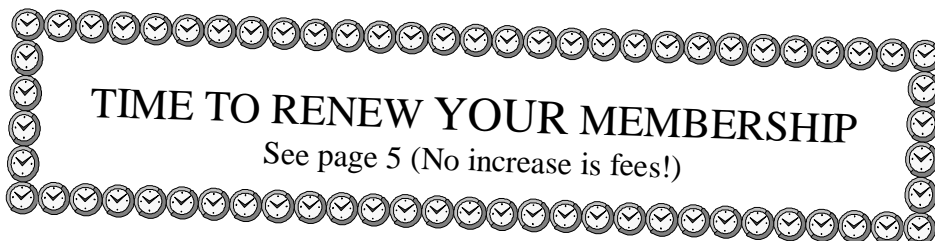


Narpulungup News

May
2007 No 2

from the Friends of the Fitzgerald River National Park



TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

See page 5 (No increase in fees!)

AGM well attended

25 members were present at Twertup on March 17th for the AGM and preceding presentations from John Bannister and DEC staff, Maria Lee and Malcom Grant. Andy Chapman's President's Report is on page 2.

The committee for 2007-8 is listed on page 6 with contact details. We welcome any feedback from members; in particular we would love to receive Letters to the Editor of the Narpulungup News.

Senior Ranger's report to the AGM (March 2007)

Fires have caused enormous damage to very sensitive habitat, including areas where there are Western Ground Parrots. There has also been damage to infra-structure, vegetation and aesthetics. Not only have the rangers fought fires in FRNP, but have attended other parks. In general:-

- Pabelup Drive works have been completed.
- BBQs have been completed and look good although they don't work too well!
- Steps were built at Quoin Head in April, but were burnt later, and will now be replaced.
- 4-mile Beach hybrid toilet seems to be working well.
- The Bush-Rangers group from Jerramungup are helping at West Mt Barren.
- There are new guide posts, but advisory speed signs have been removed
- East Mt. Barren re-development has been funded.
- Belting at Trigelow beach has been washed away and there is no access or exit at the northern end of the beach
- The Management Review Funding was unsuccessful.
- Ongoing Visitor Risk Management (VRMs) hope to keep the visitors safe.
- There is funding available from DEC following a VRM at Twertup.
- Of concern An internet advertisement on a 4WD site suggests a visit to Twin Bays!

Busy bee to be held at Twertup on May 12th & 13th.

HELP NEEDED -please turn up when you can!

Some work has to be done to our field studies centre including:-

Repairs to the ceiling following the 2006 bee infestation
Extension to front steps which are too narrow to be safe
Handrail to be built on both sides of steps.
Levelling of drain cover at rear of building.

Contact Mark Jeffrey on 9836 6023 for things to bring.

Next issue: August

President's report 2006

I recall this time last year at the completion of my first year's presidency I stated that I felt that the 'Friends' presidency was an honourable position to hold. I still feel this way but I have become aware that involvement has now become a lot more challenging – in fact I know feel more challenged than ever before in my 27 years involvement with this national park. I shall return to the issue of challenges.

For now let us review the year that has just passed. Without a doubt our 'flagship' project for 2006 was the release of the biosphere map that Vivien Hillyer produced for 'Friends'. The map speaks for itself and I don't need to further praise it – but in the present company I would like to thank both Vivienne and Mark for their dedication to this achievement. We have also completed the sampling for the river water quality project. In short, four rivers in the national park have been sampled monthly at eight points and the results are directly comparable to data obtained 23 years ago. We have had two members' field activities; searching for the sand plain sun orchid at Jacup and searching for nesting Carnaby's cockatoos in Cocanarup timber reserve. We have also participated in market days in both Hopetoun and Bremer Bay as well as reprinting our famous FRNP tea towels. Natasha is updating the walk trail leaflet for the walk to Roes Rock, as well as leaflets for orchid, eucalypt and banksia identification and park saline river systems and geology. Natasha also applied for a National Australia Bank volunteer award on our behalf.

