

HFNC Inc - President's Report 2025

Diane Luhrs

I would like to start this report by acknowledging the people who have given their help, support and time to ensuring that the Club has continued to function and has been able to maintain its program of conservation works, monthly excursions and the five special presentations throughout the year.

Particularly important was the continued work of the Committee in keeping members informed of issues and activities, managing our finances and keeping us on track with legal reporting commitments and the general members who have attended working-bees at the four sites our club manages. Thank you to Rod Bird (Correspondence Secretary) for all the writing – monthly newsletters, excursion reports, submissions and responding to questions from the local council and others outside the club who require assistance and for his time in organizing the working bees, then writing reports of these and then uploading all reports to the Club's Website – a public resource about our regional places and HFNC Inc activities. Thank you to Steve Martinich (Treasurer) for all the work involved in maintaining monthly records of the incoming and outgoing of Club funds, paying Club accounts and especially for steering the Club through the process of becoming incorporated and the flow-on business that this necessitated. It has been a massive year for the Treasurer and through it Steve has ensured that HFNC Inc is in a better place for all future business accounting. Thank you to Reto Zollinger (Vice-president) who organized and hosted the excursion and managed the Club in August during my absence as well as providing, with Yvonne Ingeme, a well-received presentation in November. Finally, a special thanks to Janeen Samuel for maintaining a record of sightings reported at meetings and for writing up each business meeting's minutes, an essential part of our Club's history and an on-going record of activities, plans and concerns.

Club activities

Special Presentations: Once again, we have enjoyed a variety of presentations – Four by Club members and one from noted South Australian hydrogeologist and cave-diver Ian Lewis. In March, Rod Bird and Diane Luhrs spoke of their January 2024 trip to the Antarctic Peninsular and the geology, flora and fauna experienced there. In May, Pam Lehmann delighted all with her stories and images of her trip to Western Australia in winter 2024 - wild flower season! Diane and Rod presented in July on their botanical research for their chapter in Jenni Mitchell and Mervyn Hannan's 2024 book *Gariwerd/Grampians: From the Mountains to the Plains* describing and depicting the endemic species and other special species found in Gariwerd. In September, Ian Lewis presented on the caves and sinkholes of Naracoorte and the Mt Gambier region, describing their geological features as well as the biota they supported. In November, Reto Zollinger and Yvonne Ingeme enlightened and entertained us with their stories of being involved with large non-governmental conservation organisations and the activities they undertook on each of the properties to assist these organisations in their conservation works. Some of their activities involved collecting and monitoring endangered species, engaged Reto and Yvonne in the actual running of the visitor centres at these places and/or routine maintenance of the buildings/facilities.

Excursions and Working bees at dedicated sites

As most of the excursions and working bees have been recorded in detailed reports that have been uploaded on the HFNC Inc website by Rod, I will only briefly mention these. I do recommend that members and others use the website to enjoy the wealth of environmental information contained there. Access can be gained by using the SEARCH function listed on the bar on the first page and by typing a key word – eg "waterbird". Reports can also be accessed by clicking successively on Publications → Excursion and Project Reports → Excursion Reports (or Environmental Project Reports) or Publications → Fauna Lists and Surveys → Mammal Surveys. Note that the most recent reports are at the end of a long list – so keep scrolling to find them.

Briefly, the Club's excursions for the year included: February – Linlithgow area wetland for waterbirds; March – Warrnambool coastal sites from east to west; April – Muddy Creek fossil sites; May – Long Swamp and Nobles Rocks; June – Gariwerd Peaks Trail, Cassidy Gap to Signal Peak; July – Tapoc/Mt Napier volcanics; August – Wannon Scenic Reserve Fungi foray; September – Stawell and surrounds orchids and other spring flowers; October – Gariwerd/Grampians NP recovery of burned area – orchids and other flowers – shared with Friends of Gariwerd/Grampians; November – Gariwerd/Grampians NP, Redman Tk late spring flowers.

Our special working bees and a mammal survey included: **Wannon Flora Reserve** – *Acacia paradoxa* control with many member visits through the year and a 7-week stint of one hour/week of Yr 9 Baimbridge College students; **Nigretta Flora Reserve** – one visit this year to remove *Disa Bracteata*; **Fulham Streamside Reserve** – one visit this year to remove Cape Tulip and other weeds; and **Kanawalla Railway Flora Reserve** – one formal visit to remove tree guards multiple

other visits by Rod to remove and control emergent weeds and to keep the track and fences clear of fallen timber; and one visit to Bear State Forest to check the mammal boxes at five sites for any mammals present or signs of recent activity.

Our members have also been involved in environmental activities with other groups. For example: the Biannual shorebird counts in February and July; the annual Red-tailed Black Cockatoo count in May; the Western Woodland Bush Birds survey in late November/December; a variety of activities organized by Portland Field Naturalists Club; and a variety of activities organized by Nature Glenelg Trust.

Up-coming challenges for the Club include

1. Having sufficient people to participate in the working bees,
2. Having more members to share the administrative load – for example:
 - a. By connecting with guest presenters and ensuring that there is a written account of their presentations and advertisements to match (three weeks before the presentation) to be published in the Hamilton Spectator (the Friday before the presentation),
 - b. To collect the Key to HIRL,
 - c. To provide platters for supper on guest presentation nights (with thanks to Janeen and Glenys for always bringing a plate of food along), and
 - d. To seek out information on places for excursions and to write up excursion reports that a member suggests.

In finishing, I would like to reiterate my thanks to all who supported the Club during 2025. And I would like to thank Steve Martinich for his time with us and for his professional approach to the Treasurer's job. I especially would like to extend on behalf of the Club our very best wishes to Steve and Debra on their move from Hamilton to a new life in Ballarat and do hope that our paths cross on future field naturalist activities.