

# Narpulungup News

February 2020 Volume 1

## First impressions of Twertup

By Romney Lynch

I have heard about Fitzgerald River National Park many times over the years but neither Mike nor I had been before the members weekend from the 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> September 2019.

Here are impressions from our first visit, but it definitely won't be our last. On the drive in to Twertup

... the sunset colours (pale gold through orange to dark red) on the heads of the truly unusual 'cabbage trees' on the gentle descent along the entry road.

... the expansive vista stretching to the horizon, a broad vegetated plain punctuated by low plateaux or break-aways.

... parking up in the camping area, following the trail to the top of a pale cliff to find a friendly group of members enjoying wine, cheese and the panoramic view.

.... the surprising subtle beauty of the spongelite itself - pale and light-weight, like chalk, with pinky-red and orange streaks. It is beautiful whether viewed as the white cliffs or up close in the 'block pile' of the former quarry. The Twertup field station. I have stayed in many field stations over the years. They were functional with basic facilities but definitely not pretty. Twertup is functional but it has clearly been designed and built with love. Made from the beautiful spongelite blocks (why wouldn't you??) with a tin roof, 'up-cycled' red-painted timber doors and windows and broad bush-pole supported



verandahs, it is both handsome and rustic within its bush surrounds. The interior has a spacious main kitchen/dining/lounge with very high ceilings so it stays cool, and a wood heater for warmth in winter. The kitchen is well stocked with equipment

and the lounge with books and guides to the park, and its history, flora and fauna. We camped in our car thinking there wouldn't be enough beds but with four or five separate rooms each with multiple bunks there were plenty to spare.

*continued on page 2*

## 2020 AGM Program

### Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March

**9:30 am** onwards – arrive Twertup Field Studies Centre.

Join us for a shared morning tea.

### **10.30 am ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**12.00 noon** Lunch

**1:30 pm** Guest speakers – Dr Alison Lullfitz and  
Noongar Elder Auntie Carol Pettersen

**2:30 pm** Afternoon tea

Followed by free time, dinner and social evening.

### Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March

Free time with the option to participate in a Citizen Science project determining the impact of fire on vegetation:

8.30 am—2.00 pm (approx).

This activity will entail bush walking and will require that you wear sturdy boots, have sun protection and drinking water.

This is a **BRING YOUR OWN EVERYTHING** weekend including food and camping gear. There is drinking water on site and a BBQ available for cooking. Limited beds available: please book by emailing [admin@fitzgeraldfriends.org.au](mailto:admin@fitzgeraldfriends.org.au).

**To get there:** Twertup is in the north west of the park, at the end of Twertup Track (about 10 km long, 4WD), which comes off Pabelup Dve/Quiss Rd, 25 km from South Coast Hwy.

**NOTE:** If Twertup is closed due to wet weather, the back up venue is Fitzgerald Hall on South Coast Hwy, 56 km east of Jerramungup. Overnight camping is available there.

Look forward to seeing you there

## Friends of Fitzgerald River National Park Committee positions AVAILABLE

If you are interested in taking on a more active role in the Friends of the Fitz. consider joining the Committee.

All executive positions will be declared open at the AGM with the view to encouraging new committee members.

We are particularly looking for people to fill the following roles:

- Narpulungup News Editor
- Twertup Subcommittee Representative, and
- (saving the best for last) ....Treasurer.

For more details about these roles contact us through [admin@fitzgeraldfriends.org.au](mailto:admin@fitzgeraldfriends.org.au) and leave your details. The committee member currently in the role (ie either Leonie McMahon, Gillian Craig or Liz Utting) will give you a call to discuss.

The Friends Committee will support and mentor you in these roles.

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As you'd expect for a remote location in an arid area, it's on rain-water, so be frugal. Two spacious drop toilets and a 'manual' shower are set separately. The resident frog, perched on the handle of the dunny brush, kept us entertained.

The members. An interesting, diverse and generous group, some passionate and knowledgeable about the park and the surrounding environment; others like us, just glad to be there.

We enjoyed the marked walk trails and were lucky to go on a longer hike with a group of long-time members to explore some of the park's habitats and diverse flora. But don't ask me to remember any plant names!

The members weekend was a terrific introduction to the stunning Fitzgerald River National Park and a great chance to meet some of its Friends group. Thank you.