Your committee met twice at structured meetings throughout the year though much business was transacted by email and some protocols for decision making by this means were established. Main issues addressed were:

- Maintaining and promoting membership
- Hooded Plover management – Anne gave a presentation to the Fitzgerald Advisory Committee
- Angela undertook an assessment as to whether our public liability insurance is adequate and value for money
- Lack of government support for some conservation initiatives; in particular it is evident that although government will support new programs e.g. the state biodiversity conservation initiative, there is a tendency to let the basic services which support new initiatives languish. A case in point is inadequate support for maintaining ranger staffing levels.
- How and where to launch the biosphere map as well as map storage, merchandising and accounting
- Structure and function of community consultative committees for FRNP

A map sub committee met twice to address technical matters pertaining to production of the biosphere map.

I commenced with the issue of challenges and now I return to it. The main challenges facing us as I see them are:

- Implications for the park and 'Friends' as Hopetoun becomes a town of 5000 people most of whom will be cashed up and equipped with the latest outdoor recreational equipment. I know that government has not adequately planned for this eventuality and BHP Billiton must accept some responsibility by underestimating their permanent workforce requirements. To their credit

they have engaged environmental advocacy group 'Leave no Trace' to prepare an environmental awareness program for employees out of working hours activities. I also think we should see demographic change as an opportunity and challenge rather than a threat.

- Climatic change, particularly as it pertains to possibly extended fire seasons and severity.
- Encouraging DEC operational managers to ensure their activities are always consistent with existing and developing scientific and technical knowledge.

Before concluding I would like to thank the committee and all other members and DEC staff who have supported the 'Friends' throughout the year. The committee members in particular have all been a pleasure to be involved with. Thank you all for the opportunity to represent you last year.

Visit from an 'old Friend' ...

Some Friends members on the south coast were delighted to be visited recently by Perth Friend, John Matthews.

John worked hard during working bees at Twertup in the 1990s and he and his wife hosted our Association Perth Christmas party a couple of times in their lovely house in Karrinyup. He also donated the large copper urn which is used for hot water on the woodstove at Twertup.

John had a mild stroke 5 years ago which affects his speech slightly, but he can drive and loves travelling around to old haunts. Good on you, John - it was good to catch up with you.

.. and welcome to new Friends

Allison & Geoff Barr - Swanbourne (& Bremer Bay)

Wendy Davies and family- Bremer Bay

Sharon and Craig Luscombe - Big Grove

Maureen Ramsey - Bunbury

Sharon and Craig Luscombe, Albany;

Brian Young & Maxine Crespín, -Swanbourne (& Bremer Bay)

The possible effect of seismic activity on whales

Dr John Banister was asked if the seismic activity associated with the search for oil which is occurring off the south coast would affect the whales.

We know nothing about the reaction of Right whales, but we do know quite a lot about the bowheads (which are the Northern equivalent) in the Arctic.

In 1994 some interesting work was done which is more than likely to apply to the right whale. There were various responses to seismic activity. If it was close by, the surface activity was dive time were shorter and there were fewer blows. Subtle changes occurred in the whales' behaviour. Some responses were seen about 3-8 km from where the seismic activity was happening. There was some partial and some total avoidance where some whales left the observation area. The effect goes off after about an hour then they come back to what they were doing before. They would have to be very close for it to have any real effect.

The people working down here are going to be 50 -24 km off shore. Within 10 km there might be some complaints, 24 km should not be a worry especially if it does not happen during the breeding season, but between December to May.

Dr John Banister talks about Southern Right whales

This is part of an adapted transcript of the talk given prior to the AGM in March 2007. My apologies for any errors! -Ed.

I am going to talk about 3 species of whales which come to the coast of WA - the Blue whale, Right whale and Humpback. I will start by talking about the Southern Right whale. It is a baleen whale: these have no teeth very large and feed on smaller species. Others—tooth whales, some very large, and some small—feed on fish and squid.

They were called 'right' because they were the right whales to catch- large, plenty of oil and the baleen used for women's corsets among other things.

They have lumps and bumps on their heads, don't have a dorsal fin, have a double blow and look like a log! They usually visit in June-October. They used to be caught by harpooning. When they were harpooned they would dive to try to escape. When they came to the surface they were lanced. It was a dangerous and profitable business. The carcass was towed in by rowing boat. The whalers 'peeled' the blubber off; this was boiled to produce the oil. The unused part of their carcass was discarded. The Americans came in the nineteenth century and caught Southern Right whales off the south coast, many on this part. An 1838 log book exists which recorded number caught and number of barrels of oil produced.

