

Gippsland Lakes Forum

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What's On

Dec 17th..Hog Deer Strategy Responses

Feb 4th.. Committee Meeting

Editors Note

Due to the number of important reports this month, we are unable to include many photos.

Space permitting we will hold over some additional photos to the next edition

Jenny & Jo

As most of you know, Habitat Network East Gippsland, including members of FOGL, arranged this most successful evening, which was attended by about 230 people. It brought together a panel of experts comprising:

Prof Barry Hart (Monash University, aquatic chemistry, water quality management, ecological risk assessment)

Prof John Beardall (Monash University, algal blooms and impacts of global change)

Prof David Mitchell (Charles Sturt University, management of catchment and irrigation systems)

Prof Max Finlayson (Charles Sturt University, wetland ecology and management)

Dr Peter Fisher (Central Queensland University, pharmaceuticals and water quality).

Each panel member gave a short address relating to water quality, ecology and management of the Lakes (Dr Fisher's address was presented in his unavoidable absence). The Forum was then opened to questions from the floor and ended with a review of key recommendations for action.

In their presentations and in response to questions from the audience, the panel made the following comments:

- *Algal blooms will be a recurrent problem.*
- *The toxicity of some algal blooms remains unclear.*
- *The Lakes are becoming more saline, and flushing from inflow is unlikely to remedy the problem.*
- *Sea-grass beds are seriously degraded, with potential impacts on overall biodiversity.*
- *Nutrient inflows from agriculture and fire-damaged areas are a major threat to water quality.*
- *The extent of natural wetlands and marshes adjoining the Lakes has been greatly reduced over the decades, and their effectiveness as a filtration system thereby diminished.*
- *Forest cover in the Lakes catchment is diminished by logging and fire, resulting in unacceptable levels of sediment and nutrient inflow. Restoration of mature forest will take decades.*
- *The Lakes ecosystem is resilient to adverse impacts, but re-establishes stability at lower levels than in previous cycles, resulting in progressive degradation.*

- *The Lakes are a Ramsar site, but Australia currently is not meeting its obligations to update and maintain data on wetland sites under the international Ramsar Convention.*

- *The extent to which pharmaceuticals may be impacting on the Lakes ecosystem is unknown because of a lack of monitoring for such contaminants.*

- *Although a return to a healthy freshwater Lakes ecosystem is theoretically still possible, the track record of government and environmental management agencies suggests this is unlikely to occur.*

- *Global warming is only likely to exacerbate problems in the long term.*

- *The Forum concluded by nominating key points of concern and strategies for action:*

- *Assess the impact of climate change.*
- *Measurement of water quality inflows.*
- *Ensure that responsibilities under the Ramsar Convention are taken seriously.*
- *More open consultation with the community by the Gippsland Lakes and Catchment Task Force.*
- *Investigate the effects of fire retardant on water quality.*
- *Assess the role of logging on the health of the Lakes.*
- *Monitor impact of Macalister Irrigation District on Lakes water quality.*
- *List of flora and fauna species found in/ around Lakes.*
- *Investigate possible Heritage Listing of Lakes.*
- *Obtain accurate information on toxins in fish etc.*
- *Community education/awareness of Lakes ecosystem.*
- *Ensure adequate funding for the Gippsland Lakes and Catchment Task Force.*

Our thanks to Chris Healey, EGBOC, for this report.

Gippsland Lakes Forum

The forum was evidence to the value of Habitat Network East Gippsland in not only providing a unified response to an issue but also in utilising the range of talents from different member groups to achieve a very successful result. The Task Force has since confirmed that it would like to work with HNEG to establish and keep up good communications with the Gippsland lakes community. A full report of the forum is included.

Hog Deer Management Strategy

Hog deer are of interest to FOGL as these introduced animals enjoy protected wildlife status and graze freely doing inestimable damage within public parks & reserves around the lakes. Their management is inefficient and is not consistent with existing DSE standards

DSE has released a draft Hog Deer Management Strategy, as part of the Victorian Government's Enhancing Game Management Initiative. When adopted, the strategy will direct man-

agement of hog deer on private and public land for the following five years.