If you have never been to the park, it's well worth the trek. Stay at Twertup, walk the marked trails or venture further afield, enjoy the vistas, appreciate the subtle diverse plant life. The scrubby bush requires sturdy clothing including long sleeved shirts, and thicker fabrics are definitely more desirable. And remember to pack drinks and nibbles and take your camping chair to the cliff tops to enjoy the view at sunset.





## 2020 AGM speakers to present PhD Findings in local area

Alison Lullfitz grew up on the edge of the Fitz, with places such as Twertup and Cheedanup (Point Ann) looming large in her memories of childhood. After fifteen years of living and working in conservation management elsewhere, her deep affinity with southcoast landscapes and biodiversity called her home to Boxwood Hill where she has lived with her family since 2009. She has recently collaborated closely with Noongar Elders to complete a PhD exploring how specific cultural activities have influenced floristic diversity and patterns in southwestern Australia. She undertook her research at UWA in Albany under the primary supervision of Prof. Steve Hopper. She continues to work on collaborative projects with Noongar Elders and to teach in conservation biology and ethnobiology. Carol Pettersen is a Menang Gnadju Elder who grew up traditionally in a large Noongar family on the south coast. Much of her childhood and early adulthood was spent in the Jerramungup and Bremer Bay areas but her family connection

extends from Israelite Bay to Albany. Carol has long recognised implicit connection between country, people and Indigenous social advancement. She has worked extensively building healthy sustainable pathways, including serving on the National NAIDOC Committee for six years, Australian National Training Accreditation Board, the Curriculum Council of WA, South Coast NRM, Single Noongar Claim and was recently appointed to review the Australian/New Zealand Alliance for Sustainable Forestry Standard. Carol was one of Alison's PhD supervisors, and they have worked closely on all aspects of Alison's research, including presenting some findings to the Society for Ethnobiology in Montreal in 2017.

Together Alison and Carol will share key research findings from Alison's 2019-completed PhD. This will include collaborative research with eighteen Elders from across the south coast to understand patterns of differential use of landscapes and the likely outcomes for biodiversity of these; a distributional study of an important cultural plant of the Esperance area, *Nyerrring (Macrozamia dyeri)*; and phylogeographic and ecological studies of several *Platysace* species, of which the tubers of some are important Noongar foods. They will also show us one of the edible species, *Youaq (Platysace deflexa)* which grows right at Twertup and across the Fitz.



Alison and Auntie Carol in North America where they presented key research findings at the annual Society of Ethnobiology conference in Montreal. Photograph courtesy Alison Lullfitz

# Life members Ron and Helen Taylor

**Ron and Helen Taylor joined the Friends of Fitzgerald River National Park in 1981 and became life members in 2010. The following stories elaborate on their long term interest in the natural environment**

## Ron Taylor

Ron Taylor had two dreams. One was to leave the UK and live in Australia. The other was to breed pigs. He achieved both, but as time went on he was drawn to live on the coast. In January 1980 he and Helen discovered Hopetoun and the Fitz, bought their block in town three months later and moved down permanently in 1982.

It was Gary Phillips, who was secretary of the Friends at the time, who told them about the organisation which they joined about 1981. Ron was a man of the land. He loved birds, the beach, timber and anything to do with the outdoors. This encompassed geology and his house was 'home away from home' to people who went to Hopetoun to lead courses and do studies. His dinghy, and those of his mates, were put into use to ferry geologists up the Phillips River, archaeologists up the Hamersley River and on another occasion to pick up bush-walkers.

His interest in wildflowers was triggered when the Hopetoun beard orchid was discovered on the eastern town firebreak. He escorted a number of eminent botanists to show them where the plant grew. A keen gardener, he collected warty yate seeds from beside the Twertup cottage and planted the resultant seedlings on his block at Blue Vista. His interest in revegetation extended to him accompanying Helen twice to Nowanup and on a walk down Peniup Creek. A practical man, given a piece of broken-down machinery, he would find a way to repair it, even if he had to fashion the parts from his collection of scrap metal. He erected signs for the Twertup walk trails, helped replace the roof, moved water tanks, assisted with conservation work on the building and the adding of a veranda. He was on the building committee until his health declined.

In essence Ron was a great recycler. There should be more like him.



Ron collecting beach litter



## Helen Taylor

After 20 years of hot wheat belt summers, Helen had had enough. When she and Ron discovered Hopetoun she was happy to move there. Her love of nature had been instilled by her parents and life in the attractive county of Derbyshire. Helen was very keen on learning about the way the hills and spongolite were formed, about water-courses, reptiles, frogs, anything that walked or flew.