My first photo was taken in 1967 off Leighton Beach. Then they were quite rare. They come very close to the coast. People think they are going to strand, but it is where they want to be. They give birth to their young in warmish waters in late winter/early spring. The calves are small and grey when first born, but they grow very quickly. They stay on coast till spring, then go south to feed in summer months - the only time they feed.

Our waters on the south coast are relatively barren which is why they are so clear. This means we can get good photos. Mothers and calves tend to stay apart from the other whales, then gradually they start to parade up and down, and by September/October they are taking quite long journeys. They are weaned 2-3 months later. Sometimes they come back together the following year for the mother to 'show its yearling where it was born'. Occasionally we see adults together; groups of males and young 'surface active animals' which are playing around and having a good time, interacting with each other. Females with calves don't do this—they just look after calves!

Sometimes the sea appears to boil—5-6 males may be chasing a female which generally chooses the male with the largest testes! This does not usually occur where you get mothers and calves. We occasionally see mating round July-September, but this may not be real mating which produces pregnancy.

Most of my work has been surveying as far as Twilight Cove and on into S.A. Originally this was with John Bell (*before his tragic death in a plane crash*). From Cape Leeuwin—Israelite Bay from 1976-1982 then later we went into SA. Bight. The animals were moving along the coast. Sightings are made 3 times a year - end of July, end of August, end September/October. There are aggregations of whales on coast west of Cape Arid and off the long stretch of sand dunes east of Israelite Bay and in the Bight. Pt Anne/Charles are also important.

As hoped they are increasing in numbers. 1993-2006 going up at about 7%. ie they double every 10 years. In the Southern hemisphere when I first came to Australia they were extremely

rare, had been so for nearly 100 years. Originally there were probably 50-70,000. Then about 1770 along came the Americans, the British and the French who from about 1820—1840 took an enormous number so by 1850 there were below 10,000. They were easy to catch and very important because of their product. Stocks were tremendously depleted. In 1920s it was estimated there were only 60 cow/calves in the S. hemisphere. They only just existed till the 1950s, then gradually started to come up with a dip in 1970s. In 1960s something else was going on, there was a great whack down before they began to come up again. This was because the Soviets were taking large numbers quite illegally and no one knew about it for about 10 years. This caused the numbers to go down; not so far that they couldn't recover—they are now recovering quite well. They didn't take many on this WA coast, but they took a lot around Tristan da Cunha and such places for a long time. We didn't know why they hadn't recovered more than they did, and this was the reason.

From the air we take photographs of them -in particular their heads- and on their heads they have these weird looking warty things, coloured white. They are actually grey but they get crustacean parasites on them. They have great masses of these things and they live on the crenulations on the head. The patterns on each animal are different just like your fingerprints, so if you take enough photographs you can identify each animal over the years. We get wonderful photographs of the animals underwater here because the waters are so clear.

We take these pictures and make a catalogue of them. S. America has been doing this for about 5 years longer than we have—started in 1970. By looking at each one you can do what I call a 'ball and chain' diagram. In 1976 we started this program—every time you see a cow with a calf you put various symbols on the chart. (*We were shown several examples.*) One in 1976 with a calf, came back in 1984 without a calf, for some reason came back in 1987 again without a calf. It has been back every 3 years since with a calf. On average they come back every 3 years. This (*photo*) is a nice one. This is a yearling 1978, came back on its own in '81. Came back again in '87 with its first calf and has been back every 3 years since with a calf. That's what you do by looking at their heads and taking photographs.

They tend to come back to the same place. We colour code SA and WA. This (*photo*) is the animal at Triggs in 1976 it has a pattern at the back—sort of birthmark. 1984 with another calf, and 3 years later—same animal. Some are occasionally partial albino when they are calves, but tend to go grey after about a year. This yearling - you can see the pattern on its head. Here is the same animal in 1987 with its first calf, then every 3 years with a calf, then in 1996 photographed by the Japanese in the Antarctic. It has been coming back every 3 years since then.

Just to show you there are some animals down here we know something about these are 3 I chose out of the catalogue—all in Pt Anne, Pt Charles, Doubtful Island Bay, Twin Bays; mostly every 3 years. Sometimes they go off to Israelite Bay for a wander.

