

Parks Victoria
Mt Eccles
Copy to:
John Amor
Parks Victoria, Warrnambool

6/2000

Dear Sir-

Our letter concerns four pressing issues at Mt Napier State Park:

- * **On-going feral goat problem throughout the Park**
- * **Boundary fence breach on NW boundary of former Mt Napier Reserve**
- * **Environmental weed explosion from a 1-ha source near Murroa Corner**
- * **Fencing of "The Devils Hole" (located NE from Menzels Pit) into the State Park.**

Feral goat problem

Goats have been loose in the Park for at least 10 years, yet nothing constructive seems to have been achieved in their eradication. They have systematically degraded vegetation on all the hills and rocky areas, removed all of the ferns from the significant lava channel/caves feature near Elmore's Cone (in the centre of the Park), have browsed the fringe of all wild cherry trees and mangled young blackwood throughout the Park. The damage is not acceptable, as it is degrading an a Park that already has problems resulting from past mismanagement with fire, grazing and mining. Our club recently noted one mob of a dozen goats, including one young kid, several half-grown kids and adult males and females, off Cole Track.

We understand that some effort has been made to trap the goats but clearly that tactic was a waste of time. Rather reluctantly we have come to the opinion that Parks Victoria must enlist the support of the local Sports Shooters Association in a control effort. This could require a closure of the Park on one day when an organised shoot could be conducted. To be effective we believe an aerial spotter would be needed initially, for a short time only, to locate the small groups of goats that infest the area. Groups of shooters could then be directed to the areas, with a better chance of achieving a total wipeout of the animals. With the availability of modern GPS units, this would be a simple exercise. Our club would be willing to assist at the entrances (of which there are 7 possible points of public access) to advise the public to keep out during the operation.

Boundary fence breach

There is a breakdown of the fence on the NE side of the former Mt Napier Reserve, some 800 m east from Menzel's Pit corner. This is allowing sheep and goats from the farm to invade the Park. This was noted last weekend and is a source of concern, as stock are using it.

Environmental weeds near Murroa Corner

Problems with environmental weeds were pointed out to Rangers in 1996 and more recently. One very bad infestation has not been treated and is capable of extending throughout the Park. This is an outbreak of garden plants from a former rubbish dump, located approximately 350 m SE from the Park sign at Murroa Corner. More precisely, the present infestation occupies about one hectare of land approximately 100 m east of the junction of two tracks which run on from either side of the Old Crusher near the northern boundary.

The presence of these garden plants was reported to the Park management about three years ago (and specimens were provided). The area infected has apparently trebled in that time and, unless urgent action is taken, will eventually infect the whole area. This is a most depressing prospect and alarming prospect. The only solution appears to be to blanket-spray the entire one-hectare area, and then inspect the area at intervals thereafter, to mop up escapees. Our club could offer some assistance in this work.

Fencing of "The Devils Hole" into the Park area

We have made mention of this feature several times in the past 5 years, especially in connection with the Draft Management Plan for the Park and again in April 1996. To refresh your memory about this feature, it is an explosion crater situated some 400 m NE from Menzel's Pit, on the boundary of the Park. The true boundary, in fact, runs directly across the crater, but the former owner chose to put the fence on the Park side of the crater. This now excludes the public from this important geological feature, one which should be made available to visitors to the area, forming an easy and interesting walk from the car park. The site could be linked to the little scoria hill and nearby shallow crater, about 1 km from Menzel's Pit on the Menzel's Pit track.

Yours faithfully

Janeen Samuel
Secretary
Hamilton Field Naturalists Club