

Narpulungup *News*

2004 No 2
June

from the Friends of the Fitzgerald River National Park



Encouraging AGM and working bee

The AGM at Twertup attracted more than a quorum of members, ranging from youngest, 2 y.o. Laika Jeffrey, to our honorary life member, octogenarian Kaye Vaux, and including a new member, Kevin Giles from Kulin, and two visitors from the Western Ground Parrot Recovery Team, Brent Barrett and Shapelle Mc Nee.

Nathan McQuoid presided over a new-style meeting in accordance with our revised constitution and Ken Broadbent took the chair for the election of new office bearers, but there were no changes. There was one change to the committee. (see page 5)

Brent brought us up to date on the Western Ground Parrot situation, but had to leave early for the evening 'listen'.

A small group had a BBQ and stayed the night. There were several people up early to take photos, but the main purpose of the day was a Busy Bee with the Rangers who brought brush cutters, chain saws and paint. Kevin Giles had a very practical introduction to his membership. He and Mark Jeffery, re-pointed an area of deteriorating brickwork, and then they were seen on the roof, looking for "Angela's Leak". At one stage, Kevin was on the roof pouring water on Mark to identify the exact spot. This was found and fixed.

Meanwhile, Angela and Anne were doing the inventory of materials kept at Twertup which had been requested by the accountant, and Kaye was making sure there were cups of tea for everyone. The Short Walk posts were re-painted by Anne and Mitchell, Gary's son, and the rangers' cutters and other weapons of brush reduction could be heard as they tidied the tracks. Eventually, we left for home after an enjoyable and productive weekend.



Red Alert

If your subscription to the FFRNP is overdue this may be your last newsletter. You will find a reminder note enclosed. We value you membership, but cannot afford subsidies!

A membership form will be found on page 5.

Next issue: August

FRIENDS OF FITZGERALD RIVER NATIONAL PARK

PRESIDENTS REPORT

AGM MARCH 27 2004

This report comes at the end of a significant year for the Friends of Fitzgerald River National Park, with successful community activities and contentious issues unfolding.

Fitzgerald River National Park faces a period of change in its surrounding communities that will both aid and impact on its future and security.

The Friends are well placed to guide the future by their involvement with several initiatives unfolding in the region.

BHP Billiton, Ravensthorpe Nickel Operations.

The mine was given the go-ahead at the BHP Billiton Board meeting on March 18th in Melbourne.

This development is one of the most momentous issues ever faced by the community of Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun and perhaps, most significantly, its natural surrounds.

The Friends have a place at the table on the Community Liaison Committee and with that comes the opportunity to be firmly amongst the representation of the community's interests, and importantly the ability to advocate for the consideration and conservation of the National Park and the surrounding natural lands.

A particularly worthwhile outcome has been the opportunity to develop strong relationships with other members of the committee including Shire of Ravensthorpe members. This provides a great platform to help these people to gain better understanding of the area's significance and the need for its conservation.

This committee is one of the most rewarding tasks I have been involved in and I look forward to continued involvement.

Gondwana Link.

Gondwana Link is now moving and building at a rapid rate. The issues surrounding the development of the Gondwana Link partnership and the Friends were resolved due to the fine efforts of Ron Richards. This now ensures that the Friends are protected from liability regarding our role as a partner organisation.

Gondwana Link shares many ideals with the Friends and significant benefits will flow for the organisation and the National Park

As this AGM is occurring, a group of Nature Conservancy Trustees and staff from Maine in the USA are embarking on a tour of the western National Park and surrounds for a few days before heading westwards. This type of interest in the National Park and how it will display to other people involved in this trip including Shire Councillors will have significant benefits.

Biological Review

Paula Deegan recently of SCRIPT has been employed to undertake the Biological Review of the Biosphere project. This tremendous project in partnership with the Fitzgerald Biosphere Group will unlock a great deal of biological investigation work that has been undertaken in the Biosphere and make it available.

Paula is a quality operator and shares our passion for the conservation of the Fitzgerald Biosphere. I look forward to the Friends' participation in the project and the difference it will bring to guiding the design of future scientific investigation.

Blueprint for the Future.