Once we had our records on cards. When you have a catalogue of 300 animals it is hard. So we got in a computer whiz who put a grid over the photo of the animals head and this paints in where the patches are. It turns the photo into digitised picture that goes into the program and will match, and in 20 secs tell you which from the 4000 recorded animals are the 10 most likely matches. You can do it literally in 20 seconds.

(*More on the other types of whales in the next newsletter Ed.*)

Department of Environment and Conservation

Government of Western Australia

Media Statement 20/04/2007

13 km fence to save species from devastating plant disease

Construction has begun on a 13 kilometre fence in an ambitious project to contain a *Phytophthora cinnamomi* infestation in the Fitzgerald River National Park.

Phytophthora cinnamomi is an introduced water mould that attacks plant roots, stopping the uptake of water and nutrients which results in death. The disease is known as *Phytophthora* dieback.

Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) *Phytophthora* dieback Project Officer Maria Lee said the vermin-proof fence would surround the entire 265-hectare Bell Track infestation.

"Construction of the fence is just one of the strategies to contain the infestation within the current micro-catchment and stop it spreading further into the park," she said.

"The 2.4-metre high fence will have netting trenched into the ground to a depth of 50 centimetres.

"This will prevent animals moving infested soil, one of the factors contributing to the spread of the infestation in the park."

The fencing project is one element of a larger *Saving our Species* dieback strategy being implemented by the Department to manage the deadly plant disease.

"Before starting construction on the fence more than 1000 soil samples were taken along the proposed fence alignment," Ms Lee said.

"This was to ensure all infested soil was within the proposed fence area and that on-ground operations would not spread *Phytophthora cinnamomi* to uninfested areas.

"The Centre for *Phytophthora* Science Management at Murdoch University extracted and analysed the DNA from soil samples to assess the presence of *Phytophthora*.

"Three positive results meant realigning the proposed fence and re-sampling until we were certain the fence line would be outside the entire infestation.

"Completion of the sampling and construction of the fence will be a significant milestone towards successful management of this infestation."

Other *Saving our Species* dieback projects underway at Bell Track are surface and sub-surface hydrological studies, soil and epidemiology research and a high intensity phosphite application trial.

Saving our Species is a two-year, \$15 million State Government initiative designed to boost efforts to protect Western Australia's unique biodiversity.

Although the Fitzgerald River National Park infestation is currently contained within a micro-catchment along

Bell Track, one of the disease fronts is very close to entering the Copper Mine creek drainage line.

Unless it is stopped, *Phytophthora* will spread into this and at least one other adjoining drainage line and ultimately into tens

of thousands of hectares of the park.

This could cause the mass collapse of ecosystems and significant interference with important ecological processes within the park.

Friends' involvement

Maria Lee and Malcom Grant gave a comprehensive presentation on the fence project to members at the AGM in March.

This fencing project to keep animals out and possible use of a membrane to prevent the seepage of water carrying the mould is believed to be the first of its kind in the world.

About 30 staff will probably be needed to flush the animals out of the enclosed area and this is where the FFRNP members may be possibly be helping with the project..

Tammar and Black-gloved wallabies in the Fitzgerald - Stirlings corridor

This project, aimed at determining the distribution, relative abundance and habitat and remnant use of Tammar Wallabies (*Macropus eugenii derbianus*) and Black-gloved (also known as Western Brush or Brush-tailed) Wallabies (*Macropus irma*), is underway in the Fitz-Stirlings. The project is being undertaken by the Gondwana Link's Knowledge Connection Project, in collaboration with Greening Australia. Sandra Gilfillan is the Project Officer and will be carrying out monitoring of the two Wallaby species in this area over the next 3 years.

The two Wallaby species were chosen as one of six Key Conservation Targets of the Functional Landscape Plan in the Fitz-Stirlings area, which will help to guide prioritisation of restoration works. The Tammar Wallaby is a medium sized wallaby, about a third to half the size of a Western Grey Kangaroo. It is kangaroo-like in appearance and holds its forearms apart, especially when hopping. It has dark, grizzled greyish-brown fur above with reddish (rufous) tinges. Tammar has a white cheek stripe of variable intensity to beneath the eye, accentuated above by a blackish area between the nostril and eye, and a dark midline of the forehead. The tail is thickish and a similar colour to the body.

