

# Narpulungup News

2006 No 2  
May

from the Friends of the Fitzgerald River National Park



## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL DUE NOW

Have you have renewed your FFRNP membership for 2006-7? We would love to send you free copies of the *Narpulungup News*, but it becomes rather costly! A membership renewal form is available on page 5. Fees have not been changed.

As a friendly reminder you will find a red dot on the address page of this issue if your subs have not been paid

THANKYOU!

## Annual General Meeting

The AGM was held on March 18th at Twertup. There were 16 members present and it was good to hear that 6 new members have joined up and two have rejoined.

Before the AGM we were privileged to hear Kaye Vaux talking about the early days of the Association. See page 2.

The President's report is printed on page 6. We all want to thank Andy for the wonderful work he did during 2005 and are delighted that he has agreed to stay on as President this year. We were sorry to lose Val Davis and Rosey Jasper as committee members, but are very happy to welcome Natasha Moore and Kevin Giles. All other committee members accepted nomination for a further year. It is truly wonderful to have (Senior Ranger) Mark and Natasha Moore back with us again.

One of the items of good news from Mark's report was that Jerramungup DHS is creating a CALM Bush Ranger Group. The Friends are looking forward to sharing some Fitzzy Experiences with them. Another piece of good news - the Park BBQs are going to be replaced!

### River water sampling and "The Map"

Both of these grant-funded activities are proceeding extremely well. There is a brief report on testing the river water quality on page 5.

News of the map launch - the **BIG EVENT OF THE YEAR** is on page 5.

### Twertup

We need a few more volunteers to maintain our unique Field Studies Centre. It is not an onerous task. See page 6 for 'empty' months. Ring a committee member if you can help.

### Public liability

The Friends are insured and have adopted 'duty of care' procedures to be followed when running public events.

### Committee

A list of office bearers, committee members and rangers + their phone numbers is on page 5. Please do not hesitate to contact any of us when necessary.

Next issue: August

## We always had good fun!

### Memories of the early days of the Fitzgerald River National Park Association..

*An edited transcript of the first part of a talk given by FFRNP life member, Kaye Vaux, at the AGM in March 2006*

Well, I suppose I ought to start from when I first became involved. In those days all this area was in the Gnowangerup Shire and so when mining was proposed it was up to us in the Ongerup Conservation Group, which we'd just formed, to try and stop the mining. And that was how I became involved in the very early days. And we did stop the mining! It took a lot of doing, I can tell you, and actually, I believe, this was the beginning of preventing mining in any other national park. Mining is banned now from all national parks. Which is good!

In 1956 this area was made a reserve. In the early days Drummond and people passing through reported rare flora and fauna so it was a reserve until in 1970 it became a National Park after we had stopped the mining. It took a lot of doing by the Ongerup Conservation Group. I forget how many names we got to try to prevent it. The OCG actually started in 1971. Over 1000 acres were under mining leases so we had to try to stop all these mines coming in. John Bannister came down from the WA Museum and he gave a talk on saving the Park.

The Park consisted of 604,304 acres ..in the old language .

*Kaye showed us some newspaper (Gnowangerup Star) and magazine articles from the time when they were trying to save this area. Also the well-known photographer Michael Morecambe had come down and taken photos in about 1970 ..*

We were so fortunate in having dear old Ken Newbey. He had got a University degree so we knew that what he was saying was right! We had Andy (Chapman) too to do the animals and that was one of the first things that we did. We got together down here and they went out surveying and we helped them. We had a grant of \$5000, I think it was, to pay Ken and Andy. (Kaye - *Did you get any money Andy? Andy - You bet! You signed my pay cheques for 2 years! 1985 and 1986!*)

We had to match that - the amount of money we paid them we as a group had to match, and because I was Treasurer at the time I had to record everything that they did, the time that was spent, the travel and everything so as to add up to the \$5000.