This inadequate document and its current process now known as the BIG (Blueprint Implementation Group) manifested again a few months ago in a document titled the Nature Based Tourism Strategy for the south-east coastal region. I was able to convince to the two Local Authorities who are involved in the strategy's development that we could do a lot better. We were able to put together a project application to GSDC to seek resources to develop a Biosphere Planning and Development Strategy to ensure that ideas are developed according to ecological, social and economically sustainable criteria.

Local Authorities

As mentioned in other areas, I believe we are developing excellent relationships with the Shires of Jerramungup and Ravensthorpe. We have been successful in making the most of common denominators such as the BHP Billiton and Tourism planning initiatives.

Colleague Mal Grant from CALM held a tour of the Stirling Range National Park for the Shires and community, several staff and councillors from Jerramungup and Ravensthorpe witnessed first-hand the devastation

caused by *Phytophthora* and have begun to develop some understanding of this insidious pathogen. We have now developed an understanding in a new group of people about the impact potential of dieback and the need to keep it out of our area.

Friends' weekend activities

This year saw some excellent Friends activities weekends, where topics, presenters, roll ups and the weather treated us all to a fine time. I'd like to commend Gil and the committee and members for their expert organisation of the events and for the success they found. Importantly new members signed on during these events.

The future

The main challenge remains in assisting the local community to understand and embrace the international significance of the Fitzgerald River National Park and what it means to be a part of a modern Biosphere Reserve. The advent of the Bandalup Nickel Mine will bring opportunities and dilemmas and I'm encouraged about the possibilities that can come from embracing the chance to make the most of this development.

The management of the National Park is also an issue that we will need to put some advocacy effort towards. In particular we will need to be pursuing action on the *Phytophthora cinnamomi* infection on Bell Track, an improved ecological approach to fire management including input into CALM's policies, assisting the improved understanding of the ecology, and an effort towards the revision of the management plan should it happen.

This coming year we will produce an excellent map for visitors to the National Park.

I look forward to continuing my involvement with the Friends in 2004, and sharing this incredible place with you all.

Nathan McQuoid
President
March 2004

Friends planning Biosphere map

An exciting new project is being sponsored by the FFRNP. We are commissioning local member Vivienne Hillier to create a map of the Fitzgerald biosphere region and will be seeking funding to produce it. The map will give locals and visitors greater access to information about the park and its Biosphere surrounds.

We aim to produce an illustrated map that celebrates biodiversity within the Fitzgerald Biosphere through visual means and which will be both aesthetic and utilitarian. All data on the map aims to be accurate and up to date, incorporating data from the relevant departments/bodies. In addition to topographical information, including National Park and Biosphere boundaries, recent data concerning important ecological developments such as the Gondwana Link project will be collated for public interest and education.

Such a map will provide an excellent communication tool in its aim to raise awareness and appreciation of biodiversity as well as the need to conserve the natural heritage of the stunning Fitzgerald River National Park and the important and spectacular natural areas surrounding the park

It is proposed that half the quantity of the illustrated map will be available unfolded (rolled) to enable laminating and/or display as an attractive poster, and the remaining half folded to a convenient A5 in an (optional) re-useable envelope for ease of use in the field. Alternatively it could be packaged in a plastic envelope with an A5 postcard, or an A5 insert could be incorporated within the design.

The Base Map.

A scale of 1: 400,000 has been chosen as the most appropriate for the designated area, which encompasses the Fitzgerald Biosphere Region and extends from Warriup Hill west of Wellstead to slightly east of Munglinup and north to the Lake King-Newdegate-Norseman Rd

The map will show many features, including the Fitzgerald River National Park boundaries, Fitzgerald Biosphere boundaries, nature reserves, Gondwana Link properties (to date), watercourses, roads, tracks, walking trails, towns, settlements, beaches, bays, ocean, topography, historical features (eg: graves, mines, wells, homesteads), longitude and latitude, scale and legend.

The Honey Possum: abstract from PhD thesis,

Dr Annika Everaardt. Murdoch University.

The honey possum *Tarsipes rostratus* is a tiny (7 - 12 g) highly specialised flower-feeding marsupial endemic to the south-western corner of Australia. The impact of fire on this small mammal was studied, over a 19-year period, in the Fitzgerald River National Park, a large (330,000 ha) area of relatively undisturbed heathland/shrubland, rich in the proteaceous and myrtaceous plants upon which the Honey Possum appears to rely for food. The honey possum is the most abundant and widespread mammal in this Park.