The Black-gloved Wallaby is gunmetal grey in colour with a brownish tinge to the neck and back; the chest is grey and the belly buff. It has a distinct white facial stripe; the ears are blackish outside and whitish within and have a clear black tip. Animals have distinct black gloves and toes. The tail is long and has a brush at the extremity. Males and females are the same size, with head and body length of about 1.2 m.

The Black-gloved Wallaby is closer in size to a Western Grey Kangaroo than the Tammar Wallaby but can be distinguished from Western Greys by the distinctive black ears, white facial stripe, much shorter forelimbs and brush tail.

Sandra would love to hear from anyone who knows they have either of these wallabies on their properties within the Fitz-Stirlings corridor.

Contact: Karl Hansom 9842 0005 email khansom@gawa.org.au

This Knowledge Connection project is funded through Great Southern Arc with support from Bush Heritage Australia and Lotterywest.

Carnaby's Cockatoo Nest Count, October 27th & 28th.

This year the count will be at the Jim Dunn Reserve not far from last year's site.

Did you know?

Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo (short billed white tailed black-cockatoo) roam the South Coast in search on food in large flocks, but the reality is that their populations have declined by half in the last 50 years! The Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo utilise two very different habitat types throughout their yearly cycle. They nest (breed) inland in hollows of old Eucalypts which take up to 150 years develop to a useable size and they feed on Proteaceous species such as hakea, dryandra, grevillea and banksia.



As our landscape becomes more fragmented, the distance between these two habitat types is increasing and this means the male has to fly further to find adequate food supplies for his family. As he is the sole food supplier while the female incubates the egg and later the chick, they further he has to fly to the food source means less food for the chick and ultimately reduces its chance of survival. The Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo recovery project is aiming to identify nesting and it's associated feeding habitat throughout the South Coast region, if you have Carnaby's Cockatoo visiting your property between July and December there is a good chance they are nesting or feeding there.

We need your help!

If you would like more information on how you can help these beautiful and raucous birds, please contact:

Raana Scott, Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Recovery Project.
ph: 9842 0011
or email r.scott@birdsaustralia.com.au

World recognition for Bremer Bay Bremer's backyard – birds, bush and beasts

You are invited to join local enthusiasts, project officers, and Greening Australia staff to discover what makes Bremer Bay one of only 34 World recognised Biodiversity Hotspots!

This opportunity will allow you to expand your knowledge and find out how you can become involved in a range of local biodiversity activities.

The morning begins with a traditional Noongar welcome, followed by talks, demonstrations and a guided walk about the wonders of Bremer. This includes stimulating talks about local eucalypts, mammals and species monitoring projects, and identifying and growing local flora in your garden. After lunch, join an informal stroll guided by guest speakers, taking time to discover more treasures. The day is wrapped up with the opportunity of a bird spotting activity with a local enthusiast.



When: Wednesday 23rd May, 9.30am -2.00pm

Where: Bremer Bay Telecentre

Bookings/enquiries: contact: Karl Hansom,
Greening Australia, 9842 0005
or email khansom@gawa.org.au
Registrations close: Friday 18th May

This position is funded by SCRIPT (the South Coast NRM Group) through the Australian and State Government support of the Natural Landcare Programme.

An art exhibition ...

is to be held at the Mundaring Art Centre in November / December 2007, and there is a South Coast theme. FFRNP member Louise Lodge is preparing her entry, which is an interpretation of the S. Coast environment. FFRNP has supported her application for funding.

FFRNP MEMBERSHIP FORM:

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

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☐

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	Garry Carr.	RMB Murray Rd Gairdner. Phone:- 9837 1022.

Other email addresses from secretary by request

Twertup cleaning roster

MAY	Everyone. Twertup Weekend.
JUNE	Mark and Vivienne.
JULY	Natasha and Mark
AUGUST	****
SEPTEMBER	Anne.

OCTOBER	Barbara
NOVEMBER	Gil
DECEMBER	Ken and Priscilla.
JANUARY	****
FEBRUARY	****
MARCH	AGM
****	Volunteers, please

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