



NARPULUNGUP NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF FITZGERALD RIVER NATIONAL PARK

JUNE 2021, VOLUME 2

Photo: Libby Sandiford

FROM THE AGM: CARL GOSPER'S TALK

BY ANGELA SANDERS

We had a cosy room at the Michael Tichbon Field Station for Carl's talk and the technology worked to allow us to watch a very interesting presentation complete with PowerPoint slides.

Carl Gosper's presentation was titled "Threatened flora distribution and differential exposure and susceptibility to threats as a framework in forming flora conservation in the southwest Australian floristic region."

Carl began by giving us a bit of background on the Southwest Australian Floristic Region (SWAFR) where 8300 plant taxa have been identified with around 47% of those being endemic, or found nowhere else. This region is also known as one of 36 global biodiversity hotspots. This designation is given to areas of exceptional biodiversity that is also under high threat. Carl explained that the SWAFR is an area with alpha diversity, high species turnover, relictual lineages and high local endemism. The OCBIL (old, climatically buffered infertile

landscapes) theory developed by Professor Stephen Hopper and others puts forward that the long evolutionary history of the area helps to explain these biological patterns. In addition, low soil fertility also leads to high plant species diversity.

The region has over 400 threatened flora species and many more priority species, which is a substantial conservation challenge. Threats are many and include land clearing, fragmentation, fire, pathogens, weeds, hydro-ecology and climate change.

Modern spatial analysis of the occurrence of these threatened species shows that they are concentrated in specific landscapes such as the eastern Swan Coastal Plain and the Stirling Range National Park for example. This coupled with an understanding of evolutionary history and exposure and susceptibility to threats leads to improved conservation management.

Fire interval in these landscapes is important with an immaturity risk with short fire intervals and a senescence risk with long intervals. Carl explained that

longer fire intervals are needed in OCBILs. He is researching minimum and maximum fire intervals at more local and SWAFR scales. Preliminary results suggest that the Great Western Woodland, SW Forests and eastern Stirling Range National Park are under Immaturity risk.

There are two projects happening under climate change research, failed recruitment after fire and quantifying Banksia population collapse, which is characterised by a 5-50% mortality across the landscape. Carl is linking on-ground surveys with aerial photogrammetry for these projects.

Carl concluded the talk by presenting the priority landscapes for flora conservation:

Eastern Stirling Range: threatened by fire and Dieback

Lake King: threatened by salt and fragmentation

Mt Frankland and Mt Lindsey: threatened by declining rainfall, high fire frequency, Dieback and fragmentation.

The Friends thank Carl for this informative presentation and hope to be able to assist with future projects.

THE 2021/22 FRIENDS COMMITTEE

President	Liz Utting
Vice President	Alison Lullfitz
Secretary	Delys Harland
Treasurer	Sheryn Prior
Newsletter Editor	Vicky Bilney
Committee Members	Jack Guthrie, Gil Craig, Kate Brown
Twertup Rep	Anne Gadsby
Twertup Works	Greg Harland
Twertup Works	Neil Gibson

We regret that Jack Guthrie has since resigned and thank him for his contribution to the Friends. All the best, Jack!



From the AGM at Bush Heritage's Michael Tichbon Field Station. Photo: Angela Sanders

ABOUT THE AGM

BY DELYS HARLAND

On 13th March, the members of the Friends of the Fitzgerald River National Park held the AGM at the Michael Tichbon Field Studies Centre on Bush Heritage Australia's Red Moort Reserve, 360 Monjebup Road. Inclement weather had caused road closures and hence the change of venue from Twertup Field Studies Centre.

Angela Sanders ensured that all was prepared at the Bush Heritage site. A few members stayed Friday night and enjoyed the wonderful accommodation facilities and opportunities for bush walking.

Saturday proved to hold fine weather and 23 members were present for the AGM. All positions were declared vacant and Angela kindly performed the Returning Officer duties. The Committee positions were mostly filled by the same people with slight shuffling of duties.

We welcome Kate Brown to the Committee. Before moving to Albany in 2019 Kate was employed as an

ecologist with DBCA Swan Region where she worked on protection and restoration of regionally significant bushlands and wetlands.

Neil Gibson has also joined the Twertup building subcommittee. He spent 30 years as a survey biologist based in Perth before moving to Albany a few years ago. In recent years he has become somewhat obsessed with research into historical botany.