Capture rates of honey possums were significantly related to the years since the vegetation was last burnt, annual rainfall in the preceding (but not the current) year, the season when trapping occurred, and the trapping grid operated. Capture rates declined markedly after fire and remained low (less than one third of those in long unburnt vegetation) for about 4 - 5 years following a fire. Rates of capture then increased steadily over the next 20 - 25 years, with maximal abundance recorded about 30 years after fire. Thereafter, there appeared to be a slight decline in capture rates, but even in the vegetation unburnt for longest (> 50 years since fire), honey possum abundance was substantial and relatively stable. In contrast to these changes in abundance, the structure of the honey possum population, with 79 % adults and 57 % males, appeared little influenced by fire history, annual rainfall, season or grid.

The increase in the rates of capture of honey possums following fire paralleled the pattern of availability of cover in the vertical and, to a lesser extent, horizontal plane. Indeed, projective foliage cover took around 20 years after fire to reach levels similar to those available in areas unburnt for even longer.

The trend in capture rates was also congruent with the maturation of the most frequently visited foodplants of honey possums, particularly *Banksia nutans* (summer flowering) and *B. baueri* (winter flowering). Areas long unburnt still contained shelter and foodplants adequate for honey possums even 50 years or more after fire, with only slight evidence of senescence.

Pollen loads indicated that honey possums caught in burnt areas, where their preferred foodplants were absent, continued to feed on these favoured foodplants (*Banksia* and *Dryandra* spp.) at nearby unburnt areas. In addition, they also fed, in both burnt and long unburnt areas, upon a suite of other plant species that regenerated more rapidly from lignotubers and epicormic buds, as well as from seeds (e.g. *Eucalyptus* and *Calothamnus* spp.). Thus, honey possums appeared to persist with their preferences for feeding from a limited number of flowering plants despite some of these species not being available in recently burnt areas for many years. Nearby patches of unburnt vegetation can clearly be important refuges, feeding grounds and shelter for the few honey possums that visit recently burnt areas, and appear to be the source of honey possum colonists in the years following a fire.

Capture rates were also greater following years when rainfall was higher than average. Indeed, rainfall had as great an influence upon capture rates as time since fire. Capture rates were also consistently higher over winter, and to a lesser extent over summer, than in either autumn or spring. Individual grids, even those close together in apparently similar vegetation with a similar fire history, still differed significantly overall in their capture rates of honey possums. This last finding has implications for the use of chronosequences in the study of post-fire changes in biota.

Although not the primary focus of the study, data on the limited suite of other, far less abundant, small mammals present indicated that house mouse *Mus musculus domesticus* numbers peak soon after fire (about two years after fire), grey-bellied dunnart *Sminthopsis griseoventer* numbers somewhat later (about eight years after fire) and that southern bush rats *Rattus fuscipes fuscipes*, like honey possums, are later successional species. Most species were present in vegetation over a range of post-fire ages, with data consistent with models based on sequential changes in relative abundance.

Like many Australian mammals, the range of the honey possum has contracted substantially over the last 200 years and the coastal heathlands of the south-west are its last stronghold. In terms of its conservation, this study indicates that, if possible, management burns in these heathlands should be separated by intervals of at least 20 years between successive burns, and preferably even longer. If burns are required more frequently to meet other management priorities, it is highly preferable that they are small and patchy, rather than large scale. Such practices may help ensure the long-term survival of this unique, highly specialised and endemic marsupial.

Our thanks to Annika who is working as a Graduate Research Assistant at Murdoch University. She can be contacted at aeveraardt@hotmail.com (Ed)

To Amelia – “Friendship” (A tribute to Amelia Moir; a much loved Past President of the Fitzgerald River National Park Association)



A friend sincere is one who seeks to help you in your life.
To laugh away the hours with you and comfort you in strife.

This little verse hangs on my dining room wall, and I feel it symbolises my friendship with Amelia.

I first got to know Amelia when she and Bill joined the Fitzgerald River Park Association in 1981. I soon realised what a wonderful asset she was to our Association. Her great energy and devotion to our activities were endless. The Twertup cottage will always display some of her work. Like when she brought in her sewing machine (powered by a generator!) and made chair covers and curtains. Her camera has recorded details of flora, working bees, and other projects. During a clean-up weekend at the cottage Amelia was still organising us by “flapping” around with one wing, while the other was held in a sling because she had broken her arm.