### Trapping

Putting down the pit traps was quite an exciting time. Before we could do that Andy was out there cutting up 4 inch plastic piping. Then after the holes were dug we had to go and clean them out before we put could the pipes in. We had to fill them with bushes and things so that if any little animal fell in it could climb its way out. When the piping was put in all the pit traps had lids put on them so that when they weren't being used it would stop anything falling in. We always had good fun, it was always a wonderful Association. So that was quite a big effort doing that and a lot of animals and reptiles were recorded. And of course Ken

found about 50 - 60 new species of flora when they did the survey, so the park became pretty popular and I think that other parks realised just how important this work was that we were doing

### At Twertup

Our Fitzgerald group was formed in 1980 . When we got here we had to clean this cottage out. We put a ceiling in the kitchen . There was a ceiling perhaps in the lounge room - I forget. What a mess it was when we got here! The bees had been in - everything had been in and everything was covered in mess. It took us a good while to clean it up.

I remember the first night that we were here we all put our sleeping things down on the floor. I wasn't very used to that sort of thing in those days you know. I'd been brought up pretty strictly I suppose I had never been mixed up in camping. Anyway I got my bed down on the floor along with a few others and the next thing I knew right beside me was a boy from Switzerland! (I think he was an exchange student staying with Bill Lullfitz) and I had to sleep beside him .I thought 'Gee'!! I got over that and later we went skinny dipping and all those things. It made you grow up!

Yes, we had some good times.

Kaye in reminiscing mood during her talk ... wearing a wonderful floral shirt and a necklace of quandong nuts!



Then of course we had all these times when we had special weekends - a photographic weekend or an ant weekend. The time that we were recording the ants was a wonderful weekend. Peter McMillan I think it was took us for that. We had a nest somewhere way out there and we had to find out how many ants were going out first thing in the morning and how many ants were coming back every two hours. It nearly killed us. We were out there counting the ants, writing it all down. Then we were out there again 2 hours later .Oh we did some mad things, but it was good fun. We certainly learnt a lot while we were doing it.

We did a geology weekend - Oh all sorts of weekends. They've all been so interesting.

Then we had different things to do in the evenings. We had a mad-hatters' night when everyone had to dress up their hat. I remember Bill Moir ... Oh, we had a lot of entertainment, a lot of fun and that really made it well worth while..

.I think we had our meetings every second month in those days. Because there was so much to - such a lot to do around the place.

## Native land snails .. the hunt is on!

*A letter from the curator of Molluscs at the WA Museum*



Dear Priscilla,

It was great to hear from you and to learn that Helen (Taylor) had passed on my letter to you. It was pleasing to hear of her interest in the land snails - and, of course, of yours.

Thanks to the WA Department of Conservation and Land Management, I was able to employ an assistant - even if only for a couple of weeks. We were able to register quite a lot of specimens of native land snails belonging to the genus *Bothriembryon* which had been collected in the Great Southern Region. The CALM regional office at Albany was anxious to have information on the geographic ranges of species that seem to be confined to small areas - those species that are generally called "the short-range endemics". This information would help the CALM officers to plan for the management of National Parks, Reserves, etc. so that seemingly -vulnerable species or even populations could be better protected.

Having entered the data associated with our specimens onto the Museum's electronic database, we were then able to map the localities where the specimens had been found. This mapping gives a much more effective idea of the distributional area of each of the taxa which we currently regard as species - whether or not these have been formally named. Of course, some of the taxa are represented by only a very few specimens and some of these specimens are in very poor condition. Snails living in habitats that are not calcareous (limestone country or along the coast) usually have fragile shells which disintegrate soon after death, so that the few shells that are found may be in poor condition.

Only the other day I had a *Bothriembryon* shell sent to me for identification and comment. It came from an area near Wellstead. The only match I could make was with 2 similar shells of an undescribed and un-named species from that general area. **These fragile shells are not in good condition so any more recently dead or (in my dreams, perhaps) some live snails would be just so welcome.**

The snails (and shells) that I collected during a trip some years ago with Helen and other Friends of the Fitzgerald River National Park have been just so valua-

ble. I hope to be able to get down that way again. Of course, most snails are active only after rain or cool humid nights. At other times they burrow into the litter and soil or creep into rock crevices and remain inactive until conditions become favourable - or until they die. So one has to be lucky to find snails out and about!

