

HAMILTON FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB



PO Box 591
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AGM at HIRL, Thursday 2 December 2010

President's Report Hamilton Field Naturalists Club 2010

Another hectic year has passed and it felt like an "old" engine ticking over on full steam, much to the credit of the committee and various other Club members. Though the ride was sometimes a bit bumpy we are making headway, even if the waves created are just small ripples along the shore, but they are better than nothing at all.

The highlight of the year would have to be the production of the '*Hamilton Region Nature Guide*' which hopefully will help the Club for many decades to come. We all can be very proud of this achievement. A big thank you to all the members that have contributed and particularly Diane Luhrs for maintaining the driving force.

The wide variety of excursions, covering landscapes from the coast at Bridgewater, the volcanic landscapes from Mt Schank in SA to the Manna gum dominated woodlands near Hamilton and the forests of the Grampians and surround are always a treat for eye and soul.

The Newsletters, as always, are a real delight to read with fabulous poems to cheer you up and exquisite cartoons that make you laugh, thanks to the dedication for detail and quirky humour of Janeen Samuel and Ken Grimes.

Leading up to May, HFNC members provided significant support and help with the running of the Platypus information day at the Grange Burn with guest presenter Geoff Williams from the Australian Platypus Conservancy. The event, organised by the Grange Burn Stakeholder Advisory Group and funded by the SGSC, had a spectacular turnout from the Hamilton community, with over one hundred people participating.

Many positive changes have occurred since the restructuring of the SGSC, much to the credit of Marta Vergara who, within her 12 month stint in the Shire Council, achieved tremendous progress toward better environmental accountability.

Thanks to our Publicity Officer, David Munro, HFNC had positive public exposure through the local Newspaper, with many informative and educational articles on environmental topics.

The re-flooding of Lake Condah is inspirational and maybe, just maybe, Buckley Swamp could make history in some decades to come.

Thanks to Elizabeth Fenton, HFNC was successful in receiving another Community Group Small Equipment Grant from the Federal Government which, on one hand is acknowledging the hard physical and mental work HFNC members provide to the community and on the other hand will help reduce the financial burden of running the Club's works program.

Between September and November, many working bees were held. Weed control was again a high priority activity with 'Weed Warrior' Rod Bid the driving force and an admirable example of keeping meticulous reports on activities. Working bees included the annual weed control at the Fulham Streamside Reserve that to date has been a steady income for the Club. Weed control also continued at the Wannan Falls Scenic Reserve, Nigretta Falls Flora Reserve and Kanawalla Rail Reserve where again many thousand Cape Tulip, Sparaxis, Angled Onion and South African Weed Orchids were wick wiped, dug up or pulled out.

The selection of high profile guest speakers highlights HFNC's endeavours to educate members and the community alike on topical environmental issues. Several speakers focused on birds, with presentations by Steve Clark, Adam Bester and Prof. Andrew Bennett. Other speakers covered non feathery topics such as threatened orchids (Noushka Reiter) and geology of volcanoes and volcanic caves (Ken Grimes).

Still to come, a Grass Identification Workshop at Dunkeld in December, instigated by Elizabeth Fenton and hosted by the HFNC. Dr Graeme Lorimer, a well respected grass expert, will deliver this two-day workshop, with the aim to educate community members in recognising native grasslands and how to manage them sustainably.

The disappointment of the year was the blunt reality that State or Federal environmental law does not fare well against political point-scoring and big industrial dollars. Another disappointment was, once again, the Fire Operation Plan (FOP) and associated increased burn targets coming out of the Royal Commission. That can only be described as holocaust of biblical proportions leading to genocide on Victoria's Biodiversity and this, ironically, in the 'International Year of Biodiversity'.

2010 was another year committee members have spent a lot of time preparing submissions and letters. Some of the bigger issues addressed were as follow:

- February, HFNC commented on Regional Forest Agreements (RFA) review, highlighting again the serious flaws of this unsatisfactory and outdated process that should have been abandoned.
- April, HFNC wrote a submission restating the urgent need to restore the Gooseneck Swamp and Bradys Swamp.
- April, HFNC alerted parties concerned about significant native vegetation and the occurrence of the Golden Sun Moth within the footprint of the proposed RES Ararat Wind Farm.
- April, HFNC requested a review of the Federal Environment Ministers decision on RES Ararat Wind Farm, sighting serious shortcomings in the flora and fauna assessment conducted.
- May, HFNC commented on the Draft Western Region Sustainable Water Strategy.
- July, HFNC wrote to State Environment Minister, raising concerns about the danger of petroleum exploration in the Otway/Bass Basin.
- July, HFNC wrote a submission to origin Energy Resources Otway/Bass Basin Gas project.
- August, HFNC members spent considerable time to comment on the annual Wimmera and Far South West Fire Operation Plan (FOP).
- August, HFNC commented on the VEAC Native vegetation assessment.
- November, HFNC reported several cases of illegal clearings of native grassland vegetation on road reserves.

All up another eventful and productive year.

We can be proud to live with the knowledge that we are a growing voice for the environment.

Many thanks to all office bearers and members that provided their valuable support during the year. It was a great team effort.

Reto Zollinger

President

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