

President's Report

Incoming President Wendy Parker

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The Annual General Meeting held at Nyerimilang on Sunday August 12, resulted in a changing of the guard at FoGL. After 7 years at the helm, David Ellard decided not to stand for re-election and has passed the tiller on to me. David has been a tireless President for the group and has been responsible for FoGL making a positive contribution to many of the parks and reserves of the Gippsland Lakes. These include the Silt Jetties – Jones Bay and Eagle Point, Macleod Morass, Metung Bushland Reserve and Boole Poole Peninsula, Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park. We all owe him a tremendous vote of thanks for all his efforts in that time and are very happy that he still remains on the Committee.



David was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation by Matt Holland representing Parks Victoria.

He will be a very difficult act to follow, especially as I have a tendency to travel around a bit. To counteract this somewhat, our new Vice President, Trevor Caldwell, will hopefully be around when I am not, and vice versa.

The first activity in this 'new term of Office' has been a wonderful 'Spring comes to Macleod Morass' walk, which was held on October 13th and was



attended by 18 people. Most of them were non FoGL members and there were many keen birdwatchers in the group. The walk was organised by Committee members Bill Cotter and Trevor Caldwell, and was led by local environmental consultant Jim Reside. Jeremy Tscharke from Parks Victoria provided us all with an overview of the over abundant vegetation project re Cumbungi Typha spp, which is presently underway. This project has had to be approved by the Federal Government Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities as the Morass is covered by the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC).

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The Importance of Dead and Dying Trees in the Landscape

Whilst walking with a group through a local reserve a couple of weeks ago, the issue of removing a recently fallen tree was discussed. Nancy McMurray has written an excellent article outlining why such specimens should remain.

Research in the past 20 years has identified how critical dead and dying trees are to healthy habitat and ecosystems. Unfortunately, many people view dead and dying trees as a hazard or as just plain 'unsightly' without ever thinking of how valuable these trees are for wildlife and the environmental lifecycle including the role of decay in nutrient recycling.

Dead tree material left to rot on the ground provides valuable nutrients for soil development and rejuvenation of healthy habitat, which then provides shelter and food for many reptiles, mammals and birds. Ground timber and healthy ground cover are essential for reptiles and small native mammals such as antechinus and bush rat. Snags and dead trees are used by ducks, bats, songbirds, parrots, birds of prey, owls, reptiles and mammals including sugar gliders, bobucks, possums, ringtail possums, greater gliders. They provide a food source for insect-eating birds, a place to cache prey, shelter from very hot wind and extreme temperatures, and importantly for many birds, especially raptors, these dead and dying trees provide roosting and hunting perches. Fallen trees in water provide shelter for fish and amphibians and feeding platforms for rakali (water-rat).



Hollows in old-growth trees are extremely important for many species and these hollows often take hundreds of years to form. There are many primary cavity-nesters such as parrots and ducks but also secondary cavity-nesters, such as swallows, owls and kestrels, who often use abandoned holes prepared by another species. Besides these cavity-nesters, there are also many species that nest externally in these dead and dying trees.

Deterioration of trees is caused by the interactions of insects, fungi, bacteria and weather over time. The rate of deterioration depends primarily on the size and species of the tree. There are five stages of deterioration, starting with broken tops in Stage 1 and ending with just a partial tree trunk either standing or fallen on the ground at Stage 5.

Stage 1: Broken tree tops provide an avenue for infection by heart-rotting fungi, and exposing areas of heart wood to weather and insects such as wood-boring beetles, which are then themselves a source of food to other species.

Stage 1 and 2: Limbs provide perches for raptors and other birds.

Stages 2 to 5: Provide potential breeding sites, as the presence of decayed heartwood is an important factor in the selection of nesting sites by primary cavity-nesting birds.

Stages 3 and 4: These stages include loose bark, which is important for bats for roosting and nesting and provides important food sources such as insects for species of birds like the brown tree creeper.

Stage 5: Trunks still provide habitat and food sources for birds, mammals and reptiles, whether standing or fallen on the ground. When fallen, the trees provide nutrient recycling, provide habitat and contribute to soil health. Black wattles are very important in this regard.

According to experts, it is best to have trees in different stages of deterioration, as this provides structural diversity. When planting out bare paddocks, it is helpful to provide logs and other fallen timber.

Nancy McMurray

Spring Walk Through Macleod Morass

On Saturday, 13th October, we were able to conduct a guided walk through Macleod Morass. Our leader was Jim Reside from Wildlife Unlimited. He was accompanied by Jeremy Tscharke from Parks Victoria. We had hoped that staff from EGW would be able to show people over the treatment plant, but this was not possible.

