

HAMILTON FIELD NATURALIST'S CLUB



PO Box 591
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3 December 2009

President's Report Hamilton Field Naturalists Club 2009

No rest for the wicked. The year started early, actually in December 2008, with two applications for grant money one under the Federal Small Equipment Volunteer Grant Program and one under the State Bush Guardians Grant Program, both ultimately successful. HFNC was also committed to host the SEANA Spring Camp in October 2009 and preparations for this event were on the agenda as early as February.

Sadly the beginning of the year was overshadowed by the horrific fire storm in February. Tragically, we may have lost a lot more than good friends. But let's not dismay, remember those friends lost in fond memory and gain strength and courage to carry on what they have fought for by being a strong voice for better environmental outcomes.

2009 turned out to be a busy year with many submissions and letters posted, keeping Rod Bird on his toes as HFNC Secretary. Many thanks to Rod and other members for all the hard (mental) work.

Some of the bigger issues addressed were as follow:

- March, HFNC contributed to two submissions supporting Jodie Honan in nominating the Glenelg Spiny Freshwater Crayfish and the Glenelg Freshwater Mussel to be listed as threatened under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act).
- April, HFNC wrote a submission contributing to the 2009 Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission.
- April, HFNC alerted parties concerned about significant native vegetation on private land south of Hamilton containing EPBC listed Natural Temperate Grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plain.
- May, HFNC prepared six submissions in response to a Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) investigation into Remnant Native Vegetation. The areas listed to be considered by VEAC for better protection were, Fulham Streamside Reserve, Red Hill, Little Youngs and Youngs State Forest, Woohpooer State Forest, Weecurra State Forest, Rocklands area (Mooralla SF & Claude Austin SF), Dergholm-Chetwynd region.
- May, HFNC wrote to the Southern Grampians Shire Council (SGSC) offering to have input on how and where \$70,000 Federal Government money is spent at Wannon & Nigretta Falls.
- May, report on behalf of HFNC on Elephant Paddock site at Hamilton, a survey conducted by Rod Bird for Justin Cook (DSE).
- August, HFNC letter of concern to SGSC, following the thoughtless clearing of native vegetation at the Wannon Reserve by the SGSC, despite HFNC offering in May to be involved in helping to make informed sustainable management decisions for this significant reserve.
- August, HFNC members spent considerable time to comment on the annual Wimmera and Portland Fire Operation Plans (FOP) prepared with knowledge gained during several fire related events held in June. Members went to great length attending this fire ecology seminars and conferences which were as far away as Ballarat and even Sydney.
- November, HFNC reported an alleged illegal clearing of significant native vegetation on private land south of Hamilton containing EPBC listed Natural Temperate Grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plain. The clearing occurred despite us alerting several parties about the significance back in April.

Apart from submissions and letters, numerous other great and wonderful projects were archived this year, much to the credit and dedication of many individual Club members.

Congratulations were due in April when Diane Luhrs celebrated her outstanding, printed and bound, first edition book of 'HFNC – Environmental Advocacy and Action 1958-2008'.

Between June and November, many working bees were held, amounting to about 400 combined volunteer working hours, or 50 working days, or 10 working weeks. This is probably a conservative estimate. Weed control was of high priority this year with activities at the 18Acre Reserve, Hamilton Community Parkland, Kanawalla Railway Reserve, the annual weed control at the Fulham Streamside Reserve, Vasey Siding Rail Reserve, Gringegalga Settlers Reserve, Wannan Falls Scenic Reserve, Nigretta Falls Scenic Reserve and the 23,000 South African Weed Orchids dug up and pulled out at the Nigretta Flora Reserve. Our 'Weed Warrior' Rod Bird was the driving force and more than often single-handed volunteer, persistently and methodically tackling the enormous task.

In October, HFNC hosted the South East Australian Naturalists Association (SEANA) Spring Camp held at the Grampians Retreat and Field Study Centre near Dunkeld, a successful and well attended event enjoyed by all. Testimony for the hard work and outstanding professionalism by all members involved in organising and running the weekends activities, making the event such a 'breeze' !!!

In November, after a long drawn but necessary process, the renewed Hamilton Community Parkland Nature Trail signs were officially unveiled by the McInnes Family. It all started early 2008 after Liz Fenton located and secured the original art work created by Sue McInnes for the Nature Trail. On behalf of HFNC, Liz successfully secured funding from former 'Timbercorp' to rejuvenate the 25-year-old Nature Trail, another job well done and thanks are due for all involved in the project.

But wait there is more; we can not forget the informative speaker nights and diverse excursions.

Speaker topics for the year ranged from the foreign landscapes of Turkey by Rod Bird and Diane Luhrs to the stunning photographs of the Grampians by Alison Poulliot. Informative presentations on threatened flora by David Pitts and diverse geological sandstone formation of tropical Australia by Ken Grimes, finishing the year with the adventurous Simpson Desert crossing undertaken by John and Glenys Cayley, Rod Bird and Diane Luhrs.

The year started with the annual bird count at Lake Linlithgow, despite the lake being dry the sun rise over the cloud shrouded Grampians was well worth the early start. Once again excursions were of great variety covering landscapes from the coast at Killarney Beach along the stony rise around Lake Condah to the mountain ranges of the Grampians and surrounds. The Mount Thackeray campout in November revealing stunning views from the top of the range across the Grampians, highlighted to me the reason why we, as a Club and individuals, need to continue being a strong voice for the protection and sustainable management of our unique natural environment.

President
Hamilton Field Naturalists Club

Reto Zollinger