

HAMILTON FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB



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15 Aug 20013

PARKS VICTORIA
Chief Executive
Dr Bill Jackson
Level 10, 535 Bourke Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000

Dear Dr Jackson

We wish to draw to your attention to long-standing issues with the management of **Mount Napier State Park** – matters that we have pursued informally many times with local managers since the early 1990s and more recently with:

- Dr Mark Stone, Chief Executive (May 2009)
- Mr Brian Doolan, Manager of Planning (March 2012) – see copy of letter attached

We have not seen any action on the issues we raised.

1. eradicating feral goats from the park
2. restoring the crater called locally the ‘Devils Hole’ into the Mt Napier SP.

Since the substance of our letter now is the same as it was in 2009, I have repeated below the letter we sent to Dr Stone (but without the attachments cited in that letter), in the hope that you may be able to elicit some action on these long-standing issues:

Yours faithfully

Dr PR Bird

Secretary
Hamilton Field Naturalists Club
Email: rod.bird@bigpond.com

Copy of letter sent in 2009 to PV

Mark Stone
Chief Executive
Parks Victoria

6 May 2009

Dear Mark

Re: (1) Feral goat problem at Mt Napier State Park
(2) Inclusion of the crater “The Devils Hole” into the Park

HFNC has been actively interested in the Crown lands at Mount Napier-Byaduk area, beginning with our correspondence with the then National Parks Authority in July 1959, a year after our club was formed. Since that time we explored the area, campaigned for its reservation, surveyed flora, fauna (birds and mammals) and geological features and, we believe, were largely responsible for the LCC recommending its reservation as a State Park. Later, from 1984-1994, we re-planted the denuded summit of the mount with 2,500 Manna Gum and Blackwood grown from seed collected around the base, and assisted with development of the Byaduk Caves trails and signage.

We have alerted DCNR and Parks Victoria to many problems, as may be seen in a sample of attached letters:

- Nov 1992 – letter to DCNR regarding sheep and goats in the Park, impact of baiting on Tiger Quolls and fire on hollow-dependent fauna.

- Feb 1997 – Byaduk Caves, illegal vehicle traffic on the mount, acquisition of The Devils Hole.
- June 2000 – feral goats, environmental weeds and The Devils Hole.
- Feb 2005 – feral goats in the Park
- June 2005 – feral goats in the Park

In the light of our long-term interest in the Mount Napier State Park we are disappointed to have to inform you that very little has changed over the last 20 years in respect to the matters we raised in our letters.

(1) Feral goat problem at Mt Napier State Park

Nothing has been done over the last 20 years to resolve the problem with the goats – while rangers have shot the odd goat, there seems to be no resolve to address the problem with any zeal.

These animals have seriously (perhaps permanently) degraded the ferns and other ground vegetation on scoria cones, caves and Natural Bridge near Elmore's Cone (central part of Mt Napier lava field) and heavily browsed trees and shrubs planted on the mount. They pass over into the Byaduk Caves complex where they also camp. We believe that the goats could be eradicated from this difficult terrain by a professional shooter employing a helicopter. Alternatively, we contacted groups such as Casterton Field and Game Club and the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (SSAA) who both expressed willingness to work with Parks Victoria to rid the pests from the area. It seems that was too difficult for Parks Victoria.

More recently we met with Clive Crouch of Nhill (crouchc@iprimus.com.au), who advised that the SSAA at Nhill now conduct a Conservation & Pest Management Accreditation course that is recognized by Parks Victoria, enabling those who pass the course to conduct an organised shoot in National Parks (through an Authority for Carrying Firearms in Parks).

We discussed the matter with Ranger-in-charge West Coast District, Don Tumney and appreciate that there are difficulties, aggravated by the lack of a ranger currently at Mt Eccles National Park. Don advised us that it would also be necessary to have adjoining landholders contacted and on-site regarding control of goats (some move from Park to freehold lands).

We are most disappointed that the matter of pest animals has not been regarded seriously by Parks Victoria in the past, despite the assurances in the Draft Management Plan (1993). We therefore ask you when we might see some action to resolve the problem. We are willing to assist in any way possible.

(2) Incorporation of the crater “The Devils Hole” into the Park

It is now also nearly 20 years since we first raised the matter of this impressive geological feature (a crater of perhaps 40 m diameter and 15 m depth) being fenced out of the Park. It seemed to us that it ought to have been a rather simple matter to fix, since the landholder was not averse to having the fence replaced by Parks Victoria. The survey line goes directly across the crater and, when the Crown land to the east was alienated in the 1960s, the landholder ran his fence on the west side. There is about 250 m of fencing involved.

This volcanic feature is not seen by visitors because it is some 500 m from Menzels Pit parking area and outside of the fenced boundary, appearing to be private land. Consequently, no track or signage has been installed.

We ask you if there can be some action on this matter in the near future.

Yours faithfully

Dr PR Bird
Secretary
Hamilton Field Naturalists Club
Email: rod.bird@bigpond.com