Eighteen people attended and they were able to see the Morass at its spring best. Thousands of



ibises were nesting and it was possible to see some of the nesting sites quite clearly from the track. Many other resident birds were also seen, including

hundreds of Australasian coots. Spring is always an exciting time to visit the wetland and with all the rain recently, this season has been really amazing.

Jim outlined many of the interesting aspects of life on the Morass and Jeremy explained the program being undertaken to control the expanding areas of cumbungi. This has involved the use of a large, floating, mechanical slasher. This machine usually cuts below the surface. It has been used in other areas of the wetlands. To be effective, however, the area needs to be flooded after slashing. This retards new growth. Unfortunately, the flooding in the Morass came to an end when the barrier was breached and the waters continued into the Mitchell River. Complete drowning of the cumbungi was not possible. So tangled and intense are the cumbungi areas that the machine suffered a number of mechanical breakages. Because this intensity presents impenetrable barriers to almost all species of birds, clearly control is important.

Fortunately, Jeremy is confident that the program can be resumed again early next year.

We express our gratitude to both Jim and Jeremy.

Jim has led a number of our activities and we acknowledge his willingness to share his enthusiasm and knowledge with us. Jeremy has expressed his interest in talking with people who

want to know more about programs undertaken by Parks Victoria in this Ramsar wetland.

Bill Cotter

FoGL's annual Boole Poole monitoring project

FoGL's concern that introduced browsers, namely Hog Deer, have a negative impact on biodiversity in the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park has led to an annual monitoring project to record species and recruitment, survivability and growth rates of native plant species on Boole Poole.

Assistance has been provided by Bruce Macpherson, Conservation and Land Management, Forestec who has created the methodology and James Turner, renowned local botanist and FoGL member who has identified the species existing in the survey areas.

Thanks also to Parks Victoria for their assistance.

What is significant is the degree to which browsing has inhibited growth of seedlings and what species are missing entirely which normally would be expected to exist in the survey areas.

Go to <http://fogl.org.au/boole-poole-monitoring-report-2012/> to read their reports for which FoGL are very grateful.

Recommendations

"Establish more single tree guards around seedlings so more precise statistical analysis can be performed on growth rates. Because we can conclude that browsing pressure is impacting on the development of seedlings we need to now concentrate on monitoring and recording the herbivore species responsible, the most logical and cost efficient method is through the installation of remote cameras."



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Discussions with Parks Victoria have resulted in further planned activities for members. The Lune Beeuke track on Boole Poole in the Lakes Coastal Park is requiring maintenance. While PV will be doing work with 'mechanical equipment', FoGL members will be invited to a hands-on pruning day. This is likely to take place in Autumn 2013 and will likely also be combined with a BBQ.



Sea Spurge

Weed infestations of Sea Spurge *Euphorbia paralias* and Mother of Millions *Bryophyllum* spp are occurring around the Lakes. Hand removal at the Barrier landing near Lakes Entrance will be attempted on November 20th and volunteers will be required for this. It is envisaged that weed removal at specified sites will occur once/twice in each year.

The management plan for the Lakes Coastal Park (Parks Victoria 1998) is supported by a plan produced under the Ramsar Convention (DSE 2003). Both these plans list feral pigs as a potential problem when and where they disturb vegetation. Parks Victoria, Bairnsdale Office, have commissioned a report on options to manage feral pigs on the Boole Poole Peninsula, Lakes Coastal Park. The report indicates that eradicating the pigs is feasible and puts forward 2 general strategies to achieve this. The preferred eradication proposal is to use ground based professional hunting with trained dogs to remove all pigs and validate success. The estimated cost of this would be ~ \$60,000. PV already have some of this money but we have urged them to investigate all avenues of funding and have offered to lobby local politicians and other organisations, so that this preferred option is not replaced by lesser ones.

Wendy Parker

What's On

Tuesday 20th Nov

Sea Spurge weeding at Barrier Landing. This is an all day event and if you can assist, please contact Wendy Parker president@fogl.org.au

Wed 5th Dec

Committee Meeting at Forestech followed by BBQ at nearby Log Crossing, weather permitting. All welcome. RSVP Jenny Dalgleish 51562101

Feb 2013

Committee Meeting

Autumn activity

Maintenance Lune Beeuke Track. Details to be advised.

Planting at Macleod Morass. Details to be advised.

Membership Application

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

.....(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 2013):

Adult \$20, Family \$35, Organisation \$10, 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
Metung VIC 3904