

Nerpulungup News

May 2005

No 2

from the Friends of the Fitzgerald River National Park



Next issue: August

AGM well attended

The AGM was held on April 9th at Twertup in beautiful conditions. About 25 people were present—and this included some friends we value very much, but have not seen for a while—Shirley and Douglas Gordon, and Sue and Ron Wooler. It was lovely to see them again, - also some new members.

In the morning reports on various projects of interest were presented. See page 5 for summaries.

President's report

The out-going President, Nathan McQuoid, gave his report which is reproduced in full on page 2. It looks as if there is going to be a considerable increase in pressure on the FRNP in the next few years with the population growth in Ravensthorpe, Hopetoun and Bremer Bay. From all Friends—sincere thanks to Nathan for his leadership over the past two years.

New committee

The 2005 committee was elected. The President is not new to the job— it is the third term for Andy Chapman who has been a member of the Friends for 25 years. We are delighted to welcome new committee member, Val Davies, from Bremer Bay. Profiles of the committee appear on page 5.

Fees

It was decided to leave the annual membership fees as they were last year. A membership form is on page 5, and we would encourage you to renew your membership as soon as possible.

Public liability insurance

The committee is very aware of the need for insurance to cover volunteers and participants in FRNP activities. Insurance cover has been taken out and the President and committee will, at their first committee meeting, address the issue of creating a check list to be used by leaders of any activity run by the FRNP.

River water sampling

In 1982 funding was obtained from the NHC by the FRNP Association to sample the water in various rivers in the park for levels of salinity and phosphorus etc. Andy suggested that we might apply to the Department of the Environment to re-visit this project in 2005 and include measuring nitrogen levels. The comparisons should prove interesting!

Biosphere map

This project, being carried out by Vivienne Hillyer, is due to be completed in the spring. It should be a wonderful tool and promotion for the Friends.

After the meeting some members stayed on for a BBQ and talked into the evening before our early start caught up with us. We then retired to bed chased by people-eating mosquitos.

Know Your Rights: A study of southern right whale habitat selection

Rebecca Pirzl, Deakin University

The Point Ann area in Fitzgerald River National Park is a great place to see southern right whales. It is also a study site for an Australia wide research project investigating the species' use of coastal breeding habitat. Southern right whales migrate from their sub-Antarctic summer feeding grounds to the Australian coast where they are present during winter and spring. Pregnant females give birth and nurse calves, while others congregate to mate and socialise. The species is now recovering from virtual extinction due to whaling, although it remains endangered with numbers thought to be less than 10% of original. Because of the dramatic population decline southern right whales are only seen occasionally in some areas where they were once plentiful (such as the Derwent Estuary in Tasmania), but in other areas they form groups at particular places year after year. Large numbers are reliably seen east of Israelite Bay (WA) and at the Head of Bight (SA), as well as Pt Ann, while smaller numbers of whales usually visit Warrnambool (Vic), Victor Harbour (SA), and Twilight Cove and several other locations in WA.

Many years of observations have shown us where whales are found, but we still don't know why they occur in certain locations and not others. What conditions attract them to particular places? How does the present distribution of this now endangered species compare with its pre-whaling distribution? Can we predict which areas will be important to right whales as the population increases? Shedding light on these sorts of questions helps to discover the habitat needs of the species, and provides information necessary for effective conservation planning. A clear understanding of what southern right whales need for calving habitat is important so that we do not inadvertently limit their access to breeding areas by making them unsuitable through our various coastal activities.



3 whales

Our study aims to establish whether there are links between where southern right whales are found and the environmental features of those areas, and what influences whale movements within a calving ground. We have three study sites within calving grounds at Pt Ann, Head of Bight and Warrnambool, and will be also be using data provided by other researches. Within the study areas right whale

locations and movements were mapped from shore-based positions, and a range of associated information collected. We monitored environmental conditions regularly so that whale responses to factors such as swell direction could be assessed. Whale positions will be integrated with maps of habitat features such as depth and bottom type using a geographical information systems. By examining the location of whales in relation to such features, we hope to be able to discover which are important in the choice of calving areas and in the way whales use calving areas. The findings of the study will contribute to a better understanding of the environment southern right whales need for successful breeding, and will feed into decisions about how best to protect and manage these important areas.