We would like to sincerely thank Bill Thompson for his time on the Committee, he has served as President for three years (2017,18,19), Twertup Building Rep 2020, and has worked on many busy bees during the re-build of Twertup.

The Rangers' Report was presented by Paul Cory. The Friends would like to thank Paul for his informative address and for his involvement with the Friends during the last twelve years. Paul, Tracey and Blake are leaving for Kangaroo Island to take up the position of Fire Management Officer (burning

on private land) with the National Parks and Wildlife service, a division of the SA Department of Environment and Water.

Tracey has made a significant contribution to Friends by serving on the Committee in 2008,9,10,15.

Tracey also housed and managed a significant amount of Friends Merchandise for several years.

After lunch, guest speaker Carl Gosper held his presentation (see previous page).

Friends' members enjoyed walks around the area and some stayed overnight in the very comfortable accommodation.

FRIENDS MEMBERS' VISIT TO THE ALBANY BRANCH OF THE WILDFLOWER SOCIETY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

BY DELYS HARLAND

The Friends of the FRNP were invited to provide a talk at the Albany branch of the WSWA on April 20th at their monthly meeting. We had 8 members attend, plus extra friends, which filled the room to capacity. Dr. Gillian Craig spoke on Fire Management in the FRNP and Sylvia Leighton, Jane Thompson and Delys Harland spoke about the "Wildflower Discovery sessions" project which was funded by the Mary Bremner Grant through the WSWA.

The following is an excerpt from WSWA Minutes about talk:

The first to speak was Gillian Craig, who has been working in the area for 30 years. She spoke about the effects of fire on diversity in the park, showing photos taken of the same areas in 1987 and 2003. She expressed concern about DBCA plans to burn in the wilderness area and noted that, for some species, 30 years is not long enough for a seed bank to establish. She showed a map of different fire ages and photos of mallet woodland that had been burned 30 years ago and then 8 years ago. It showed little regeneration. Research has compared fire intervals from 3 different eras-pre human settlement, pre European settlement and post European settlement. Gillian also noted the effect on recruitment of factors such as wallaby grazing after fox control.

Delys presented a powerpoint showcasing the wildflower discovery sessions project, and how it aligns with the Objectives of the Wildflower Society

of WA: Know, Grow, Enjoy and Conserve.

This bit is also an excerpt from WSWA Minutes:

Delys Harland, Sylvia Leighton and Jane Thompson spoke about their Mary Bremner grant to take education in to the 7 schools near the western side of the Park. Jane has developed a colouring-in book with botanically correct flowers. Sylvia was facilitator to school groups from 4-12 year olds. This involved taking the children for a walk in nearby bushland, having them pick a flower and discussing it in the classroom, including looking at it under a microscope (which they found even a 4 year old could do) and being given a copy of Jane's book.

Bill and Jane Thompson had helped deliver the sessions, with Jane dressing up in her costume as the 'Allocasuarina Kid'. Jane helped the students to draw wildflowers. Bill and Jane have also developed a pack of cards for games.

Sylvia's spoonful of home grown honey also generated interest and enjoyment for the children, helping them to employ other senses.

Sylvia would like to repeat the lessons every 3-4 years and extend them to other schools.

Jane spoke of her father teaching her about botany when she was 4 years old. Stamp collecting helped her develop comparisons. She attended art school at 35 and took up botanical art at 60. She has had previous experience taking photos for a book and developing groupings comparing colours

and shapes of petals. She and Bill had previously lived in the Glasshouse Mountains, then moved to a property in the Gondwana area, which they have developed. She acknowledged help given over the years by Libby Sandiford. Jane passed around samples of children's drawings and letters and, after a brief pause, reappeared in her 'Allocasuarina Kid' costume.

Bill spoke of the 'Children's University' scheme, which is international, starting in the UK in 2017. There are several places in and around Albany that are involved, including 'Friends of the Fitzgeralds'. (The website brings up some interesting information.)

At the conclusion of the talks, Hes thanked all the speakers and presented each with a pack of cards, made up by Lynda from some of her photos.

The Albany WSWA members provided a fabulous supper and a very social chat following the talks. It was a very enjoyable evening and great to meet everyone.

The Friends were also invited to visit the Herbarium the next morning.

We were welcomed and shown throughout the facility. An impressive collection and very well maintained. We were also privileged to share morning tea and socialising.

