



# HAMILTON FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

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## NEWSLETTER, March 2013

Now that Australia's hottest-ever summer has come to an end, officially at least, we can look forward to cooler days and a nice variety of Field Naturalists' events. Our program for the year is enclosed although as always there may be unavoidable changes due to fire, flood or fierce wild animals. So check the "Spec" and/or your email in-box to confirm topics of meetings, and if you're intending to come on an excursion and can't get to the preceding meeting, contact one of the committee to check the arrangements.

The names and phone numbers of the committee are on the program. Once again, these are unchanged from last year. This is **not** because the current office-bearers are power-crazed despots, but because no-one else has volunteered. So please, over the course of this year, give some thought to whether you might be able to help out in 2014.

It's also time to renew your subscription – still held at the fantastically low rate of \$15 per person or \$20 for a family. Please fill in the form enclosed and either post it with your cheque or bring it to the next meeting.

### AROUND AUSTRALIA, DOWN A VOLCANO ...

At our next meeting on **21 March** there will be a presentation by Yvonne and Reto, who have recently returned from going anti-clockwise around the continent. They crossed the north from Cape York to the Pilbara, saw vast expanses of varied landscapes, visited Aboriginal heritage sites of world significance, explored caves, were entertained for hours by burrowing native wasps, reached the South-West in time for its renowned wildflower season, and were frequently made indignant by the failures of government to care for all these wonders. They will summarise it all as: "**Australia, the good, the bad and the ugly**".

For the **excursion** on the following **Saturday March 23<sup>rd</sup>** we are going back in time half an hour and several thousand years. We will head first to **Mount Gambier** to see the film "**Volcano**". This is a recently-made brilliant documentary about the origins of volcanic features on both sides of the border, including Mount Napier and Mount Eccles. We will leave the Hamilton Visitor Information Centre at 9.00 am sharp Eastern Summer Time, to be in time for the showing at 10.30 am Central Time. The film is at Mount Gambier's Main Corner and entry is free. It lasts about an hour, and after that we will go to the top of the Mount so we can look down on its craters with newly informed eyes. We shall return via Penola, stopping at one or more sites in the Darjurk forest. **Please note** there is a very slight possibility that the film will not be showing on that Saturday, in which case we may change the excursion to Sunday. This will be announced at the meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Note also that no uncooked fruit or vegetables may be taken over the border into South Australia.

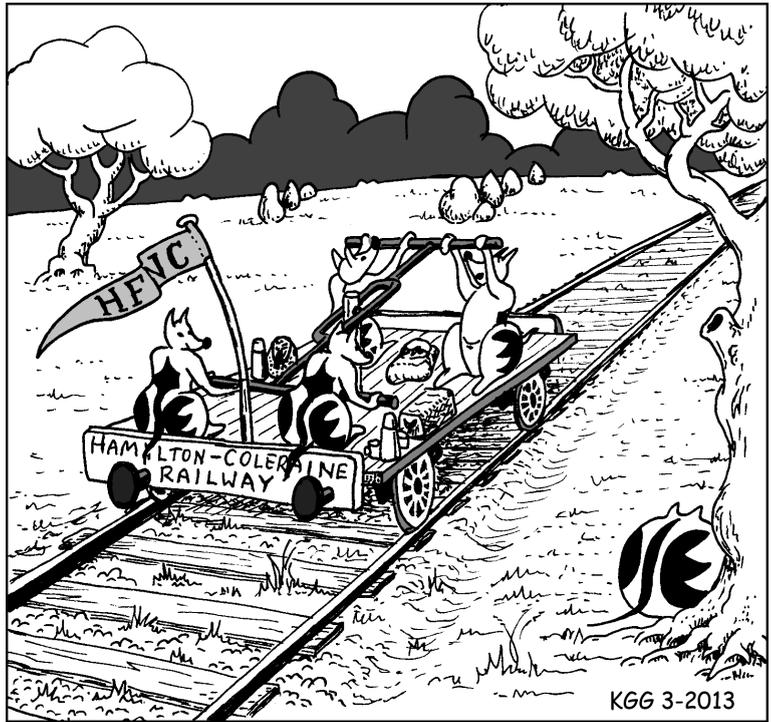
### ... INTO WETLANDS AND ALONG A RAILWAY TRACK

Our **excursion** on **Sunday 21 April** will be to the **Hawkesdale Racecourse Reserve**, which is an area of remnant vegetation including wetlands and grassland and some really big old manna gums.

On the following Sunday, **28 April**, we have been invited to take part in a project to restore Gooseneck Swamp. This Swamp, at the SE corner of the Grampians, once filled largely from the head waters of the Wannon River. The aim is to plug an artificial channel that drains into the adjacent Brady Swamp. Volunteers will be needed to help fill and place sandbags, and possibly to help with surveying water levels so the effects can be monitored. No doubt there will also be opportunities for bird watching.

Our **May meeting (Thursday 16<sup>th</sup>)** and **excursion (Saturday 18<sup>th</sup>)** will both be devoted to the **Hamilton-Coleraine rail trail**. The excursion will involve looking at some short sections with driving in between, and walking a longer section with car shuffling.

Earlier in the month, we will also have an excursion to check the **nest boxes** that we placed in the **Bear State Forest** last April. So far, the boxes have not been as successful as the cameras that we installed at the same time. The cameras caught a range of animals both native and introduced, but when the boxes were checked late last year they were all still empty except for three that had been colonised by feral bees. This excursion will probably take place on a weekday, the exact date to be announced later. Any suggestions as to how to exclude bees from the boxes would be welcome.



## **FIRE AND ICE**

Our **June** excursion to the **Grampians** was originally planned back in January, before the fires. Exactly where we go will depend on where the fire has spread by the time it is finally extinguished. In **July** we shall visit yet another burnt area – that of the Kentbruk fire, south of Drik Drik. As well as observing regrowth, we will be taking advantage of the absence of vegetation to look for caves and springs along the Glenelg River. And for our **July Special Meeting**, Ross Cayley will be showing us some stunning photos from his recent trip where he went kyaking in the Antarctic and climbing in Patagonia. Note that this meeting will be on **Friday 19 July**, rather than our usual Thursday.

## **GLUE-POTS**

The **August excursion**, for those who don't work or can take a few days off, will consist of a camping trip to **Gluepot Station** in the South Australian mallee. This reserve of 50,000 hectares is owned by Birds Australia and shelters about 190 species of birds, including the endangered black-eared miner. Accommodation on-site is "self-sufficient camping"; this means BYO everything including water and gas fires. More details are available on the website, [www.gluepot.org](http://www.gluepot.org). The nearest alternative accommodation is at Waikerie, 64 km to the south along a "good dirt" road.

We will try to book campsites early, so anyone who is intending to come should contact Rod Bird (5572 3639) as soon as possible. We aim to publish another newsletter, with more details, closer to the time.

Don't forget our bird counts at Lake Hamilton on the fourth Thursday of every month, i.e. the week after a meeting. We meet near the beach at 8am, and all pairs of eyes are welcome (preferably with bodies attached).