



HAMILTON FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

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NEWSLETTER, March 2015

Our new Life Member

Sadly, last year saw the loss of two of our Life Members, Rae Dempster and Grace James. On a happier note, we also gained one – at our December meeting members voted unanimously in support of life membership for John Cayley.

John has been a member of the Club since the early 1970s and has put in a tremendous amount of time and effort in all sorts of ways – from leading us through impenetrable bush to fighting his way through impenetrable government documents, and from spraying weeds to talking to politicians. As Rod Bird said in his nomination, “One of John’s strengths has been his ability to communicate in a friendly non-adversarial fashion, not allowing environmental ignorance or uncaring attitudes to visibly frustrate or upset him.”

John’s stints as Club President, beginning in 1977, add up to a total of 19 years. He had hoped to retire from the position at the end of last year, but has nobly agreed to stay on for another year. John’s President’s Report for 2014 is enclosed.

Coming events

The formal presentation of John’s Life Membership will take place at our Special Meeting on **Thursday 19 March**. The guest speaker at this meeting will be Mark Bachmann on “**Restoring drained wetlands in the South West – recent case studies on public and private land.**” Mark is manager of Nature Glenelg Trust, which works on waterways, wetlands and other ecological projects in SW Victoria and SE South Australia. Our Club has been involved with the Trust’s projects at Gooseneck Swamp and Bradys Swamp. As well as presenting local case studies, he will discuss the ecology and restoration of wetlands in general. As usual, the meeting will be at HIRL beginning at 7.30pm.

At the **May** meeting, Rod Bird and Diane Luhrs will show pictures from a few selected places on their recent 12,000 km trip to the **Pilbara region** of WA and return. These will include the desert park of Karlamilyi (Rudall River), the rugged Karijini NP, rock art at Burrup Peninsula (Dampier), Sharks Bay, Ningaloo Reef, and the fabulous wildflower country of Coalseam, Badgingarra, Lesueur, Watheroo and Eneabba.

Excursions over the next few months will concern fur and feathers, rocks and cliffs, and fresh water and salt, not to mention the odd plant.

On **Saturday 21 March** we will be installing movement-sensitive cameras in the **Mt Napier State Park** to monitor the wildlife there. The cameras are trained on a strong-smelling “bait” and anything that comes to investigate is captured on film. The cameras were previously set up in the Bear State Forest, where they revealed a number of species including at least one – a koala – that was unexpected. At Mt Napier we are expecting koalas, possums, sugar-gliders, and native rats, but we’re also hoping we might find a yellow-bellied glider, brush-tailed phascogale, or spotted-tailed quoll. While it won’t take many people to set up the cameras, everyone can enjoy an interesting drive-and-walk in the forest, with maybe a “stroll” up the mountain afterwards. There will be trips back to check the cameras in the following months, in addition to our regular excursions.

After discussing how to restore wetlands in March, we will be hoping for a wetland that’s not yet too full when we go to **Lake Bolac** on **Sunday 19 April**. This is because there are some interesting rock outcrops on the floor of the Lake, which Ken will be explaining to us. Doubtless there will also be plenty of water birds.

The above two excursions will leave the Hamilton Visitor Centre at 9am. For the following excursion, on **Saturday 23 May**, the main meeting place will be the **Allansford Cheese Factory at 10.30am**. However, those of us who want to car-pool will meet at the Hamilton Visitor Centre at **8.45am** so we can get away promptly by nine. From Allansford (probably after a quick coffee) we'll proceed to **Murnane's Bay and Childers Cove**. Both of these offer spectacular scenery with more opportunity for geology lessons from Ken, as well as sea birds and coastal vegetation.

Book Now for our September Camp-out

In September we are planning a Campout at the **Little Desert Nature Lodge**. There are two options for accommodation: camping at \$25 per night for two, or en-suite rooms at \$125 per night single or double. (All the bunk-rooms have already been booked by another group). **You need to make your own bookings soon, particularly if you want a room** (phone the Lodge on 5391 5232). Some of us will go up on **Friday 18 September** for walks on nature trails in the area, and on Saturday we'll drive into the western part of the Little Desert National Park. On the morning of **Sunday 20** we'll head down to Douglas where we'll meet Euan Moore, and he will take us into his bush block adjacent to the Jilpanger Flora Reserve. Members who can't make it to the camp-out can meet us at **Douglas at 10am**.

Later in the year

Also in the second half of the year we have a number of **working bees** scheduled in order to deal with the spring growth of weeds threatening native grasslands. We don't expect that any member – except Rod Bird – will get to all of them, but it would be good if every able-bodied member could spare an hour or so for at least one of them. We'll also be checking our **nest-boxes in the Bear State Forest**, some of which have been occupied by sugar-gliders. We can now inspect these without perilous ladder-climbs, using a camera on a long pole – the same principle that surgeons use to peer into people's insides. Many thanks to Reto Zollinger for organising this.

The topics of our **guest speakers in July, September and November** will all be concerned in some way with caring for our planet and its plants and animals – indigenous projects looking after country in Northern Territory and Australia, important bird and biodiversity areas in Victoria, and diseases of wild animals in a shrinking world (no gory pictures).

Finally, please note that membership subscriptions for 2015 are now due – still \$15 individual or \$20 family. They can be paid by cash at a meeting; by posting a cheque made out to "Hamilton Field Naturalists Club" to PO Box 591, Hamilton 3300; or at a CBA branch or via internet banking to 'CBA A/c No. 00901086 and BSB 06 3513' (please put your name and 'subs' in the description section of the input form). A short form of the membership form is attached, or you can use the updated version on our website:

(hamilton-field-naturalists-club-victoria.org.au).