In the early 1980s she took over the production of Narpulungup News, and as secretary and later president, she organised a number of field study weekends at Twertup, where experts would come and talk about their special subject.

She climbed West Mt Barren in search of land snails and walked beaches looking for hooded plover. She trailed geologists to learn about the vast age of the Barrens, dug in a mosquito infested cave with archaeologists, and she and Ron helped with post-fire restoration.

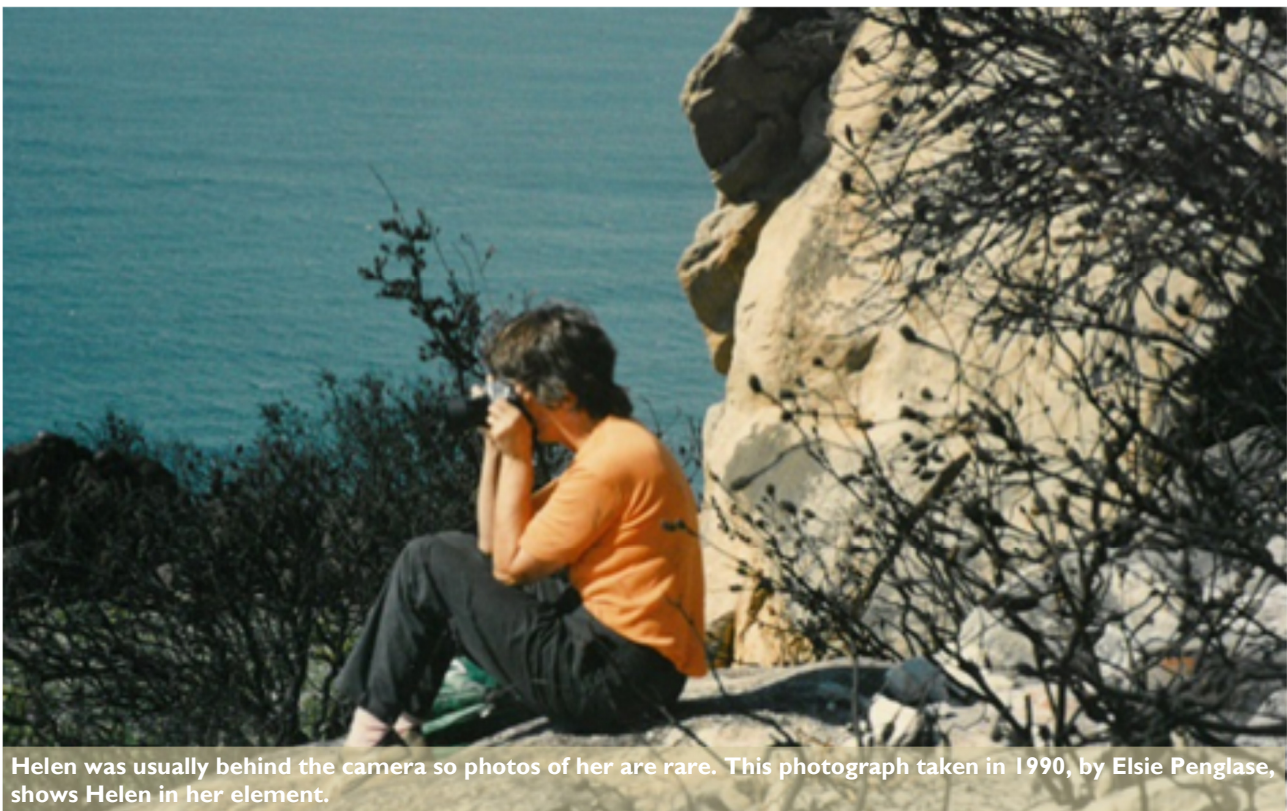
She delighted in the interesting people she met, the treks exploring bush tracks to places she would otherwise never have seen, experiences she would otherwise not have had.

Helen's camera went everywhere with her and she recorded activities, copies of which can be seen in the albums she put together in Twertup library. She wrote and collected poetry inspired by the Fitz and collated them in an album in the library, unhappily destroyed in the 2008 fire.

Most of all Helen enjoyed the friendship of the

like-minded people who gathered at Twertup and the interesting conversations held there.

Her one hope is that her enthusiasm for wildlife is contagious, because if people learn to love something, it is automatic to want to protect it.



