

Narpulungup News

November
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from the Friends of the Fitzgerald River National Park

www.fitzgeraldfriends.org.au



Next issue:
February 2012

'FRIEND' IS FINALIST IN ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD



Merle Bennett receives her award from Mark Germain from CSBP at the Convention Centre

On 11 November 2011 Merle Bennett was presented with a certificate as one of four finalists in the Regional Achievement and Community Awards - Environmental Section, ceremony at Bellevue Ballroom at the Perth Convention Centre. Merle was nominated by the Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show Committee. Her commitment to the environment was demonstrated to the judging committee by her support for many causes including:

- ♣ Involvement in running the Wildflower show for 25 of its 29 years.
- ♣ Producing the video and DVD on Ravensthorpe wildflowers.
- ♣ Involvement in production of the book 'Native Plants of the Ravensthorpe Region.'
- ♣ Membership of the Natural Resources Management Group, Threatened Flora Recovery Team, Friends of Fitzgerald River National Park, Culham Inlet Management Group.
- ♣ As a member of Birds Australia has been involved in searches for hooded plover, Carnaby's cockatoo, western ground parrot and malleefowl.
- ♣ Past Ravensthorpe Shire Councillor and Citizen of the Year in 2004
- ♣ Involvement in bridal creeper control and establishment of Railway Heritage Trail.

As if this isn't enough, Merle's crowning achievement must surely be her establishment of and collecting for the Ravensthorpe Herbarium. Her insistence on procedures including checking name changes, altering labels etc. has made it the valuable resource that it is today.

On the award night a table of supporters including Helen Taylor, Dorothy Perret, Gillian Smith, Christobel Bennett and members of Merle's family were present for the presentation. 'Friends' congratulate Merle on her achievement and thank the Wildflower Show Committee for her nomination. *Contributed by Helen Taylor*

PRESIDENT'S ISSUES UPDATE

On September 16th, WA's Environment Minister, Bill Marmion, together with other States' ministers met with the Federal Environment Minister, Tony Burke.

Mr. Burke briefed them about proposed reforms to the EPBC Act, which would strengthen protection for the nation's National Parks.

On 21st September, the WA Minister Bill Marmion, issued a press release which stated (in part) "Western Australia's conservation legislation and environmental impact assessment process already provided strong protection for the State's national parks and nature reserves."

A letter was sent to the Minister respectfully suggesting that a good way to demonstrate this, would be to instruct DEC to implement Stage 2 of the Walk-track instead of Stage 1.

The Minister replied stating that he will consider the EPA's advice, and will take into account

"...the importance of the park, and the potential threat of *Phytophthora* dieback. This threat is being managed during the improvement project, and will continue to be a key focus of management in the national park"

In his reply to Hon Wendy Duncan MLC, the Minister states that "The recruitment of the two additional rangers is underway, and it is expected they will be appointed by the end of the year" Appointment of rangers by the end of the year is hardly progress when the western end of the park has been without a ranger since Peter left.

Vehicles can still access Pt. Ann via the belting at the northern end of Trigellow beach, after having traipsed through the mud on the Doubtful Islands road, something which DEC has overlooked.

We are still exchanging information with officers of the **WA & SA Section Environment Assessment and Compliance Division Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population & Communities** and will continue to do so.

Please have a safe and happy holiday season, and I'm looking forward to catching up with everyone at the AGM 17th and 18th March, at a venue to be decided.

Anne Gadsby, President, Bremer Bay, Nov. 2011

(DEC conducted interviews for the two rangers' positions in November. Editor)

TWERTUP UPDATE

At last we have a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the Department of Environment and Conservation and 'Friends' for the future management and use of the Twertup precinct. This MoU includes the Twertup Master Development Plan and the building plans. The arrival of Greg Mair, Acting Regional Manager of DEC, greatly facilitated this event. The signing of this document means that 'Friends' can now feel confident in planning for the rebuild of the Field Studies Centre.

A couple of quotes have been received for the construction and erection of the steel framework and roof for Twertup. The markedly increased cost of steel has meant that these quotes are more than we originally budgeted, however we will endeavour to at least buy the necessary materials this financial year to make good use of our *2011 Environmental Community Grant* valued at \$30,000.

Unfortunately we were not one of the four projects in Western Australia that were successful in obtaining a Commonwealth *Regional Development Australia Fund*. Our hat is still in the ring for the *Royalties for Regions - 2011 Regional Development Council's Action Agenda Funding Scheme*, with announcements expected in mid-December. The latter grant application has been made in cooperation with Green Skills Inc to develop two 'International Field Studies Centres', for environmental education at Twertup and the Centre for Sustainable Living at Denmark.