RANGER UPDATE: WELCOME VANESSA AND JOSH

BY GIL CRAIG

Over the past year, the park has seen a major turn-over in staff. Jack Cosgrove (Senior Operations Officer) returned to Queensland, while the Rangers have dispersed around the country. Paul Cory moved to Kangaroo Island, Duncan Crichton to South Australia, while Malcom Grant has stayed local, taking a position with the Shire of Ravensthorpe.

Friends welcome two new members to the DBCA team - **Vanessa Lipianin** has been recently appointed as the Senior Operations Officer and **Josh Woods** as the Ranger based at Gairdner. Three Ranger positions, one located at Jacup and two in Hopetoun, are due to be filled shortly.

Vanessa comes to the South Coast with a wealth of experience. Originally from Victoria, she graduated with a BA Applied Science (Parks, Recreation and Heritage) and has a Post Graduate Diploma in GIS and Remote Sensing. She has been working in conservation for about 15 years, starting with the Northern Territory National Parks and Wildlife Commission as a Ranger at Simpsons Gap, West MacDonnell National Park. Parks Australia promoted her to Senior Ranger at Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. She says that this “was a great experience as I got to work closely with the traditional owners, including specifically working with women on cultural projects. This included monitoring of endangered species and learning how to recognise their tracks.”

A move to Norfolk Island National Park and Botanic Garden, working as the Natural Resource ranger, saw her creating and implementing conservation programs to protect the islands many endangered endemic species such as the Norfolk Island green parrot and Norfolk Island Boobook. This included baiting the island’s introduced rodent population and managing other introduced species such as cats, argentine ants, exotic bird species competing for nesting hollows and many weed species. She managed to get attacked by a Boobook protecting her nest (which was very exciting as it was the first evidence of breeding in seven years) and subsequently “developed a passion for owls [...]; there is nothing cuter than baby owls”.

Different landscapes were experienced working for the Department of Defence as an Environmental Ranger at Beecroft Weapons Range in Jervis Bay, NSW, where the range was very popular with the public as it was managed as a national park when not in use. It included a littoral rainforest and open woodlands which were prime habitat for birds of prey including owls. It was here that Vanessa spent many nights searching for Powerful Owls while conducting broadcasting surveys, i.e. where a bird’s call is played to attract the species being monitored.

Prior to moving down to Hopetoun, she worked as a Ranger for DBCA in Cervantes, in the Moora district, and worked across many national parks, including Nambung, Lesueur and

Badgingarra National Parks, all of which are very popular with wildflower enthusiasts.

As a passionate animal lover, who loves birds of prey, and is interested in ecology and ecosystem dynamics, Vanessa is a welcome addition to the Parks and Wildlife staff. Friends look forward to helping Vanessa learn more about the park and its inhabitants, and perhaps discover a chuditch.



President Liz Utting met with **Vanessa Lipianin** (pictured) at the newly constructed bridge and boardwalk, built by DBCA to protect the fragile coastal vegetation, to Mileys Beach. Photo: Liz Utting.

Josh started his career in the environmental work sector as a Cultural Projects Officer for South Coast Natural Resource Management in Albany. This was a great experience as it allowed him to work with his close family groups to conserve and protect cultural sites within the Albany Region. He worked there for about two years and during this time completed a

Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management.

A job with Green Skills for 2 years, also in Albany, involved working on a wide range of different projects such as dune rehabilitation, revegetation and weed eradication to name a few.

After this, Josh made a decision to try something different and managed to land a job as a Station worker in the Mid-West Gascoyne. Here he spent 3 years before eventually deciding it was time to move back to Albany. Back home, he worked on the family farm in Manypeaks for about 6 months before landing a job with DBCA in Bunbury.

Josh has now been working for the Parks and Wildlife service for over two years. Firstly in the Bunbury Regional Parks unit as a MATES Trainee Ranger (Mentored Aboriginal Training Employment Scheme). He completed a Certificate III in Conservation and Land Management before landing his current role as a Ranger for the Fitzgerald River National Park. Josh has

now been working in the park for 10 months and says that he has “loved every minute of it! A beautiful place to visit, let alone to work”.

Friends feel fortunate to have Josh employed as a Ranger in the park, and look forward to him sharing some of his cultural knowledge with our members.



Ranger Josh Woods, based at Gairdner, enjoys working in the beautiful Fitzgerald River NP. Photo: Josh Woods.



