NP boundary and east to the Hopetoun-Ravensthorpe Road. 'Parks & Wildlife Service' have long recognised the significance of the natural values in this area, and on their field mapping it is designated as 'Proposed Nature Reserve'.

CCA is preparing a submission to Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) which puts the case for this wider area to be declared a Class 'A' Reserve. It is anticipated that several organisations (CCA, FFRNP, Birdlife Australia and others) will contribute, and that together we will produce a compelling argument for the reservation of this diverse and unique landscape. If you're interested in Cocanarup and its surrounds you're invited to visit the CCA website— www.cca.asn.au, or register your interest so that you can stay abreast of developments. To support our work, click on the "Take Action" links on our home page. For more information, email CCA Inc. on info@cca.asn.au



Inaugural Australian Biosphere Conference

In March I attended the inaugural Australian Biosphere Conference in Maryborough, Queensland on behalf of the Fitzgerald Biosphere Community Collective.

A tremendous vibe was set by MC, Costa Georgiadis, and there were many inspiring presentations.

The Clayoquot Sound Biosphere in Canada stood out for at least two similarities to the Fitzgerald Biosphere: its remoteness and its sparse population.

Cathy Thick is the co-chair of the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust in Tofino, Vancouver Island. She was the only guest speaker at the conference from a biosphere outside of Australia.

About 5000 people live in the Clayoquot Sound Biosphere, including a significant Indigenous community, and the area attracts about a million visitors a year.

In the 1990s the trust set up a scientific panel that ran for five years to answer the question: why is this place so special? The average life of the trees in the forests around Clayoquot Sound is 500 years, with some trees estimated to be more than 2000 years old. The region's annual rainfall is measured in feet: they get between 10-12 foot (3000 to 3600 mm) of rain per year! Five intact rivers run into the sound. While Clayoquot has many special elements, Cathy said it is the nature of the relationship between the ocean and the forest that sets the Sound apart. The forest feeds the sea and the sea feeds the forest.



Australia has four active biospheres. The Fitzgerald is the oldest in Australia and the only one active in WA. There are two active biospheres in south-eastern Queensland: the Great Sandy Biosphere and the Noosa Biosphere, and one in Victoria: Mornington Peninsula and Western Port Biosphere. Each of the biospheres has a marine component. Representatives from each of the four active biospheres in Australia addressed the delegates. For the Fitzgerald Biosphere; myself, Deon Utber, the South Coast Regional leader for Conservation with DBCA, and Justin Bellanger, CEO of South Coast NRM, did this.

The Great Sandy Biosphere Management Group organised the conference and the Burnett Mary Regional Group hosted it. Many thanks to the Great Sandy Management Group for covering the conference costs and accommodation and the FBG for covering travel costs.

Leonie McMahon

Plastic oceans and nurdle sands

The alarming rate at which plastics are building up in our oceans, and on our beaches, was brought home to us recently during a presentation by marine scientist, Dr Harriet Paterson.

Dr Paterson also showed us the global nature of this issue. Huge quantities of rubbish enter the oceans from ten of the world's most polluted rivers, she said. Ocean currents spread this rubbish around the world. It congregates in five enormous 'garbage patches', located in the North and South Pacific Oceans, the North and South Atlantic Oceans and the Indian Ocean. Rubbish from the Indian Ocean garbage patch ends up on our southern shores.

Plastic rubbish is only one of the issues for our beaches and marine life. Plastic pellets, or nurdles – the raw plastic used to make plastic products that are spilt during transportation – can also be found on most of the world's beaches.

Including ours. In October 2017, 42 tonnes of nurdles were spilt off the coast of South Africa. Harriet estimates they will arrive here this winter. She is currently running a Citizen Science program to track their arrival rate. People on the south coast are invited to collect plastic pellets from beaches and send them to her for analysis. A warning: plastics act as bio-accumulators. They absorb toxins from the water. Harriet said they can be 100,000 times more toxic than sea water. So use tongs and tweezers. For more information email harriet.paterson@uwa.edu.au

Leonie McMahon

Dibbler monitors find bush rats but no dibblers



The Friend's fourth dibbler monitoring session was held in May this year at the eastern end of the national park with five 'Friends' volunteers. Zoologist and Friends member Andy Chapman, who ran the monitoring program, reported that no dibblers were trapped, as was the case in October 2018. Forty seven bush rats (pictured) were captured, also comparable to last October, though down on previous years. Andy said he wasn't surprised by the results, given the extremely dry conditions experienced in 2018 and early 2019.

| Monitoring period | Dibbler captures | Bush rat captures |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| October 2017 | 12 | 99 |
| May 2018 | 5 | 139 |
| October 2018 | 0 | 50 |
| May 2019 | 0 | 47 |

Narpulungup News

is the newsletter of the **Friends of the Fitzgerald River National Park.**

For further information contact
Leonie McMahon.
Phone: 98366021.
Email:
Southernedits
@iinet.net.au

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Gairdner River Cultural Mapping celebration



In 2018 the Yarramoung Aboriginal Corporation ran a cultural mapping program on the Middle Gairdner River near Jerramungup. The State NRM funded project involved local Noongar Elders, the Nowanup Rangers, Applied Archaeology Australia, Gondwana Link and University of Western Australia. A celebration of its completion in March 2019 was also the occasion for the launch of the associated Cultural Heritage Action Plan. Photograph courtesy Amanda Keesing

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