If you want to give a helping hand with Twertup, here are some options:

♥ Keven Giles has many windows and doors

that need sanding and repainting. If you're able to help by cleaning up at least a couple of these, please contact Keven on 9880 4040 or 0427 804041.

- ♥ We need 14x timber verandah posts, can anyone source these for us?
- ♥ We're very keen to hear from anyone who can assist with fundraising for Twertup – this could include searching for and applying for suitable grants, a fundraiser event, or any brilliant ideas (and the willingness to activate them). Please contact Gillian Craig 9838 1071.
- ♥ All cash donations will be gratefully received by our Treasurer, Robyn Cail 9071 3080 (AH), PO Box 1325, Esperance 6450. *Contributed by Gillian Craig.*

NEW EDITION OF RAVENSTHORPE WILDFLOWER BOOK RELEASED

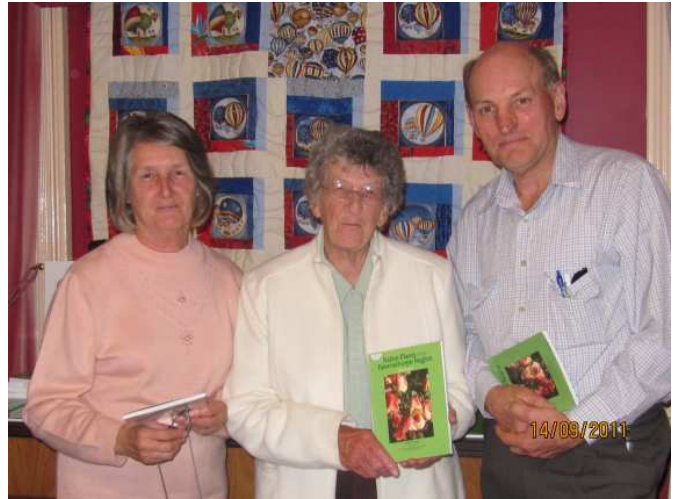
It is said our lives are like ripples in a pond, constantly spreading and interconnecting. It is like this with the 'Friends', often involved with other activities besides the Fitzie and often with other people. What was once just the Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show has expanded with other events being held over the two weeks it is run.

On Thursday 15 September the second edition of 'Native Plants of the Ravensthorpe Region' was launched by Dr Graham Jacobs MLA in the Red Room in the Ravensthorpe Community Centre. The first edition was published in 1995. After 2 000 copies were sold, it was decided to update it as some names had changed and new techniques enabled some photos to be improved.

Gillian Craig authored the first edition assisted by Merle Bennett, Win Chambers, Elsie Penglase, Helen Taylor and Enid Tink. Some of the original co-authors were no longer available for the update but with naturalist/photographers like John Tucker and Gai Downes in the district this was soon overcome. Merle Bennett collated the information with much discussion with Gillian, Helen and Enid; artwork and design was by Craig Chapelle. The cover is slightly different with Elsie's lovely photo of the Qualup Bells surrounded by a green frame, whereas in the original it spread over the whole cover. The contents are much the same, being divided into sections according to landform with final sections on die-back disease and fire effects on plants.

back disease and fire effects on plants.

The cost of the book is \$15. Copies can be purchased by contacting the Wildflower Show Committee at PO Box 143, Ravensthorpe, WA, 6346. *Contributed by Helen Taylor.*



Helen Taylor, Merle Bennett and Dr Graham Jacobs at the 'Red Room' release of the book.

RAILWAY HERITAGE TRAIL WALK - 'Just a walkin' in the rain'

On Sunday 18th September, as an activity of the Wildflower Show celebrations a group of 15 people participated in a walk along the Old Railway. It was planned to walk from Desmond to Kundip. We all met at the old Desmond town site at 10am and were warmly welcomed by the walk leader, Andy Chapman, one of the district's very well respected environmentalists.

At the start, the weather was overcast, with a brisk wind, and light rain forecast, but once we were on the Railway itself we were largely sheltered from the wind. It was good to meet visitors from New South Wales, Esperance and Perth, as well as some new residents, enjoying the walk. Very soon we were able to see a variety of orchids, and many other wildflowers. Out came the cameras, and many fine shots were taken.

The walk trail is in good condition in this area. Regrowth has recently been cleared by local volunteers, and there were plenty of sleepers and bolts in place to give an aura of reality. Before long it started to rain. Just a light drizzle. Nothing to worry about at this stage.