During the filming of “Heartlands” in 1984 by the ABC Amelia always knew when we needed a cuppa and some of her special cookies. Providing meals never seemed to bother her. In 1995 Amelia became President which kept our Association very much alive.

Amelia would always make me welcome at her home no matter what she was doing, and my sleeping bag was automatically dumped on a bed if I needed to stay. At her computer she spent many hours recording family history and had several books printed. We shared a love of the Fitzgerald and writing poetry relating to the many events. Yes Amelia you gave me so much and I miss you so, as we all do.

Kaye Vaux April 2004-05-13

Coming Events: An artists’ weekend will take place at Twertup 2-4 October 2004. Further details will be announced in the August Narpulungup News.

Ravensthorpe Range (Mt. Short) walk will take place Sunday 29 August 2004. Meet at gravel pit 2.5 km from origin of Mt Short Rd on Ravensthorpe-Lake King Rd at 10.00 am. Bring appropriate footwear with ankle support, lunch and drinks to carry, hat, sunscreen, camera.. The walk (moderate difficulty) is only 3-4 km but there is a fair bit of up and down, some on tumbled boulders, most is on cleared path. It will easily be finished by mid afternoon . Encounters with feral bees are a possibility (unfortunately) but the wildflowers will be a delight. Further information and advice of your intention to walk to Andy Chapman 98381149 .

2004 Friends’ committee

President: Nathan McQuoid
Vice-president: Gil Craig
Secretary: Anne Gadsby
Treasurer: Angela Sanders

Robyn Cail
Andy Chapman
Rosemary Jaspar

Twertup committee rep: Mark Jeffery
Newsletter editor: Priscilla Broadbent

* * * * *

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☐

E C U's Bremer field station a step closer ... a useful link for the FFRNP.

Edith Cowan University's School of Natural Sciences, with assistance from the Shire of Jerramungup, is well on the way to establishing a field station at the Bremer Bay Youth Camp site. The building has been transported to Bremer Bay and is awaiting final installation.

The field station will capitalise on Bremer's natural assets, its location within the Fitzgerald Biosphere and its proximity to the Fitzgerald River National Park. It will be a base for researchers and students studying plants, animals, environmental management issues and economic, environmental and social sustainability. Undergraduate students will come here on field trips to gain experience in field work, thus potentially contributing to long-term monitoring data sets.

ECU will also make the field station available to other researchers and to local community members at a small fee. Community based science events and workshops are planned once there are a significant number of projects being run from the field station.

Staff from the School of Natural Sciences travelled to the Biosphere in February to meet local groups and discover local issues and potential research topics. They visited the Jerramungup Department of Agriculture, the Shire, the Fitzgerald River National Park (where they stayed at Twertup), a farm in the Gairdner region, the Bremer Bay Fish Factory and Youth Camp and a series of properties that are part of Gondwanalink in the Corackerup Creek region of the Biosphere.

On the eve of the "Life on the Edge" weekend held in Bremer, the School of Natural Sciences hosted a BBQ for the Friends of the FRNP committee and members of Gondwanalink who had been meeting here. This was a wonderful opportunity for a lot of people with common interests to meet and exchange ideas and enthusiasm. On the night we heard from Head of School, Associate Professor Paul Lavery, Nathan McQuoid (on behalf of the FFRNP), Keith Bradby (for Gondwanalink), Johanna Tomlinson (for the Fitzgerald Biosphere Group), Nigel Metz (FBG's trials coordinator), Robyn Cail (Fitzgerald Biosphere Marketing Association), Merle Bennett (Ravensthorpe Herbarium) and Craig Lebens (Coast Care project—Bremer Bay dive trail).

The School of Natural Sciences is very excited about the imminent establishment of the field station and the opportunities that will open up. Establishing research and teaching programs will take some time in the first year, but the staff are looking forward to building relationships with the Bremer Bay and Fitzgerald Biosphere communities and the resulting exciting mutual collaboration and partnership.

Twertup cleaning roster

April:	Nigel and Robyn	October:	Angela and Mark
May:	Mark and Vivienne.	November:	Rosey and Ron
June:	Gil.	December:	Barbara Miller
July:	Ken and Priscilla.	January:	vacant. (Volunteers needed!)
August:	Helen and Ron.	February:	Nathan
September:	Anne.	March:	AGM

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