A new memento of Fitzgerald River National Park’s unique flora will be available soon by contacting admin@fitzgeraldfriends.org.au. The 100% linen tea-towels, designed by artist Julie Outram, will be \$20 each.

DIBBLER DAYS

IN THE FITZGERALD RIVER NATIONAL PARK

BY ANDY CHAPMAN

As it is an endangered species, there is a Dibbler Recovery Team (DRT) to bring together a broad spectrum of people with relevant expertise who meet twice yearly to report progress and plan appropriate conservation initiatives. The team includes a community representative group. In 2016 the 'Friends' were asked by Department of Park and Wildlife whether they would consider being that group. They enthusiastically agreed to do this and it was explained that their role could involve; raising community awareness, fund raising and assistance with field work. After some consideration the 'Friends' proposed that they resume the dibbler monitoring on the established trapping grid on Moir Track which commenced in May 2005 but ceased in May 2014 due to lack of funding. This proposal ticked all the boxes that DPaW indicated and was supported by the department.

The monitoring grid is located very close to where Moir Track joins Hamersley Drive. It consists of 60 marked points which each accommodate an Elliott trap when in

use. There are six lines with ten traps at 50m intervals. Each line is 200m apart. The vegetation is long unburnt mallee shrubland with a medium dense, species rich low shrub understorey. The monitoring specification was to trap for four consecutive nights in both May and October. These months were determined by the biology of dibblers; if all is well, females will be carrying pouch young in May and these will be out and about as juveniles or sub adults in October. Trapping with Elliotts is an established, effective way to determine whether this is the case.

In 2016 'Friends' successfully applied for \$5,120 grant funding from State NRM to meet establishment and Dr Tony Friend's travel costs including training A. Chapman in dibbler handling, particularly tissue sampling and microchipping. The application valued the volunteer and in kind component for the first year at \$13,831. The project was due to commence in May 2017 but was deferred to October due to flooding in February 2017 which caused access restrictions including a two year closure of Moir Track. Because of this

for the first two trapping sessions participants camped at the Hamersley Inlet campground which is 15 km from the trapping grid. Camping fees were paid by 'Friends' from their grant. Park entry fees were waived by DPaW for an approved volunteer project. This worked well because traps inspection had to be completed by mid-morning in October and later morning in May due to day length and animal welfare considerations; participants had much free time to go for walks, rest, and photograph or explore the national park.

Between October 2017 and May 2020 the 'Friends' conducted six trapping sessions. Access for October 2018, May & October 2019, was via private property and a dispensation to use Moir Track and for May 2020 by the newly aligned Moir Track.

Data in Table 1 indicate 555 captures of which only one was an adverse event – a dead juvenile bush rat with the cause of death unknown. Animal ethics considerations require that adverse events are reported. Dibbler data which are not in the table reveal that females were carrying between pouch young in May and juvenile and sub-adult males and females were present in October. Dibblers were doing what they should be. Very, very dry conditions pertained over 2018, 2019 and 2020 and this almost certainly influenced numbers though it is encouraging that, in spite of

Table 1. Vertebrate captures on Moir Track monitoring grid October 2017 – May 2020. Figures in brackets are recaptured fauna i.e. recaptured in the same trapping session.

	Oct 17	May 18	Oct 18	May 19	Oct 19	May 20
dibbler	11(1)	5			2	
bush rat	44(2)	139(18)	50(18)	47(14)	45(16)	98(23)
bandicoot		5	5			
house mouse	1	5				1
heath monitor	1		1			
bull skink	1				2	
bobtail		1	1		3	

this, a male and female were trapped in October 2019.

Of the 555 captures 514 were bush rats. This is an extraordinary number and equates to 36 rats per 100 trap nights. In other words overall just over every third trap had a rat in it. I have trapped many bush rats in many places over my time as a biologist but never as many as this. Interestingly high numbers were maintained in spite of the dry conditions. The other interesting thing about these data is the house mouse was the *least* recorded mammal. This is not an unusual result for the Fitz. but elsewhere in south-western Australia the opposite is usually the case. And of course it is always nice to see a bandicoot or five and the juvenile heath monitor in October 2017 with its reddish/orange colouration was a sight to behold.