The research is a PhD study through Deakin University and funded by Federal Department of Environment, Woodside Energy, Warrnambool City Council. WA in-kind support has been provided by CALM, and WA data and advice has been provided by John Bannister and Richard Holst.

Thanks to Rebecca for this report. Editor



Mapping the whales at Pt Ann

Spring weekend at Twertup planned

The Friends committee is planing a weekend at Twertup in the spring— probably September or early October.

It will be the sort of weekend where you will be free to follow your own particular interest— walking, bird spotting, wildflower discovery, geology investigation, or whatever you wish—in the company of like-minded people.

There will also be the chance for the artistic among us (or those who would like to learn) to do some drawing and painting under the leadership of a Friends' artist.

More details in the **AUGUST** edition of the Narpulungup News.

President's report—AGM April 2005

Nathan McQuoid President 2003-2005

This report marks my last AGM as President. I have enjoyed the role of President of the Friends of Fitzgerald River National Park. However, work, family and building commitments have mounted and it is with regret that I will not be re-nominating.

2004 has been a year of low key yet profound influence for the National Park and The Friends.

The significant issues have been the increase in activities following the announcement of the go-ahead for BHP Billiton's RNO Nickel mine at Bandalup Hill, the continued growth of Gondwana Link, the increase in mammal fauna noticed in the National Park, a fire that impacted private land National Park and unallocated crown land in the Calyerup Rocks area, the decline and photographing in the wild for the first time of the ground parrot, the release of the South Coast Natural Resource Management Strategy Southern Prospects 2, and its Investment Plan, the implementation of the Biosphere Ecological Research Review project, and indeed the Biosphere map project was commenced.

BHP Billiton, Ravensthorpe Nickel Operations

The announcement of the mine go-ahead just prior to last year's AGM has resulted in greatly increased activity in the eastern part of the National Park. Of particular note is the opening of the new Ravensthorpe Airport as a spin-off from the project which will bring many more people to the area and the National Park.

The Friends participate in this project by our inclusion on the Community Liaison Committee. This committee continues to be an ideal place to bring issues concerning the conservation of the National Park and the other significant conservation estate of the district, and the opportunity to share issues regarding the National Park with other members of the community including Shire Councillors.

Gondwana Link

The Gondwana Link program continues to grow and receive widespread acclaim and, importantly, increasing support. More properties have been secured, more people from around the world have been visiting and as part of their introduction to the area they are brought to the western section of Fitzgerald River National Park as a matter of routine. Keith Bradby will elaborate on the activities and successes of the program on the day of the AGM.

National Park Operations

Several issues including the increase in mammal fauna, the impacts of a wildfire in November 2004, and new information on Ground Parrots have been significant during the twelve months. These will be expanded upon by CALM Staff on the day of the AGM. It is pleasing to see the development and management of biological matters becoming operational routine for Park management.

Southern Prospects 2

The development of this Natural Resource management Strategy for the south coast region has been a boon for the protection, management and improved understanding of the nature of the region. It is at a stage where an investment plan has just been drafted and is going through the approval

process to guide the best use of around \$45 million over the next four years. This significant investment will be implemented in an integrated manner across the themes of Biodiversity, Land, Marine and Coastal, Water, Cultural Heritage and Capacity Building. This represents significant opportunities to improve the sustainability of the whole land and seascape and to begin, in an operational sense, to manage more holistically. It will have benefits for the future of the Fitzgerald River National Park by its actions.

Biosphere Map

It is particularly pleasing to see the Biosphere Map project up and running. Congratulations to Vivienne, Gil, Lotteries WA and the Shire of Ravensthorpe to get this underway. It will fill a large void in the amount and quality of information available about the nature of the Biosphere and make it available to the interested traveller.

The Future

The impacts on the Park of an increased human presence resulting from the BHP Billiton Bandalup nickel mine and the associated flow-ons will likely be considerable. We will need to be ready to support the increased management, community liaison and infrastructure needed to help the Park and CALM cope with the increases.