As I mentioned to Helen, we badly need more specimens, particularly of such poorly known taxa. But we also need new living specimens of all land snail species so that we can preserve them in a way that allows for genetic analysis. In the distant past we always fixed the tissues of our specimens in formalin before preserving them in alcohol (70% methylated ethanol). This did result in specimens which were very suitable for anatomical dissection. Then more recently we omitted the formalin fixation because it tended to dissolve the fine sculpture on the tips of the shells but we still used the methylated ethanol. Now, even more recently, we realised that none of the earlier material could be used for genetic analysis, so we now use pure ethanol on those specimens that come our way.

**So I would be so pleased if you could enthuse some Great Southern residents/visitors to collect snails and slugs (not only *Bothriembryon* but any other genus - native or introduced) and send them to me - either directly or via the Museum or CALM in Albany. Of course, I don't need a whole lot of garden snails (brown or white) or slugs, but a few would be handy to enable me to track their spread. Land snails can be safely kept - or sent through the post - in dry conditions (i.e. in a perforated or cardboard container (such as a match-box) but with NO green leaves). The snails can seal over their apertures with a mucus film or a plug and lie dormant when conditions are dry. Once the conditions become wet or humid they start crawling (it's like a reflex action) and so give off more water vapour. In a closed jar or similar, or in the presence of greenery, they just keep on crawling in the increasingly-humid conditions until they exhaust themselves and die (and then disintegrate!)**

Best wishes to you and to all the Friends of the Fitzgerald River National Park

Shirley

=====

Please contact Shirley Slack-Smith :

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Welshpool DC  
WA 6986

**Phone:** 9427 2747 or 9427 2700 (receptionist)

**Web:** www.museum.wa.gov.au

## Notes from the Rangers at the Fitzgerald River National Park

Winter is nearly upon us and Easter and the school holidays have come and gone. It is pleasing to report that whilst very busy in the park we experienced no incidents or problems and all had a good time.

Work has been completed on the Quoin Head beach access. The result is a much more user friendly means of getting down to the beach safely and is a great focus for people, which in turn should help prevent trail braiding and ad-hoc trails out of the campsite and down to the beach.

**Research:** It has always amazed me the amount of interest the Park attracts from people carrying out all types of research, local WA people and others from far away. Such is the significance and recognition of this very special National Park.

The following are some of research projects currently underway in the park.

A PhD student is currently undertaking a study and survey of the status of populations of the Heath Rat (*Pseudomys shortridgei*). Although known from several localities in Victoria and W.A we know very little of its distribution and habitat requirements in W.A. In general appearance the Heath Rat closely resembles the common bush rat but can be distinguished by its bi-colored (dark on the top and pale underneath) and a less scaly tail.

The South Coast Threatened Birds Recovery Team, which has interests in local species such as Western Ground Parrot, Western Whip bird and Western Bristle bird, have done a preliminary assessment of feral cat numbers in the park. The area is thought to have very high numbers of cats, which raises concerns for the survival of the ground nesting parrots and other fauna in the park.

A project proposal is underway to test the uptake of a non-lethal bait by non target species i.e. native fauna. This will be done by laying baits impregnated with Rhodamine, a simple non-toxic dye. If there is any uptake by non-target species, the dye will show up in their whiskers under U.V light. (If it were humans it would be evident in our fingernails)

A PhD student from the University of Frankfurt (Germany) has teamed up with researchers from CALM'S wildlife research centre to study the metabolic rates of feral cats in varying climatic regions including desert, tropics and the moderate climate that we experience in this part of Australia. It is hoped that this research will clarify physiological changes that may have evolved in the different feral populations throughout the varying climatic regions. Any differences will have a bearing on future cat control programs.