Helen was usually behind the camera so photos of her are rare. This photograph taken in 1990, by Elsie Penglase, shows Helen in her element.

## Hopetoun Market Day – 18<sup>th</sup> January 2020

The annual Hopetoun Market Day run by the Hopetoun Progress Association was one of the coolest days in January, but it didn't stop the locals and holiday-makers from spending the afternoon at the markets.

The Friends of the Fitzgerald River National Park ran a 'Banksia Quiz' where entrants had to match 10 species of banksia fruits with photos of 12 flowering banksias. There were 21 entrants with only five obtaining full marks – one of whom was a junior. Two adults donated their prize back to the quiz, so a prize draw was made for the next entrants who scored nine out of ten.

The winners were: Junior book prizes (donated by Andy Chapman): 'Ratburger' – Pia Couper (Hyden); 'The Great Lizard Trek' - Lucy and Eliza Edwards (Hopetoun). Open prizes of an Annual All Parks Pass (donated by Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions): Moira MacMahon (Hopetoun) and Arthur Ferguson (Thornleigh). Open book prize (donated by Gil Craig): 'Native Plants of the Ravensthorpe Region' - Malcom Grant (Hopetoun).

Thanks to all those who entered the competition, donated prizes, collected banksias (Helen Taylor, Louise Lodge, Rosey Jasper) and helped on the stall (Louise Lodge, Tracey Chapman, John Tucker).

Gil Craig



Eliza and Lucy Edwards—Junior winners.



Moira MacMahon and John Tucker puzzling over the Banksia Quiz. All photographs courtesy Gil Craig.



Pia Couper—Junior winner.

## October Dibbler monitoring results

The 'Friends' dibbler monitoring took place from 24<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> October 2019 and the dibblers did not disappoint in spite of my misgivings due to the extreme dry conditions and not being recorded over the two previous sessions. Two juveniles were trapped, a male and a female, they were so similar in weight and size that it's possible they came from the same litter. DNA analysis should be able to confirm or refute this. This is a good result and indicates dibblers are doing what they should when they should in spite of the seasonal conditions. Our friends, the ever-present bush rats, didn't disappoint either, though numbers were down on all previous sessions; total captures were 36 including 16 returns, females outnumbered males 1.4:1. Other fauna was four bobtails and three bull skinks. Eight 'Friends' participated, we clocked up 56.26 hours and 451 km of volunteer effort. The next trapping will be in May 2020; anyone interested in participating is invited to contact me by phone on 0428383498 or email [fishymaster1@bigpond.com](mailto:fishymaster1@bigpond.com).

Andrew Chapman.



# Fire and Biodiversity workshop report

A Fire and Biodiversity Workshop was held in August 2019 at the Jerramungup CRC to discuss the impact of fire in the Fitzgerald River National Park (FRNP). The Friends had requested this workshop be held with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) due to our views and concerns about prescribed burning within the Wilderness Zone, the young age (juvenelisation) of most of the vegetation within the park, the frequency of prescribed burns and escapes causing short fire-return intervals, the lack of fire-related research and monitoring, and our desire for the establishment of the monitoring and research group as referred to in the 1999 Management Plan Amendment.

The workshop was chaired by Greg Mair (DBCA Regional Manager) and attended by DBCA science and fire operations staff, as well as Friends' representatives Gillian Craig, Nathan McQuoid, Libby Sandiford and Joanna Young. Greg opened the session with a commitment from Parks and Wildlife South Coast Region to formalise a FRNP Research and Monitoring Group subject to the support of the Executive Directors. Potential research projects included:

- does hazard from vegetation reduce after a peak biomass accumulation?
- what is the comparative risk to fire sensitive systems from escaped prescribed burns vs source of unprescribed fire e.g. lightning, anthropogenic sources?
- what is the optimal fire age mosaic to maintain biodiversity (ecosystems, species, genetic) within the FRNP?

It was acknowledged that there has been minimal fire-related vegetation monitoring and that there is a lack of a framework to ensure consistency and clear linkages between fire and ecological monitoring with defined objectives. The key points relating to monitoring were:

- monitoring needs to be underpinned with a strong foundation of baseline information. A significant gap in this information is the availability of vegetation/habitat mapping across the FRNP at a scale which identifies fire sensitive ecological units.
- a monitoring framework is required that provides a simple but effective process of data collection and analysis to inform ecological and fire management in planning and pre/ post fire events.