The approved terms of reference provide for the development of a management strategy for hog deer that:

- ensures a viable population throughout its current range and that its presence is managed according to land tenure objectives
- provides for sustainable, quality Hog Deer hunting opportunities on areas where the activity is consistent with land reservation status
- considers improvements and efficiencies to current management practices for Hog Deer hunting throughout the current range
- improves opportunities on private land, in order to strengthen relations between landowners and hunters, encourage improved access to hunting, and educate and encourage landowners to provide quality habitat for Hog Deer (Hog Deer Management Strategy p.18)

Members should read the 22 page document and make their own judgment as

to the balance of this strategy. You are encouraged to utilise the feedback document to make an individual response by December 17. A number of individual respondents also helps to offset the influence of established lobby groups so this information should be made available to encourage others to respond.

The Strategy passes major responsibility for management plans to hunters and private landowners, DSE and Parks Victoria. While the draft plan may claim to address some issues we are all too familiar with words on paper found in strategy documents and management plans where the implementation is poorly resourced and selective. The draft strategy is open for public submissions until 17 December 2008.

For copies of the draft Strategy, call into DSE's Bairnsdale Office ring the Customer Service Centre on 136 186. or got to the DSE website

For more information on current issues in relation to hog deer contact Lynne & David Ellard

Best Wishes for the Holiday Season

Sub Committee - Project Works & Grants - M. Burns

Silvershot interpretive signage

Launched Thursday September 18. The Interpretive Sign and accompanying Park Note will give visitors and locals greater insight into the interesting flora, fauna and landscape of Boole Poole.

Joe Stephens was presented with perpetual Honourary Membership to thank him for his outstanding commitment and contribution to the environmental health of the Gippsland Lakes Parks and Reserves. Photos on the website.

Planting day Saturday 18th of October Mitchell River Silt Jetties Reserve (north)

This was a follow up planting to a successful planting event undertaken at the same Crown Land location in May. It was warm, about 27°, nevertheless about 20 people turned up - thank you all! Approximately 700 plants were planted, Parks Vic provided plants, guards and equipment, Landcare Network provided the bbq trailer. Lots of leftover plants were taken home by members so in the

long run we can say that we planted approximate 1000 plants. Photos on the website.

Project Burragarra

FOGL has entered into an agreement with Parks Vic and Wildlife Unlimited to use the remaining Envirofund monies to assist with eradication of feral pigs on Boole Poole Peninsula on a pay per pig basis. This should remove a further 18 feral pigs from Boole Poole Peninsula over the coming months.

No Butts! Grant applications

FOGL were unsuccessful with a grant application to East Gippsland Shire Council but still await notification regarding an application with Coast Action/Coastcare. We expect to hear before Christmas.

Gippsland Lakes-Managing Change Forum

FOGL donated \$100 to assist in the organisation of this successful forum.

Ideas for future projects and works now called for.

Member Profile - Bill Cotter

At the end of 2006 I retired from secondary teaching, having spent 43 years in state high schools and private schools, 25 of them here at Bairnsdale Secondary College. My particular teaching interests were English, Literature and French.

I was very much involved with Friends of the Wetlands group, a small group that for many years worked to improve the conditions of Macleod Morass.

I also write a good deal, more so now since I have retired. I have had poetry and short stories published throughout Australia and recently in New Zealand. Also I have had a number of books published.

It concerns me, as it does us all, to look at the havoc we are reeking on the natural environment and I would like to do, even in a small way, what I can to help restore the environment, at least in this area. FOGL, I think, is well-placed to do good things. There are clearly a number of very committed people in the group.

Nungurner Jetty Rainforest Project - Heather Oke

The Nungurner Rainforest was saved from the bulldozer because of its steep terrain.

The site runs in a North East direction directly behind the toilet block at the Jetty reserve.

It originally was destined to be the final section of Nungurner Jetty Road but a decision at the last minute to redirect the road allowed much of the remnant rainforest to remain.

Glen Forster from Coastcare Coast Action was offering funding for projects and after discussions with him, a site inspection was organized with Bill Peel from the CMA and Peter Murrell from the E.G. Rainforest Management Group. Bill officially classified the site as Warm Temperate Rainforest with more than half of the plant species as well as a Littoral Rainforest, as it flattens out near the adjoining wetland. 11 local community members attended the inspection and Bill spoke of the many threats and the reasons why we need to protect and restore such sites.

