

Hamilton Field Naturalists Club President's Report for 2012

Excursions, surveys and trips: 2012 has been a year where we have tried something new: the installation of nest boxes and remote-sensing cameras in bushland at Bear State Forest. Reto did a great job preparing mounts to attach the cameras to trees and also made the lures to attract animals. The cameras were a great success, detecting a range of species but feral honey-bees have set-up home in 3 of the 10 boxes. We were warned about this, and getting rid of the bees remains a challenge.

In addition to the traditional look at Lake Linlithgow and associated wetlands in February, visits were made to Camperdown (SEANA camp-out) and the Bear Forest to set up and retrieve cameras. Two trips were made to the Grampians, one to the Mt Zero-Mt Stapylton area and the other to Mt Abrupt. A highlight of the latter trip was the impressive work on the track following the January 2011 landslides. Excursions were also made to Mt Napier, Fulham Streamside Reserve, Bool Lagoon and the historic sheepwash at Bessiebelle, a 'first' for most of us.

Special meetings: In March, Mark Bachmann gave an inspiring insight into how wetlands in the SE of South Australia have, and are being restored. Sally Purnell was unable to present her talk in May, and the members' slide night held instead was a great success. This could be a regular feature for one of our Special meetings each year. In July, Steve Clark gave us an interesting account of the birds and other wildlife he and Jenny encountered during the recent year they spent in Tanzania, including the sighting of a raptor species previously unrecorded in that country! At our September Special meeting, Jodie Honan presented a well-researched and interesting account of the history and natural history of an area that is familiar to most of us: Griffith Island, at Port Fairy. Rod Bird and Diane Luhrs' recent trip to Bhutan was the topic for the final Special meeting. It was great to have visitors all the way from Portland in attendance.

Submissions and involvement with other groups: We, with local community members, erected posters depicting history and wildflowers at Vasey and Gringegalgona. The HFNC have also been involved with meetings of the Grampians Round Table, Grange Burn Stakeholder Advisory Group, Budj Bim Sustainable Development Partnership Leadership Group, Southern Grampians Roadside Management Committee and Glenelg-Hopkins CMA River & Wetland Health Advisory Group. Submissions were prepared on the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, Review of Victoria's Native Vegetation Clearance Regulations, Fire Operation Plans (FOPs) for the Wimmera District and for Far South-west Victoria, and Parliamentary Inquiry into Rural Drainage in Victoria.

Weed control: The control of weeds in bushland concentrated on Sparaxis and Cape Tulip at the Fulham Streamside Reserve and Blue Periwinkle and African Weed Orchid at Nigretta. Monitoring the number of weeds treated will hopefully give us a rational basis for continuing this work. It is, however, hard to come to definite conclusions about the effectiveness of our efforts from only a few years.

The website: The website is now up and running thanks to the graphic contributions from Ken and Reto and the drive of Rod who, in consultation with Christine O'Grady, designed and created the website. Ken also kindly agreed to a training session on keeping the website up-to-date and has already attended to a number of items on the website, much to the relief of the rest of us!

Membership: Current membership is 41, up 4 on 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 while Glenys and I were tripping to the Netherlands and Scotland. I am grateful to Glenys for her careful management of the Club's finances, Diane for once more taking on the role of Minutes Secretary and Reto for designing the wildflower posters. Rod deserves special thanks for handling a mountain of mail, his tireless commitment for controlling invasive weeds and for keeping everyone in the club informed about club-matters *via* email. Rod also prepared the submissions on FOPs, Native Vegetation Regulations and Rural Drainage. Finally I thank Ross Robson for allowing us to approach the northern bank of the Wannon at Nigretta *via* his property, enabling us to get across the river when water levels are too high for rock-hopping.

It has been a good and productive year for the Club.

John Cayley, President

13 Dec 2012