

Hamilton Field Naturalists Club President's Report for 2013

12 December 2013

Excursions, surveys and trips: Following our annual excursion to Lake Linlithgow we visited Mt Schank after seeing an excellent film on the volcanics of the Mt Gambier region. Trips were also made to the Lower Glenelg National Park and the Grampians (Victoria Point and the Mooralla/Glenisla Flats area). Many of us also walked part of the Hamilton-Coleraine Rail Trail. A highlight was a visit to Gluepot Station in the South Australian mallee, where we did many enjoyable walks and met-up with Penny Moon and some of her friends in South Australia. We also took part in a couple of wetland trips hosted by the Nature Glenelg Nature Trust, the first to raise the water level in Gooseneck Swamp, and the second to inspect wetlands in the Glenthompson area. For my part, the most satisfying trips were two visits to inspect nesting boxes installed in the Bear State Forest, where we successfully dealt with the bees, and later found families of Sugar Gliders in 2 of the boxes.

Special meetings: We had a varied and interesting series of talks at our Special meetings: Reto and Yvonne told us about their trip around Australia. Heinz de Chelard and Rod Bird told us about future plans for the Hamilton-Coleraine rail trail. Ross Cayley gave an entertaining slide show about his recent trip to Antarctica and Patagonia, and Ken Grimes introduced us to landforms in Cape York. The slide night, at which our members showed some of their best images of the natural world, was enjoyed by all.

Submissions and involvement with other groups: The HFNC continues to have representatives on the Grange Burn Stakeholders group and the Grampians Round Table. The highlight for me was the presentation on the Grampians post-fire management project by Prof. John White of Deakin University to the Round Table in August. The HFNC also contributed to the Australia Felix Museum of Arts Culture and History (AFMACH), a project that aims to develop, in Hamilton, a museum exhibiting the arts, culture and history of the region. Diane Luhrs has been the HFNC delegate on the committee. She organised an evening at HIRL in September at which presentations were made to RMIT staff and masters students involved in a project with AFMACH as its focus. At this evening, Rod Bird spoke on the natural history of the region, stressing that this region's cultural wealth is underpinned by its natural history. The HFNC can provide information about the region's natural history as the project progresses. The HFNC also made submissions on the Fire Operations Plan for the Wimmera district; to Parks Victoria on the draft management plan for parks at Mt Napier, Mt Eccles and other reserves; to the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor (Mr Neil Comrie); and to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Rural Drainage in Victoria.

Weed control: Our principal efforts in weed control have been at Fulham (Cape Tulip, Sparaxis, Gladiolus and African Weed Orchid) and Nigretta Flora Reserve (African Weed Orchid and Phalaris). It will be interesting to see if numbers of AWOs at Nigretta continue to fall. This year, all 8,100 AWOs found were treated with herbicide applied by wick-wiper, a far quicker process than digging plants up.

The website: We have had a bad time with our website this year, with two 'hackings'. Hopefully our troubles here are over as we have a new hosting set-up.

Membership: Current membership is 38, 3 less than last year.

Acknowledgments: I wish to thank Janeen & Ken for the newsletter and Dave for organizing news items about the guest speakers and running meetings that Glenys and I were unable to attend. I am grateful to Glenys for her careful management of the Club's finances, and Diane for once more taking on the role of Minutes Secretary and for providing information about AFMACH. Rod deserves special thanks for handling a mountain of mail, for keeping everyone in the club informed about club-matters *via* email and his tireless commitment for controlling invasive weeds. Rod also prepared our Club's submissions. Financial assistance from Parks Victoria towards travelling for weed control, and the Glenelg-Hopkins CMA towards the administrative costs of running the Club are also gratefully acknowledged.

John Cayley

President