The construction crew in the early 1900s worked to maintain a consistent level on the railway line

and so make it easier for the engines to pull their loads. Where the track goes through a valley, it is filled with overburden taken from where the line passes through hill tops. This results in an elevated walk trail with fine views. We all enjoyed walking across areas that were originally creeks flowing under the track through drains constructed of wood. These wooden drains have long since collapsed, leaving occasional areas of subsidence on the track. It is still easy walking.

By now the rain had set in. Everyone was getting wet to the bones. The birds all found sheltered spots in thick trees. No kangaroos, wallabies or reptiles were to be seen. Even the flowers seemed to turn their backs to the rain and hang their heads for shelter. The 17 mm of rain we had was enough to make the Steere River flow and the sediments from the Elverdton tailings dam were being transported down the river. Makes one wonder what a really heavy rain would do?

By the time we arrived at the Ard Patrick Mine, the track had become dangerously slippery, and with everyone being drenched and cold, it was decided to take the next path to the west and not go all the way to Kundip. This meant that when we reached the Ravensthorpe-Hopetoun Road, we would be about 5 km from any vehicles. Pat Chadwick called the SES and Keith Rowe was able to come out and collect us and ferry us back to the vehicles. Thanks Keith! Thanks as well to Andy, Roger Walker and Pat Chadwick who were all very supportive when we needed it.

It doesn't usually rain heavily when there is a Railway Walk organized, so I will definitely be going on the next one! *Contributed by Mary Smith.*

ANOTHER DAY IN 1841....

In the last issue we accompanied explorer Edward John Eyre and Wylie as they approached East Mt Barren on their epic journey from Fowlers Bay to Albany. On June 27 they camped close to where the East Mt Barren ranger station is now. The following excerpt describes their next day's journey.

"June 28 1841. Upon getting up this morning we saw the smoke of native fires along the margin of the lake, at less than a mile from us. They had already noticed our fire, and called out repeatedly to us, but as I did not wish to come into communication with them at all, I did not reply. Soon after-

wards we saw them in the midst of the lake carrying boughs, and apparently fishing. Three miles from the lake we crossed a small salt stream, and a mile further another. Four miles beyond the latter we came to a very deep narrow salt lake, swarming with swans, pelicans and ducks. As the passage between the lake and the sea appeared to be scrubby, and very similar to that we had found so much difficulty in passing yesterday, I turned to the north west to head it inland; but had not proceeded far before I found our progress stopped by a large salt-water stream, which joined the lake, and whose course was through steep precipitous ravines. By following the river upwards I came to a place where we could descend into its basin, and as the water there, though brackish, was till drinkable, I halted for the night after a stage of fourteen miles. The horses were a good deal tired with the rough hilly road they had passed over, and having been without water last night, stood greatly in need of rest.

In the afternoon Wylie took the rifle to shoot some of the swans and ducks around us, but was not successful. I remained at the camp, breaking down and clearing a passage amongst the shrubs and trees which grew in the rocky bed of the watercourse, to enable us to get our horses readily across tomorrow. Our position bore S.W. from East Mt Barren, E. from a bluff range three miles from us and N. 55°E. from some high hills in the direction of Middle Mt Barren. The course of the stream we encamped upon being nearly north and south".

This excerpt is from 'Journals of Expeditions of Discovery Overland from Adelaide to King George's Sound in the years 1840-1 by E. J. Eyre. T. & W. Boone. London. 1845.

My interpretation is that the 'lake' first mentioned is Culham Inlet. The two 'small salt streams' are the two un-named creeks which flow into Mylies Beach and the 'deep narrow salt lake' must be Hamersley Inlet remembering that Eyre will be comparing it with Culham Inlet which is much larger. From the inlet Eyre heads upstream along Hamersley River through 'steep precipitous ravines' - an apt description, to camp on the river probably due east of Whoogarup Range. If Eyre's descriptions seem a bit vague, it must be remembered that in 1841 this part of the south coast was unexplored and, except for the three Mts Barren, geographic features were un-named. *Editor.*



Department of Environment and Conservation

Our environment, our future 

In Our Backyard

*– NOTES FROM THE RANGERS AT FITZGERALD
RIVER NATIONAL PARK --*

FRNP Improvement Project

Construction works have commenced at the Barrens Precinct recreation sites. The construction of toilets at Four Mile Campsite, Four Mile Beach and Barrens Beach is close to complete and landscape works will commence soon.

Due to FRNP Improvement Project roadworks, Hamersley Drive is closed from the Culham Inlet Causeway to the Hamersley Inlet turnoff. The Hamersley Inlet campsite, Hamersley Beach and Sepulchralis Hill remains open. Access to the eastern park sites is via West River Rd from the South Coast Hwy, John Forrest Rd and Moir Track from Hopetoun and Moir Rd from Ravensthorpe.