Bill recommended the project should proceed firstly with the treatment of the willows and

the Pampas Grass followed by the "Bradley" method of weed removal due to the fragile nature of the soil.

Funding was sought through Jeremy Nielson (Glen's replacement) for willow poisoning, monitoring and felling by a professional arborist. Funding was achieved and work commenced by the arborist at the end of autumn 2008. Ian Bate from the Shire came on board and sprayed for blackberries and was happy to do any follow up spraying which he recently has agreed to do again this summer however it was noted the blackberry in the adjoining wetland died off from a continual cover of water, resulting from the floods in 2007. Jeremy also arranged for Green Core to undertake the Pampas grass removal in Feb 2008.

Recently the willows have been monitored by the arborist, which revealed they needed a further treatment, as sections of the tops were still green. The trees will be further monitored early in the new year before finally being felled. The pampas grass needed a few follow up sprays by the shire and currently appears to have died. Geoff and I continue to moni-

tor the site on a regular basis applying the Bradley method of weeding and have found many exciting indigenous species beginning to emerge. Without the blackberries and the willows consuming most of the moisture Kangaroo Apple, *Solanum aviculare*, Boobialla *Myoporum* sp., Swamp paperbark, *Melaleuca ericifolia*, Scrub nettle, *Urtica incisa*, Geranium sp., *Senecio* sp., *Phragmites australis*, are some of the species to return. However some weeds such as the thistle, some blackberry and others also need constant removal which we continue to do.

At the site I have collected and germinated seed of *Poa labillardierei* and have taken cuttings recently of *Pandorea pandorana* & Blueberry ash *Elaeocarpus reticulatus*. Swamp paperbark, *Melaleuca ericifolia* has been planted and hopefully in the near future more funding will be sought for a revegetation project, when we will need to rally up some volunteers to help with this exciting and rewarding project.

MSGV Camp at Mt Elizabeth

Heather and Nancy joined the Mammal Survey Group of Victoria (MSGV) for their 4-day November camp up at Mt Elizabeth, arranged with the help of Matt Holland, from Parks Victoria. The wet, windy conditions deterred no-one, especially the furry little animals. Antechinus and many bush rats were caught using cage traps; heaps of bats, representing six species, were caught in harp nets; 30 species of birds were recorded; grey kangaroo and wallaby sighted.

Spotlighting found greater glider, yellow-belly glider and bobuck. All animals appeared healthy. Matt provided a remote camera which caught, as well as bush rat, one camp member strolling out for a pee in the middle of the first night. Needless to say, the following night all campers knew where the camera was placed.

It was a great camp, with magnificent mountain ash, some good walking trails, and fabulous views from the very top of the mountain, although the terrain provided some challenges

in placing cage traps, with some very steep areas (see photo of Heather) and others with extremely dense understory. In spite of atrocious weather, Matt joined us on Monday morning and showed us a rare plant which is only found on Mt Elizabeth. Good food and wine around the campfire and a large tarp made the wet conditions tolerable.

Nancy McMurray

Rubbish Collection on the Silt Jetties

A rubbish collection in May of the entire length of the silt jetties by Nancy by bike resulted in a considerable collection of rubbish, half of which was recyclable. Since then, rubbish monitoring and collecting has concentrated on the final 2 kms of the silt jetties, the area that begins at the composting toilet and fishing platform.

During May to November Trevor made a total of six collection trips of an average of two hours each. With a commitment to carbon-neutral activity, a push bike with two rear panniers and a small trailer as rubbish receptacles was used. Over these

past 6 months over 1.5 m³ of rubbish has been removed from the area.

Approximately 2/3 of the rubbish has been recyclable including bottles, plastic bait containers, plastic oil containers and other miscellaneous glass and plastic. The other 1/3 is landfill refuse – plastic fish bait bags, cigarette butts, lolly and other food wrappers, toilet paper (copious quantities) and disposable nappies. A number of large items including a TV set Trevor retrieved from the Mitchell River have been left for others with trucks or utes to collect as they were too bulky to carry away by bike and trailer.