The Dibbler (*Parentechinus apicalis*) recovery program is still ongoing. Current surveys in the park are looking to expand on known distributions in the park through placing hair tubes (plastic arches placed on the ground with double sided tape on the under side of the arch; as the animal passes through hair from the animal sticks to the tape and is collected for identification at a later date). Good numbers of the Dibbler are still being caught at monitoring sites throughout the park.

Most readers will be aware that CALM and the Dept of Environment are co-funding a project organized by the Friends of the Fitzgerald, which will repeat water monitoring done in 1983 by A. Chapman and K. Newbey. Data collected will assist in determining what change if any is discernable in water quality at 4 waterways within the park. The project will be completed December 2006 and we look forward to their final report.

**Dieback report::** The following are excerpts from M. Grant (Senior Operations Officer) and S. Barrett's (Threatened Flora Officer) report on the recent inspection of the Bell Track *Phytophthora dieback* infestation in March 2006. The objective of management at Bell Track has been to contain the *Phytophthora cinnamomi* infestation to its currently confined micro catchment and protect adjacent conservation values within the National Park by limiting human movement of the pathogen from this locality and by reducing the surface root to root spread of the pathogen into the tributary of Copper Mine Creek and the Susetta River. The annual reassessment of the phosphite monitoring quadrants and rate of spread transects on the sand plain at the southern end of the *P. cinnamomi* infestation, and inspection to determine whether the above average 2005/06 summer rainfall had influenced the disease activity, was undertaken on the 14th and 15th of March 2006.

An inspection of the rain gauges on site revealed that the area has received between 220 and 250 mm since the 29th of October 2005. This figure is approximately half of the annual average 400 to 450 mm rainfall for this region of the south coast. The March monitoring showed that there was reduced plant mortality in plots sprayed with phosphite compared with those in a non-sprayed exclusion area. Overall the rate of spread of the pathogen has slowed from over 2.5 m per annum from 1991 to 1997 to approximately 1.5 m per annum in 2006. However small spots infections ahead of the dieback fronts continue to be cause for concern.

There has been a notable amount of soil erosion on the management tracks in the northern parts of the National Park this summer; even with the improved standard of surface water management techniques that have been deployed with recent machine operations. In view of the recent activation of disease boundary a range of research and management actions are being explored. The unchecked root-to-root spread of the Bell Track infestation will inevitably cause major changes in the vegetation in the immediate vicinity. Conservatively, 2 – 3 ha / year will be newly infested by this method of spread, assuming a 2 – 3 m / year spread rate without phosphite application. However, much more rapid spread of the pathogen has been seen in the past following a wet winter. If *P. cinnamomi* reaches the Copper Mine Creek tributary and is carried downstream, the potential for spread of the pathogen will be greatly increased.

From 1997-1999, Bell Track monitoring plots indicated that phosphite application had substantially reduced the rate of spread of the infestation front for up to 18 months post-spray, with 93% survival of *Banksia baxteri* in the sprayed plots versus 56% survival in the unsprayed plots and 86% survival of *Lambertia inermis* in the sprayed plots versus 61% survival in the unsprayed plots. However a visit in autumn of 1999 has shown that, following rain during the 1998/99 summer, the infestation has started to spread again especially in the Banksia Scrub on deep sands. From these results it is apparent that phosphite achieved an eighteen-month period of protection. Phosphite has only been applied to date in 1997, 2000 and 2004, it is hoped that with more secure funding it may now be applied at regular 18-month intervals to achieve more effective control.

It should be emphasised that phosphite application alone, even under the best conditions, will only limit the rate of spread of the infestation and will not eradicate *P. cinnamomi*.

This detailed report highlights the level of concern raised over this infection and the need to prevent further infections. The main method park managers have in trying to do this is through the control of access and periodical road closures when roads carry too much moisture.

## A Doubly Excellent Occasion .. Map Launch and Orchid Search

### Saturday September 23rd & Sunday 24th

Saturday -Launch of the Friends' delightfully illustrated comprehensive map of  
the Park and Biosphere

#### FRIENDS OF THE FITZGERALD RIVER NATIONAL PARK

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Garry Carr (Murray Rd)		9837 1002

#### Testing the Water ...National Park rivers project has commenced

A project to examine river water quality in Fitzgerald River National Park rivers funded by CALM and the Department of Environment and undertaken by 'Friends' of the park is well underway. Monthly sampling in the Phillips, West, Hamersley and Fitzgerald rivers commenced in January 2006 and will extend to December 2006.