Gondwana Link will continue to build its profile and in doing so introduce more conservation minded people to the National Park and surrounds. We need to continue to support this novel project and to assist its development east of the Park.

The Southern Prospects 2 Regional Strategy offers opportunities to significantly improve the conservation of nature and we should make the most of the opportunities it presents to aid the development of projects, particularly where they relate to aspects of National Park management that include such things as the management of invasive organisms and biological inventory.

The role of Local Authorities as multi-use reserve managers is being supported by the regional strategy and we should support their involvement and improved resourcing where possible.

The continuing role on the RNO community liaison committee for the Friends is vital. It allows discussion of issues of environmental protection to be on the agenda of the groups involved and I would be happy to continue my role in that capacity if the Friends executive think that worthwhile.

Our focus should be on providing support to the other groups and agencies working at improving environmental protection and sustainability, given the developing climate of significant investment in the area.

Promotions in the Narpulungup News

At the November 2004 committee meeting a motion was passed regarding advertising events not run by the FFRNP. It states:

That promotions to be included in the Narpulungup News be provided by the promoter, vetted by the committee, and a charge of \$20 be made for inclusion.

The Friends are happy to include A4 or smaller leaflets in the Narpulungup News. They should be provided in time for the committee to consider them before publication of the paper.

Committee profiles

Andy Chapman - President

Andy is a zoologist by trade and has had an association with the FRNP, both professional and as a Park user, since 1970. In 1985-86, along with Ken Newbey, he conducted a biological survey of the park, an experience he describes as 'like lifting the lid on a treasure chest'. Presently he literally keeps an eye on the Park, living just north of Annie's Peak at the eastern end. Andy was a foundation member of the FRNP Association. (9838 1149)

Gil Craig - Vice-President

Gil has spent most of the last 15 years on a sheep farm near Ravensthorpe. Her work and joy are botanical surveys, mainly searching for rare flora or preparing vegetation maps in the Ravensthorpe region for mining companies and government departments. After years of not finding any "new" species (Ken Newbey had always been there first!), Gil has found four in the last year! Riding a mountain bike (often with Andy and Rosey) around the many tracks near Ravensthorpe keeps the heart pumping. (9838 1071)

Angela Sanders—Treasurer

Angela has lived on the south coast for 12 years working mainly in the field of biological surveys and assessment of bushland for conservation values. Her involvement with the area began in the mid 80's when a group of local people presented "The Bush comes to the City" seminar at Murdoch University. She was impressed and fascinated by the seminar which covered the early days of the Fitzgerald Biosphere so when an opportunity popped up in 1993 to work with CALM in the biosphere she jumped at it and has been here ever since. The survey and community work that she did during the 90s with CALM was a great experience and it is heartening to see that the animals are increasing in number since the days before fox control. She has been involved with the Friends since the mid 90s and has been the treasurer for the past 2 years. At present she is helping the Ongerup Community develop a mallee fowl research and interpretive centre which will open at the end of the year. (9846 4173)

Nathan McQuoid - Committee member

Nathan has worked in the field of nature conservation for around twenty years. He has spent two thirds of that time associated with the south coast and in particular the Fitzgerald Biosphere area. He has developed a broad knowledge of the ecosystems of the region and in particular the vegetation communities, most closely the eucalypts that dominate the landscape— in fact he has had a Eucalypt endemic to FRNP named after him. His experience has been in National Park management and more recently as the Greening Australia south coast region manager involved in the Gondwana link project and the regional natural resource management process with the South Coast Regional Initiative Planning Team (SCRIPT). He is the immediate past President of the Friends of Fitzgerald River National Park, currently represents the community as a member of the SCRIPT management committee and the Friends of FRNP on BHP Billiton's Ravensthorpe Nickel Operations Community Liaison Committee. (0429 812 144)



Anne Gadsby—Secretary

Anne came to live in Bremer Bay after working for many years in the school nursing service. She is a keen member of Birds Australia and has been heavily involved in the Western Ground Parrot and Hooded Plover surveys and recovery projects. (9837 4063) Email: anngad@wn.com.au

Val Davies—committee member

Val has had a life-long interest in nature, particularly birds, but that has now extended to any living thing that shares our planet.. She was a member of the Kwinana-Rockingham branch of the WA Naturalists club for over 20 years, several as chairperson. After she moved to Albany she became a member of the Albany Community Environment Centre (of which she is now a life member) and was convenor until moving to Bremer Bay in 2005.

