



## Critters for Christmas

The Friends of Brisbane Ranges celebrated the end of the year festive season with a delicious BBQ and memorable spot-light walk at Mt Rothwell Biodiversity Interpretation Centre. Located at the northern end of the You Yangs range, this wildlife sanctuary has a fence designed to keep out predators like feral cats and foxes. It's become a free-ranging haven for several native marsupials that are threatened with extinction in the wild.

The night was also to say a big thanks to everyone who has contributed to the Friends group over the year!

We settled into the Woodland Hut with lovely views of the old-growth grassy woodland, granite hills, and out to Corio Bay and beyond. Some people wandered through the old rambling movie set from Ned Kelly, filmed in 2003 and starring Heath Ledger. That's until the tempting smells from the BBQ enticed them back for dinner. And can Judy please share her recipe for that yummy pasta salad!

As dusk darkened (and the mozzies set in) we headed to check out the spotted cat-like Eastern Quolls housed in a captive breeding program. The Eastern Quoll once lived in the grasslands and grassy woodlands across south-eastern Australia, but is now considered to be extinct on the mainland. In Victoria, it was last sighted in the early 1950s.



After the winter breeding season, two females named Ally and Blackie have reared litters of 4 and 6 joeys respectively. Blackie is a very important animal as she brings new genes from the wild populations left in Tasmania. Her young will help ensure more Eastern Quolls can be set loose at Mt Rothwell.



Mark Urquhart was presented with a special Brisbane Ranges Koala print as a thank you from the Friends for his five year support as our Ranger in Charge.

We did miss Boxy, the current Acting Ranger in Charge and his sense of humour but he was busy looking after our park we understand.



We all had a great end of year evening event at Mt Rothwell.



Thank you to our special guide **Melissa Doherty** who is also one of us - a Friend of the Brisbane Ranges.

FEBRUARY 2011

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## Upcoming Events

**Sunday 13 February**  
**WaterWatch or**  
**propagating - you**  
**choose!**

Don't forget to bring your lunch, hat, drinking water, sturdy shoes, sunblock, gloves and your smile.

FoBR events usually run from 10am to 4pm-ish but if you can only attend part of the day you are always welcome to join in for whatever amount of time you can.

Please see note on page 2 about total fire ban days etc.

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# Critters for Christmas

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With the stars shining, the nocturnal wildlife at Mt Rothwell like bats, owls, and possums becomes active. However we were looking for quite a few other critters to hop or scuttle across the path. With such a wet year, the wide diversity of native Spear, Wallaby and Kangaroo Grasses have grown so lushly, it was hard to find the small and medium-sized animals in the torch light. At least lots of frogs were heard croaking happily in all the puddles.



Good sightings of Eastern Barred Bandicoots (EBB), with pale lines or bars across their tan rump, were real cause for excitement. EBB was thought to be extinct on the mainland until they were rediscovered in Hamilton in the 1970s. 99% of its grassy habitat has been cleared, so considerable efforts have since been put into captive breeding of this critically endangered species. Female EBB has a gestation of just 12 to 12.5 days and tends to have a litter of 2 to 3 young, and as soon as they are out of the pouch another litter is born. From the 30 animals introduced in 2005, up to 250 EBB are now roaming across Mt Rothwell. This is Victoria's largest population that can provide a source of animals for translocation to other protected sites.



Suddenly after a cough, thump and jump, a silvery-grey Rufous Bettong posed on the path; a 30cm tall mini-kangaroo. During the walk, we saw lots of cute bettongs - please check with Owen for the exact count, but I reckon at least 30. And to get that close to them was a special experience, considering that Rufous Bettong went extinct in Victoria over 100 years ago, along with three other species of bettong (i.e. fox bait). Native ground-foraging animals like bandicoots, potoroos, and bettongs perform several important ecological roles, such as spreading seeds and fungi, improving soil fertility and structure, eating pest insect larvae, keeping grass tussocks healthy and opening up spaces for wildflowers to grow. It's estimated there's 250 to 300 bouncing bettongs at Mt Rothwell.



