

Hamilton Field Naturalists Club President's Report for 2015

10 December 2015

Excursions: Excursions were made to Lake Linlithgow, Mt Napier, Lake Bolac, Murnanes Bay and Childer's Cove, the Wannon Flora and Scenic Reserves, Baileys Rocks, Mt Rosea, the Claude Austen and Bear State Forests. The annual campout was at the Little Desert Lodge in September..

Surveys: Rod Bird and Jane Hayes have conducted a monthly bird count at Lake Hamilton since March 2012 (and finishing in January 2016), complementing the earlier surveys at the Hamilton wetlands. Both surveys provide monthly data over 4-year periods of bird species and numbers of each species. A repetition of such comprehensive surveys in 10-20 years time would be quite interesting.

Regular visits to Lake Linlithgow by Jane and Rod have been used to provide a case for restoring sanctuary status to Lakes Linlithgow and Bullrush. That status was supposedly lost in 1975 with a revision of the Wildlife Act that had unintended consequences.

Remote-sensing cameras have been transferred from the Bear State Forest to Mt Napier State Park, to detect mammals in the Manna Gum forest and lava landscape. In addition to detecting native animals the camera array has detected deer and goats. A visit to the Bear SF in November 2015 showed that many of the nest boxes were providing homes for Sugar Gliders.

Special meetings: A wide range of topics was covered at our Special Meetings. Mark Bachmann told us how Nature Glenelg Trust was restoring drained wetlands. Rod Bird and Diane Luhrs gave an interesting account of their trip to the Pilbara, and Janeen Samuel showed us how some diseases of wild Australian animals impinge on us. Jane Walker from the CMA gave us a fascinating account of the role of women "Looking after country" in the Northern Territory and Victoria. The final speaker for the year was Euan Moore, who gave us an interesting account of bird and biodiversity areas in Victoria.

Submissions and involvement with other groups: Members were involved in fire meetings at Heywood, Moyston and Mirranatwa, Grampians Round Table meetings, and a field trip jointly run by the CMA and CFA, looking at significant remnants of Native grasslands on roadsides. Rod Bird has tirelessly pursued Local and State Governments to restore sanctuary-status to Lake Linlithgow.

Weed and pest control: The Club has continued to target weeds at the Fulham Streamside Reserve and Nigretta Falls Flora Reserve, and has encouraged Parks Victoria to continue its program of culling goats at Mt Napier.

Donations: The club was astonished to receive from the Magistrates Court fines of \$7,500 imposed on operators for illegal wood clearing in a State Forest. We had no knowledge of the activities or court process. The club has expended all of the funds on environmental projects and the major recipient was Nature Glenelg Trust, for wetland restoration (\$3000) and genetic studies of the Victorian Brolga population (\$2000). Lesser donations were made to Environmental Justice Australia, Environment Victoria and the VNPA.

Membership: Current membership is 39.

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. A big "Thank you" to Rod Bird and Jane Hayes for their early morning trips to Lake Hamilton to do the Bird Count.

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.

John Cayley
President