

Hamilton Field Naturalists Club President's Report 11 December 2014

Excursions and surveys: Excursions were made to Lake Linlithgow, Point MacDonnell, Mt Napier, Yarram Gap and the Serra Range in the Grampians, Cape Nelson Coastal Park (with Portland FNC), the Black Range SP and Wilken. Surveys included monthly bird counts at Lake Hamilton, summer water birds at Hamilton and Willaura, participation in the annual Red-tailed Black Cockatoo survey and the use of remote cameras at the Bear State Forest to detect mammals and birds. We all enjoyed the joint excursion with the Portland Field Nats. It would be nice if we could run an annual joint excursion with them.

Special meetings: We enjoyed a wide range of topics at our special meetings. Dave and Lyn Munro gave an interesting account of their recent trip to New Zealand's North Island. Ivor and Ruth Graney (Portland Field Nats) told of their recent holiday into Canada, backed up with excellent photos. Mary Johnson and Ben Church provided a stimulating evening introducing us to Gunditmirring land management including how wetlands were managed in order to ensure a reliable harvest of eels. The final speaker for the year was Peter Hocking who told us of his father's task of mapping in central Australia using stellar observations. The final special meeting evening was devoted to images of nature presented by our members. Ken showed a stunning movie about three dimensional mapping of an enormous cave in China using laser scanners.

Submissions and involvement with other groups: Highlights included working with Nature Glenelg Trust (NGT) in constructing a sandbag dam to restore water levels of Brady's Swamp, and being involved in a goat-culling exercise at Mt Napier organised by Parks Victoria (PV). Members attended meetings of the Grampians Round Table, fire-management meetings organised by PV and DEPI, the Shire Roadside Committee, and with NGT to discuss management of weeds and flora at Lake Linlithgow. Submissions were made to PV about the new management plan and restoration of mounds at Tabor Swamp, and to DEPI and Dept. of Water & Environment concerning herbicide spraying of 10 km of roadside on Noske's Subdivision Road. Several letters were written to DPI, local and state Governments in an effort to restore the sanctuary status of Lakes Linlithgow and Bullrush that was inadvertently lost in the 1975 revision of the Wildlife Act. A letter complaining about the dumping of rubbish in the bush near Four Posts was also sent to the Shire.

Weed control: Weeds at Fulham, Nigretta and Kanawalla were once again targeted. Over 180 hours of work (mostly by Rod) were devoted to this task. Experimental observations at Nigretta are examining the effects of herbicides glyphosate and metsulfuron methyl singly and in combination, on the survival of African Weed Orchid bulbs over summer. I think that the control of this nasty exotic will depend on an effective combination of herbicides. If we cannot limit weed populations using herbicide the battle will be lost, and our time would be better spent on other pressing issues.

Membership: Current membership is 39, 1 more than last year. We were saddened by the deaths of Rae Dempster and Grace James who were life members and stalwart supporters of the club.

Acknowledgments: I wish to thank Janeen & Ken for the newsletter and Dave for organizing news items about the guest speakers and running meetings that Glenys and I were unable to attend. I am grateful to Glenys for her careful management of the Club's finances, and Diane for once more taking on the role of Minutes Secretary. Thanks also to Peter for agreeing to hold our Christmas break-up function at his property on the Wannan. Rod deserves special thanks for handling a mountain of mail, for keeping everyone in the club informed about club-matters *via* email and his tireless commitment for controlling invasive weeds. He also made the task of writing this report easier by providing me with a summary of the year's events.

John Cayley, President