

Mt Napier Excursion May 17th 2014

Diane Luhrs

9.30 am – HFNC members met at the Hamilton Visitor Centre and travelled in convoy to Menzel’s Pit for our day’s outing in the Mt Napier State Park.

Present: Rod Bird (excursion leader), Diane Luhrs, Karen and Chris Simpson, John and Glenys Cayley, David and Lyn Munro, Roger Thompson and Hilary Turner. We met the Ranger, Gary Bellesini, at the Park, as organised.

The day consisted of two parts: a morning to show Gary some of the geological features that were known to HFNC members but not to Parks Vic, and an afternoon stroll to the top of Mt Napier. We were very fortunate with the weather, warm dry and only a little breeze.



First we walked to the Devil’s Hole (see left and below), a deep crater to the east of the car park which is currently fenced out of the park, although the true boundary runs through the centre. HFNC members believe the entire crater should be included in the Park since it is a major feature of the volcanic complex.

The second part of the morning – a walk to Elmore’s Cone and Natural Bridge – was abandoned as the track was now overgrown with bracken and the way was not clear. Rod was able to provide the GPS location to allow Gary to visit later via the stone fence running east from Cole Track. Many thick and healthy leeches were seen on the ground as we travelled through this thick bracken but none managed to get a feed.



Ranger Gary and HFNC members inspect the Devil’s Hole

After lunch in the car park, and saying thanks and farewell to Gary, our party made its way slowly up the track to the summit (see left). We had expected to see some fungus but the dry days of the previous two weeks put paid to that. We did see a Rooting Shank and *Scheroderma* sp of fungi and *Wahlenbergia* in flower along the track near the summit. Two wedge-tailed eagles soared high overhead.

We also enjoyed seeing other visitors to the park, a family walking to the summit, cyclists and a visitor from Queensland. People do use the park for recreation and exercise.

At the summit clear views of the local area were enjoyed in all directions, with the wind turbines of Macarthur and Glenthompson now an established part of the landscape. The distant volcanic peaks to the east could not be clearly seen and identified.

The local provenance Manna Gums and Blackwoods planted by HFNC members are now very well established and younger saplings have emerged. The best growth has occurred in the sheltered eastern part just below the summit. The summit and upper slopes were devoid of any eucalypts and had only a few scraggy Blackwoods when HFNC planted the site in 1986 and 1991. Major Mitchell's party cleared the summit in 1836; frequent fires and grazing kept it bare afterwards. Blackwoods in the crater volunteered.



Karen, John, Glenys, Roger, Rod, Lyn, Diane & David with HFNC plantings on the slopes of Mt Napier in the background.