She was also the leader of a Bush Ranger Unit at Albany High School which she absolutely loved as she worked with youth in a wide range of conservation activities. She is now a teacher at the Bremer Bay Primary School and hopes to involve her students in something similar. (9837 4270)

Rosemary Jaspar - Committee member

Rosey lives near Ravensthorpe with her irrepressible (her word!) husband Ron, in a house they built themselves, amongst Salmon Gums, Yates and Jams - and she finds considerable delight in that. She works with CALM as the Land for Wildlife person in the Lake King, Ravensthorpe and Esperance region and that puts her in touch with people who enjoy their bush - another delight. She first visited the FRNP in 1979 and has been involved with the Friends since about that time. In the early 80s she was part of a group which campaigned to save the bush along Old Ongerup Rd from the bulldozer. The Ground Parrot was a key argument then - she knows its Latin name still - so it has been great to see the Ground Parrot Project get going, as well as to have the importance of the northern FRNP for fauna more widely recognised. (9846 1640)

Priscilla Broadbent—Newsletter editor

Priscilla has lived in Bremer Bay with her husband, Ken in a stone house built by themselves, for the past 13 years. In a previous incarnation she lived in Perth and Mt Barker and was a teacher and lecturer in Speech and Drama. She wears several volunteer hats—Telecentre worker, Townscape chairperson and church member as well as editing the Narpulungup News. She was both President and Secretary of the FRNPA in the early 90s. She and Ken (also a past secretary of the FRNPA) joined the Association while they still lived in Perth and holidayed in Bremer Bay. They were then thought to be mythological beings as they never appeared at any functions. (9837 4004)

Mark Jeffery—Twertup Building committee rep.

Mark lives on a farm on the coast near Bremer Bay with his partner and young daughter. He is interested in all things natural, and is an enthusiastic surfer. He has been responsible for looking after the Twertup buildings for some years. (9836 6023)

Reports

Following are some points from the presentations given at the AGM:

Western Ground parrot recovery project—Brent Barrett

The team and volunteers are now working in the Cape Arid National park.

Seven survey trips were conducted in the Fitzgerald Biosphere between March and July 2004. These resulted in a total of 76 field days and were attended by 41 volunteers and CALM staff. Volunteers provided the project with 2,800 hours of time.

During this period 18,000 ha were physically surveyed for WGP occupation through listening surveys. This resulted in 1000 listening sites. The results indicated that only 2,000 ha of the identified suitable habitat contains populations of WGPs. There is still a further 5,000 ha of possibly suitable habitat that remains unsearched due to logistical difficulties including limited or no access and onset of winter rains (dieback risk).

During these surveys five populations were located. Of these three were true populations; one may contain birds recently displaced from a historically known population, the second was historically known and the third is a new population not previously identified. Two birds were observed during the field season. One was flushed during a walking survey and another was sighted while recordings were being made of WGP calls.

Gondwana Link—Keith Bradby

Gondwana Link - from Kalgoorlie to the Karri. This is the vision held by the Gondwana Link project. Working with SCRIPT, the Wilderness Society and local Noongar people and others, they hope to create a corridor, or link, of unbroken bushland stretching across 500 km of some of the most biologically significant country in Australia. In the Fitzgerald—Stirlings area 4500 ha is under conservation ownership at the moment.

Fundraising is progressing reasonably well with local, national and significant international interest being shown.

Expect to see an art focus on the Great Southern in the 2006 Perth International Festival.

Fitzgerald Biosphere Review—Paula Deegan

This review instigated by the Friends is now almost complete. A thorough job has been done in collating and placing all available relevant references, both published and unpublished, on a database. The categories in which the 400 entries have been filed are -

Geology
Soils
Water
Marine and Coastal;
Vegetation and Flora
Fauna
Fire
General and other.