Water quality indicators - salinity, pH, temperature, dissolved oxygen concentration and turbidity are measured in the field and a sample collected for laboratory analysis in Albany of total nitrogen and total phosphorus concentration by Centre for Excellence in Natural Resource Management. The project repeats identical sampling done in 1983 and may provide some insights into what, if any, changes are occurring to our rivers.

Ravensthorpe biologist Andy Chapman is coordinating the project on behalf of Friends of Fitzgerald River National Park and may be contacted on 98381149 for further information.

#### *FFRNP MEMBERSHIP FORM:*

Family \$25 \* Individual \$15 \* Concession \$10 \* or donation

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Friends of the Fitzgerald  
River National Park  
1190 Nanarup Rd  
Nanarup 6330

Tick if a receipt is required.

☐

## President's Annual Report 2005

I have enjoyed my year as your President; for me it is an honorable position to hold. I would like to take this opportunity to review what the Friends have achieved this year as well as reflect on our future as I see it.

We have offered two activities this year, the art weekend at Twertup in September and seed collecting at Nowanup in November; both have been reported in Narpulungup News. Our 'flagship' project for the year is undoubtedly Vivienne's map project which I am confident will be a credit to all concerned. Our 'flagship' for this year is perhaps the rivers investigation project which is underway.

The committee has met twice during the year and addressed the following issues:

- ❑ Public liability and safe practices on excursions
- ❑ Gondwanalink linkages
- ❑ CALM/Government lack of financial support for relief ranger staffing
- ❑ Tourism developments in FRNP
- ❑ Maintaining membership
- ❑ Conduct of committee meetings

In addition Helen Taylor has labeled and put our photographic collection in chronological order. These photos form an important record of our activities over 25 years.

As I contemplate the future and our role in support for both CALM and FRNP I think we face some fairly serious challenges. These include:

- ❑ Demographic change and increased recreational demand on the coast and bush due to the RNO project. The Friends have a letter from Alan Walker, CALM Director of Regional Services, that suggests we consider jointly with CALM lobbying RNO to provide financial resources to address this issue. Personally, I believe we should turn this idea on its head and lobby Government to provide the resources as it is doing very nicely from the resources boom.

- ❑ I believe we need to be more pro-active in promoting ourselves to the wider community particularly within the political process. For example, we have both a new member of State Parliament and a new Minister for the Environment; we need to appraise both persons of our objectives, achievements and activities and concerns.
- ❑ The issue of the overdue review of the Management Plan. Up until now financial constraints have delayed this process which was due in 2002. We have a letter from the Minister for Tourism stating that the review is due to commence this year. While I'm sure we welcome this news, we need to be aware and prepared that the issue of access, possibly including the coastal road, will be part of process.
- ❑ Finally I have a vision; I wonder whether a world class FRNP Information Centre commensurate with its status as an International Biosphere Reserve and one of WA's premier conservation locations is a project we should investigate with CALM and aim to achieve over say a 10 year time frame.

In concluding I would like to thank all committee members, activity presenters and CALM rangers for their support; you have all been a pleasure to work with and the committee has gone about its tasks with enthusiasm and minimum direction from me.

*Andy Chapman: President 2005.*

### Twertup cleaning roster:

<b>April:</b>	Ken & Priscilla
<b>May:</b>	Mark & Natasha
<b>June:</b>	-
<b>July:</b>	Gil Craig
<b>August::</b>	Mark & Vivienne
<b>September:</b>	Anne Gadsby
<b>October:</b>	Barbara Miller
<b>November:</b>	Andy Chapman
<b>December:</b>	<b>Volunteers, please</b>
<b>January:</b>	"
<b>February:</b>	"
<b>March:</b>	AGM

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