As a volunteer exercise the project's objectives were met. In particular 26 people participated and although not all got to see a dibbler, most did, and those that didn't would have gone

away with some sort of appreciation of dibblers and what is being done to conserve them. The 26 people included a 5 person contingent of Tjaltjraak trainee rangers from Esperance who spent two days with us and helped pack up in October 2017. The trainees were active participants, engaged and engaging – a credit to their organisation. Volunteers contributed 348 hours and 5,247 km. At \$20 per hour and \$0.68 per km (ATO figure). These contributions are valued at \$10,526.

Monitoring progress was reported quarterly in 'Friends' newsletter 'Narpulungup News' and on two occasions in 'Community Spirit'. All trapping data were forwarded to Tony Friend at DPaW. I attended only one DRT meeting which was in Albany. Meetings in Jurien Bay were attended by Rodger Walker and in Perth by Jessica Wright, Brenda Newbey (twice) and Louise Lodge. On one occasion 'Friends' presented an apology.

The monitoring, as of October 2018,

was financially supported by South Coast NRM and RAIN by \$735 and \$420 respectively. These monies covered vehicle running and expendable expenses – usually bait materials. In the case of vehicle running participants were offered a small per km rate which in most cases they declined preferring to donate it back to 'Friends'. In a typical trapping session my own costs were to the order of \$85-\$90 – these for vehicle running and purchase of bait materials. RAIN also advertised trapping sessions in their email newsletter and supported the project by their attendance.

'Friends' acknowledge Department of Parks and Wildlife (particularly Tony Friend), South Coast NRM and Ravensthorpe Agricultural Initiative Network as well as the 26 participants for their support of this project. This project was also supported by funding from the Western Australian Government's State NRM Program in 2020.

Andrew Chapman, 16th February 2021



natural resource
management program





National Science Week – Friends’ Event Sat 21 - Sun 22 August 2021

National Science Week is Australia’s annual celebration of science and technology. This year the Friends of the Fitzgerald River National Park are holding the following activities to encourage an interest in science pursuits. Both members and the general public are welcome to attend, and we encourage younger people to come along and be fascinated by this exceptional national park.

Saturday 21st August at Twertup:

2.30 pm – Twertup botanical walk. Join local botanist, Dr Gillian Craig on a 4 km walk starting at the Twertup Field Studies Centre. Bring walking shoes, hat and water.

7.30 pm – Twertup owl hunt. Vanessa Lipianin, FRNP Senior Operations Officer and owl enthusiast, will guide a search for these night predators near the Field Studies Centre. Bring walking shoes and torch.



G Craig

Sunday 22nd August at Point Ann:



10 am – Morning tea (byo), meet at Point Ann picnic/bbq area.

11 am – Point Ann whale * watching. TBA [an expert] will talk about the humpback, southern right, killer and blue whales as they migrate along the South Coast. Bring binoculars.

* Stop press: cetacean researchers John Totterdell and Kirsty Alexander will present this section

1 pm – Discover Hooded Plovers. Join local bird enthusiast, Anne Gadsby, as she searches the known hiding places for these vulnerable shore birds. Meet at Point Ann picnic/bbq area.



N McQu

gorcc.org



Note: Access to Twertup is via a 10 km 4WD track from Quiss Rd/ Pabelup Dr which is closed during wet soil conditions. Point Ann may also be closed in wet weather. Please check www.fitzgeraldcoast.com.au/explore/road-closures.aspx for updates. These events will be cancelled if there are road closures.

This is a bring your own everything event. Overnight shared accommodation is available at the Twertup Field Studies Centre (max 16

beds) or byo swag/ tent (limited to 30 people total) – bookings essential. Please RSVP to admin@fitzgeraldfriends.org.au to book Saturday night at Twertup, or for further information www.fitzgeraldfriends.org.au.

BREMER BAY EASTER MARKET

Friends' members had a good morning at the Bremer Bay Markets on Easter Saturday. We were in a room with the FBG ladies showcasing the Environmental issues of our region.

We had a colouring in table set up for children with a page from the Wildflower Faces book photocopied for children to colour, along with other FRNP information and the Twertup movie playing on screen.

Anne Gadsby, Julie Outram and Delys Harland attended to merchandise sales and chatting to people!

By Delys Harland



UPCOMING EVENTS

21st and 22nd August 2021 National Science Week event – see page 8
2nd and 3rd October 2021 Twertup Open Days

THE COTTAGE IN A WILDERNESS

Steve Janicke's documentary about the Twertup Field Studies Centre is on YouTube! It's not accessible to the general public, so please email admin@fitzgeraldfriends.org.au to receive your code link to view it.

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