Pabelup Drive is closed from the West Mt Barren turnoff to Devils Creek Road. Access to the western park sites is via Quiss Road from the South Coast Hwy. Pt Ann, the St Marys' Inlet campsite and West Mt Barren remain open. Gairdner Road is closed north of the Quaakup Homestead, there is no access to the park from Bremer Bay via the Gordon Inlet or Gairdner Roads. The Quaakup Homestead remains open and visitors can access Quaakup by arrangement.

All park 2wd roads and 4wd tracks can be closed at short notice during wet soil conditions to minimize the risk of dieback being carried into the park by visitors' vehicles. Visitors are advised to have alternate arrangements planned in the event of park road closures due to wet weather.

Fire Management

FRNP Rangers, staff from DEC Albany and Ravensthorpe, with the assistance of a helicopter have carried out two prescribed burns in the park; along Hamersley Drive and the Quoin Head track, and along the Telegraph and Drummond tracks. The aim of these prescribed burns is to reduce the

risk of a large wildfire by breaking up the extensive area of 22 year old vegetation that regenerated following the 1989 wildfire and by increasing the effectiveness of these tracks and roads as firebreaks.

Prescribed burns have also been carried out by staff from DEC Albany and Ravensthorpe and FRNP Rangers in the Cocanarup Timber Reserve north of the South Coast Hwy and in Aerodrome Road Nature Reserve west of Ravensthorpe.

Wildlife

Reptiles including the Southern Heath Monitor, Tiger Snake, Dugite and Carpet Python have become active with the warm weather. Good Winter and Spring rainfall has seen an increase in the activity of frogs including the Spotted Thigh Frog, Quacking Frog and Bleating Froglet. Large flocks of emus can be seen in the north of the park along Old Ongerup Rd, Quiss Rd and Hamersley Drive. Western Whipbirds can be easily heard and possibly seen by the patient observer along Quiss Rd south of the Jacup Ranger station, along Hamersley Drive at Sepulchralis Hill and along John Forrest Rd at No Tree Hill. Ospreys and White Breasted Sea Eagles can be seen around Culham Inlet and along the coast to Quoin Head. A Chuditch has recently been sighted at Culham Inlet near the park entry.

Flora

Good displays of wildflowers can be seen throughout the park, Boronia, Eucalypt, Claw Flower, Barrens Regelia, Verticordia, Melaleuca, Kunzea, Banksia, Isopogon, Chittick, Smokebush, and Grevilleas are still flowering over much of the park.

Park visitors are reminded to pay close attention to vehicle and footwear cleanliness before exploring the park. The use of local carwashes before entering the park and the cleaning of shoes before walking in the bush are recommended, especially if arriving from known dieback infected areas such as the Stirling Ranges, Cape Le Grand and the gravel roads east of the Jerdacuttup River between Hopetoun and Esperance.

Inlets

After coming close to drying out last summer, water levels in the Culham and Hamersley Inlets have risen following substantial recent rainfall and flows along the Phillips, West and Hamersley

Rivers. As of mid November 2011 the East Mt Barren ranger station has received 600 mm rain for the year, compared to between 410-490 mm for the previous four years.

For Park Enquires contact:

Paul Cory (Ranger East Mt. Barren) 9838 3060
Grantly Morton (Ranger Jacup) 9835 5043
DEC Ravensthorpe 9838 1967

TRAIL CAMERA SUCCESS!

Although the trail camera project at Culham Inlet is officially finished, some cameras are still in place faithfully recording images 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This is their great advantage. What is beyond control without an operator is sometimes the quality of image. In spite of this, here it is, unequivocal evidence of Chuditch or Western Quoll on the western shore of the inlet.



Photo: Paul Cory. For the record the date stamp should be 22/11/2011.

COMMITTEE AND MEMBERSHIP CONTACTS:

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email fishymaster1@bigpond.com

For membership queries contact Robyn Cail or website www.fitzgeraldfriends.org.au

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members and wish them an enduring and satisfying membership: Ian Field, Ruth Kerr, Pat Meadows, Eleanor O'Driscoll, Rita & Rob Phillips, Mary Robertson, Libby Sandiford & Peter Dawson, Arch Siero, Marcia Shepherd, Elisa Spengler, Bevan & Karen Tuckett, Audrey Turner, Ian & Leila Worth, Hon. Wendy Duncan and Hon. Graham Jacobs.

AGM FOR 2012

The AGM and members weekend will be held over the weekend of 17 & 18 March at Boxwood Hills recreation centre. There will be a guest speaker and field activity. Details will be in February issue.

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