

## HFNC Life Membership to Rae Dempster

Rod Bird

Rae Dempster was nominated in September 2008 as a Life Member of the Hamilton Field Naturalist Club for her notable contributions to the HFNC over many years and to a number of other organisations, including the Hamilton Institute of Rural Learning (HIRL), the Hamilton Regional Art Gallery and the Women's Hockey Association where she was a coach and umpire.

Rae was a physical education teacher who came to Hamilton in 1946 to join the staff at the Hamilton High School. While raising 3 children and assisting her husband who served 8 years a Mayor of Hamilton, Rae returned to teaching in 1956 and continued until 1979. Rae became involved with HFNC in the early 1970s and was the Club's librarian from 1976-1978 and contributed to all the working bees and events staged by HFNC. She served as a committee member from 1984-87.

One of Rae's passions was gardening and planting trees and shrubs and a particular interest was the planting of local native species along the Grange Burn.

In 1983 Rae was a member of the planning committee that lobbied to set up the Hamilton Institute of Rural Learning (HIRL) buildings on part of the former Crown Lands Water Reserve and the establishment of the Hamilton Community Parklands (the area that includes the Old Reservoir and the Bandicoot Enclosure of 100 ha) on a substantial portion of the remainder. Her objective was to preserve the land, including the area around the Old Reservoir, for conservation. The preservation of the Eastern Barred Bandicoot (*Perameles gunnii*) was of particular concern to Rae, because she had observed its decline over many years in Hamilton.

For at least 25 years Rae tended the vegetable garden at HIRL, raising money at the market for the running of HIRL. She also planted and tended the flower beds near the entrance.

Rae was a great advocate for recycling and she consistently lobbied for a 5-cent can recycling program in Victoria. Despite her efforts that particular objective has not been achieved.

Rae was a person who could be depended on to help. She was a very practical person with a great love of nature and a willingness to do something positive about conserving it for future generations.