It appears that most of the rubbish is left by fisher-people and the presence of this material reflects very poorly on the fishing community generally.

Indiscriminate fires at the many fishing spots are not only an eyesore but are also a collection point for rubbish and these fireplaces are decimating the natural bush left in this iconic area.

Clearly this is an issue FOGL needs to address.

Nancy McMurray

Sea Grass Update - Jenny Dalglish

As promised in our last edition, we have an update from Chris Barry about the condition of seagrasses in the Lakes.

In September, 2 'snapshots' were completed as the start of a long term monitoring program. The surveys were done by Dr. Jeremy Hindell.

FISH. Those sampled fell into 2 categories; estuarine residents (e.g. Black Bream) and estuarine dependant (e.g. Tailor). The catches of both were generally low throughout the Lakes compared with sampling done in the tributaries (Nicholson, Tambo and Mitchell) and that done in autumn 2008. Dr. Hindell felt that this was not necessarily surprising, especially for the bream as they move into the mid sections and upper reaches of the rivers. The condition of the fish was not formally

investigated but there were no signs of fin rot or external ulcers. Even though the numbers were low in the study area, the range of species sampled was consistent with those done in the winter months in Port Phillip Bay and Western Port Bay.

SEAGRASSES. The sampling sites were based on those chosen by Ball and Roob in 1997 and were completed using aerial photography. Whereas the 1997 survey was done pre-winter (June) this year's was post-winter, (September). The seagrass density in 23 of the 30 sites had decreased since Ball and Roob's study. Most sites have some level of seagrass cover but condition is quite low. It was expected that this would be the case, after the extreme shading by the algal bloom. What is required now is a February/March study, fol-

lowing what would normally be the growth period. This will verify any ongoing change and provide information on the resilience of the seagrasses.

Dr. Hindell's full report is currently going through internal approval processes and will be available on the TaskForce website very soon.

Chris Barry will maintain ongoing communication with FOGL regarding this study as well as in other significant areas.

Anecdotal evidence on the condition of fish or seagrasses from FOGL members should be communicated to the committee by email.

Coastal Board - New Appointments

Our congratulations go to FOGL member, Peter Johnstone who has recently been appointed to the Gippsland Coastal Board. The other new appointments are Kate Nelson, Director of Planning East Gippsland Shire and Shayne Haywood, West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority. These positions will run until the end of June next year when all positions will be reassessed.

Peter says of his new position...

I was aware of the Coastal Board system along the Victorian coastline thus keen to get involved.

Firstly, to be involved in the process for managing (future planning) the coastline and secondly, to create greater links between the Board and community groups like FoGL and Lakes Entrance Business Tourism Association LEBTA.

The Coastal Board has legislation

(Coastal Management Act) to oversee planning issues along the coastline from Inverloch to Mallacoota. The Board are particularly interested in the future thus determine what planning can be done now to alleviate possible problems in 30 years time. Planning for the future can shape or over-ride existing planning schemes by Shires and Government Departments, in particular impacts of sea-level rises and frequent severe weather events.

As for my input, as a strong supporter of sustainable environmentally friendly tourism, I am keen to ensure that this industry can continue in conjunction with proposed developments that may occur in the future. My appointment is based on 2 or 3 days per month including site visits.

Well done, Pete and best wishes from all of us at FOGL!

Nungurner Jetty Project
Pampas Grass
before and after
removal



APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OF FRIENDS OF GIPPSLAND LAKES PARKS & RESERVES INC.

I.....(name of Applicant(s)) of(address)

Ph. Mb. E-mail(s) desire to become a (state category of membership - see

below) member of the Friends of the Gippsland Lakes Parks and Reserves Inc.

In the event of my admission as a member, I agree to be bound by the rules of the Association for the time being in force (can be viewed at <http://fogl.org.au/forms/rules.pdf>).

.....Signature of Applicant Date

Membership fees (to 30 June 2009):

Adult \$20, Family \$35, Organisation \$20, Concession \$10 (Healthcare, Pension, Student)

Please complete Membership Form and enclose membership fee (cheque or money order only) then post to:

The Secretary,

Friends of the Gippsland Lakes Parks and Reserves Inc.

P.O. Box 354