

Mt Napier State Park – flora and fauna surveys and revegetation of the summit Rod Bird

Lionel Elmore worked diligently for many years to raise awareness in the local community and scientific circles of the significance of this 3,000 ha volcanic area that includes the Byaduk Caves. In 1973, Edmund Gill and Elmore published *Radiocarbon dating of Mount Napier eruption, western Victoria* (*The Victorian Naturalist* **90**: 304-306) and in 1974 *Importance of the Mount Napier volcanic complex near Hamilton, Victoria* (*The Victorian Naturalist* **91**: 167-174).



Mt Napier, circa 1978 – Lionel Elmore and Rod Bird restore the top wire in the rabbit-proof fence that the Lands Department had erected around the original Mt Napier Reserve (photo from LCC SW District 2 Report).

Cliff Beaglehole conducted a botanic survey of the area in 1977. A few additions were made later and the total is now 178 native species with 102 aliens.

An exhaustive fauna survey of the area was conducted mainly in the late 1970s, published later in PR Bird (1997) *Mammals and birds of the Mount Napier State Park* (*The Victorian Naturalist* **114**:52-66) and HFNC used that and Lionel's work to argue for a National Park.

In 1963, botanist Jim Willis, in *Notes on the history and vegetation of Mount Napier* (*The Victorian Naturalist* **80**: 162-168) described the landscape and flora of the then Mt Napier Reserve – and he was not impressed! *Everywhere is evidence of repeated fires, infestation by rabbits, unrestricted grazing and the concomitant spread of many weeds...I looked in vain for the trees and bushes that Major Mitchell found growing so luxuriantly...the whole summit area and slopes for 200-300 feet downwards are now completely bald...*

The summit of the mount was not always devoid of trees. In 1836 the trees on the summit were cut down so that Mitchell could survey the land through his theodolite. Following settlement, fires have razed the mount and livestock contributed to the condition seen by Willis in 1963.

HFNC resolved to improve the situation and grew seedlings from seed collected at the base of the mount for planting on the upper slope and NE summit. The project was staged over several years:

- September 1984 – planted 500 Manna Gums and 100 Blackwood (western slope & summit).
- September 1985 – planted 600 Manna Gum and 400 Blackwood ((western slope & summit).
- July 1989 – planted 900 Manna Gums (western slope & summit).
- September 1994 – planted 30 Blackwood (southern slope).

The growth of trees has been slow on this dry and windy eminence but, despite the attention of feral goats, a significant number of trees have survived and the outlook has been improved.