While it will be the role of the research and monitoring group to identify and recommend priorities for research, it was recognised that there is an immediate opportunity for resourcing a research project through the DBCA Biodiversity

and Conservation Science (BCS) Regional Research Project funding. It was agreed that a project proposal be submitted to develop a model for defining ecologically acceptable fire return intervals for susceptible plant species. This internal DBCA application for \$35,876, was successful and field work is expected to occur between March and May this year, with the project being led by Ben Miller and Carl Gosper (DBCA Fire Science Unit).

We anticipate an update being provided at the Friends' AGM in March and opportunities for the involvement of Friends, in collaboration with DBCA, in this and future fire-related 'citizen science' projects in the park.

Postscript: Dr Margaret Byrne (DBCA Executive Director) is against the formation of the FRNP Research and Monitoring Group as it would only address one specific issue in one park. She would rather see collaboration between Friends/ the community and DBCA to ascertain the key research and monitoring priorities and funding opportunities. She is happy to support the Fire Science Program Leader to achieve this as the FRNP is an important park with high conservation value.

Gil Craig

## Gilbert's Potoroo monitoring call for volunteers

In March 2020 DBCA and Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group invite volunteers to radio-track potoroos in our 380-hectare enclosure in Waychinicup National park east of Albany. The tracking involves team members staffing one of four radio-tracking stations for six hour shifts spanning the evening, night and morning to monitor the movements of these critically endangered marsupials.

We will be based at a farmhouse near the site through the generosity of the owners. There is no cost – we just ask you to get to Albany, where we can pick you up. All food and transport will be provided. Sleeping places in the farmhouse are limited, so you are welcome to bring a tent, caravan or camper trailer. We can provide tents but you will need your own bedding and mattress. We have a dedicated catering team to keep you well fed and nourished. For fieldwork we have comfortable tracking tents so you can be totally snug throughout your nocturnal shift.

The two-week trip will be in two stints with a team changeover after a week: from 29<sup>th</sup> February to 7<sup>th</sup> March, and 7<sup>th</sup> March to 14<sup>th</sup> March.

Please contact me as below and do pass this email on to others who may be interested.

Tony Friend, Principal Research Scientist, DBCA.  
Ph: 0429 449 983. E: [Tony.Friend@dbca.wa.gov.au](mailto:Tony.Friend@dbca.wa.gov.au)

## Friends receive Mary Bremner Grant for plant ID workshops

Recently the Friends were successful recipients of a Mary Bremner Grant through the Wildflower Society of WA. The project: *Introducing a New Generation to the Botanical Wonders of the Fitzgerald Biosphere*, has the following objectives:

1. To engage and inspire a new generation of children living in the Fitzgerald Biosphere to appreciate the exceptionally high botanical value of their local environment.
2. To encourage a greater enjoyment and care of flora through the sharing of expertise within the FFRNP membership, school

children, teachers and wider school communities. We intend to achieve the above objectives through a program with schools located within or adjacent to the Fitzgerald Biosphere.

There is considerable botanical expertise within the members of FFRNP, including Jane Thompson, a talented artist, who has created an engaging activity book about Biosphere wildflowers. The program will include:

- Reprinting of "Wildflower Faces" book, by Jane Thompson.
- Botanist visits to local schools to conduct wildflower education activities. The students will visit bushland close to their school and learn about the species growing within it.

- The sessions will integrate the "Wildflower Faces" book into learning activities. Each student will have a copy to utilise, enjoy and engage further with their classroom teacher and parents.
- The purchase of 30 magnifying glasses for student's use, to assist with plant identification and appreciation of various plant parts.

The Friends look forward to implementing this program in 2020 -2021.

Delys Harland



## Narpulungup News

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

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## INSPIRED BY TWERTUP

**Two days of art - Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> and Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2020**

This is an invitation to members and artists who would like to spend time at Twertup Field Studies Centre to draw and paint with like-minded people. Across both days people will be able to join outdoor excursions, taking inspiration from the magnificent environment surrounding Twertup.

Each session will commence at 9.30 am, returning to the Centre for lunch at 12.30 pm, followed by free time in the afternoon.

Come for one day or both.

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. For bookings and more details contact Louise on 0427700613 or email [louisemlodge@westnet.com.au](mailto:louisemlodge@westnet.com.au)

Cost per person: \$30 per day. Park entry fees must be paid separately.

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