The database will be available on the Fitzgerald Biosphere Group website -

www.albanygateway.com.au/Member/FGB2

Book review

A copy of Geology of Western Australia's National Parks: geology for everyone by Peter Lane was kindly presented to the Friends by the author to add to our library at Twertup. Here is what our Friends geologist, Bill Moir, had to say about it.

I would give it the thumbs up!

Most of the other publications I have seen tend to be somewhat dry and full of technical jargon that quickly puts people off. A certain amount of jargon is unavoidable, of course, but I notice that Peter usually takes the effort to explain the technical terms in the text as he goes along. So much better, I think, than the reader having to look up a glossary at the back of a book.

The book is really more than just a description of the geology of the Parks, as it also explains in simple terms the events that have shaped our world. In addition, it would supplement an introductory course to geology. A very good addition to the Twertup library.

Sincere thanks to Peter and Bill.

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Natures News - Fitzgerald River National Park

Peter Wilkins Senior Ranger (April 2005)

Once again autumn has brought along some spectacular weather to enjoy. It's even brought a good drop of rain which has topped up a few dams and rainwater tanks.

The park didn't receive much damage overall from the downpour at the beginning of April, however the huge seas that accompanied the weather did cause serious damage to the entry / exit track at the Point Ann (eastern) end of Trigelow Beach. This track is now closed as it is untrafficable to vehicles. The only access and exit for Trigelow Beach is from Gordon Inlet.

Prior to the rain the vegetation within the park was looking very stressed with some dying through lack of moisture. However always quick to respond to rain I noticed a few Qualup Bells flowering on the weekend. Hopefully we'll see a good wildflower show later on.

Of course the coming of autumn also means the coming of whales, they should start to arrive within the next three weeks. (They are already here! Ed)

The park didn't avoid the inevitable wildfire, two occurred early in the season, one burning approximately 5500 ha of park and farmland near the Quiss Road Ranger Station and the other a much smaller fire to the west of Hamersley Drive. Many thanks to FESA, the Bushfire Brigade volunteers and CALM who contributed to those fires.

There are plans to implement six prescribed burns in the park this autumn and winter. The Department is currently reviewing these.

The first major achievement for this year has been the re-alignment of a management track around the Bell Track dieback infestation. This will further reduce the risk of spreading the disease in the park.

Major projects that will occur over the coming financial year are the continued re-gravelling of Pabelup Drive, the replacement of the Quoin Head board walk, the redesign of the East Mylies carpark and the replacement of some of the BBQs. You will also see a new park pamphlet come out in the coming months.

The Western Shield baiting continues as per normal and the autumn fauna trapping program will commence the second week after the school holidays. Last years results were fantastic with lots of dibblers and a few of the threatened red-tailed phascogale and heath mice being caught. I'm looking forward to this year's program, as are the year eight students from Ravensthorpe and Jerramungup Schools who will get to see some of these native animals.

There are two groups associated with the FRNP - the Fitzgerald River National Park Advisory Committee and the Fitzgerald River National Park Fire Working Group. Both are made up of community and Shire representatives. The function of these groups is to provide communication link between the Shires, the community and CALM. Issues relevant to each group are brought up and discussed at regular meetings; the outcomes provide CALM with advice regarding park management issues. If you wish to raise an issue relating to the above committees please contact either your local Ranger or Shire to find out who your committee representative is.

Hope to see you enjoying the Park someday.



Twertup needs



Some of the **kitchen chairs** at Twertup have definitely seen better days. If you have any chairs in reasonable condition which you are willing to donate would you ring any member of the committee and we will work out a way to get them there. We also need more pre-loved **tea towels**.

Twertup cleaning roster:

May: Mark & Vivienne	November: Barbara Miller
June: Ron & Rosey	December: Andy
July: Ken & Priscilla	January: volunteers needed
August: Ron and Helen	February: " "
September: Anne	March: AGM
October: Val & Steven	

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