And finally, some Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies made the night walk complete. This is yet another critically endangered species due to habitat loss and feral predation. These agile and beautiful rock-wallabies are well-adapted to seek refuge on rocky outcrops with a long brushy tail for balance and serrated foot-pads for grip. Their ancestors were seasoned travellers, with animals taken from NSW in the 1860s and put onto a small island in New Zealand. Brought back to Australia in 2005, 3 males and 5 females were released onto the granite outcrops at Mt Rothwell and now numerous animals can be seen sunning themselves in the late afternoon.



There were fleeting glances of Southern Brown Bandicoots and



Long-nosed Potoroos, which are also taken by feral cats and listed as threatened species.

The website at [www.mtrothwell.com.au](http://www.mtrothwell.com.au) is full of information about the critters, and more on the property's history, geology and vegetation. If you missed out, want to visit again or get involved then contact the office on **0434 295 355**. Please let all your friends and family know about Mt Rothwell, as it's a huge conservation success for some of our most unique and threatened species.

Thanks to the Friends of Brisbane Ranges for visiting!  
*Melissa Doherty*

# For your diary! Join us

All Friends please be reminded that if the event day is declared a Total Fire Ban Day, the activity will be cancelled. This is in line with Parks Victoria's Emergency Management guidelines where on days of extreme or severe fire weather conditions, the park visitor will be strongly advised not to enter or to leave the park.

On days deemed "Code Red", under the National Fire Rating System and issued by the Bureau of Meteorology, all of Parks Victoria's estate will be closed to public access.

## Sunday 13 February 2011

first FoBR event for 2011 - a choice!  
WaterWatch monitoring at Sutherlands Creek Steiglitz and Lower Stony Creek Reservoir **OR** you can get involved in the propagating at the old Parks Vic depot in Anakie.

## Sunday 20 March 2011

[week later than usual because of long weekend]  
Koala research with Janine Duffy

## Sunday 8 May 2011

Annual General Meeting to be confirmed

## Sunday 9 October 2011

### Brisbane Ranges Wildflower Show

See page 3 for how YOU can get involved.

If you have ideas of activities for FoBR for this year please [email](mailto:email) to let us know as we want Friends activities to be relevant and of interest to all of you.

## 'The recipe' Risoni and Broccoli Salad

8 garlic cloves	80g pesto
2 tablsps extras virgin oil	100g crème fraiche
2 tablsps lemon juice	250g broccoli florets
125g whole egg mayonnaise	
400g risoni (rice shaped pasta)	
100g toasted almonds	
1 tablsps finely chopped parsley	
1 tablsps finely chopped chives	
Shaved parmesan cheese	

Toss garlic cloves in olive oil and bake for 45 mins in oven 180F or until soft and golden. Squeeze 2 of the garlic cloves from their skins and place in food processor. Add mayo, crème fraiche, pesto and lemon juice and process until just combined. Set aside until required.

Steam florets for a few minutes, then refresh under cold water and drain well. Bring a large saucepan to boil then add 1 teas of salt and the risoni. Cook for 8-10 minutes - drain.

Add the almonds, dressing, parsley and chives to the risoni while still warm, toss with the broccoli in a large bowl.

Serve in deep salad bowls garnished with shaved parmesan and a roasted garlic on each.

Serves 6. Can add some cooked king prawns for a special meal. ENJOY!  
*Judy Locke*

# Meet a Friend - can we include YOU please?

This can include a photo if you like and a bit of info about you or one of your family so please email [cazbarth@yahoo.com.au](mailto:cazbarth@yahoo.com.au).



# Cathy's Column

It seems that summer has finally arrived. The grasses are starting to turn brown and the spring wildflowers have gone to seed.

We went for a walk this week to see if the *Spiranthes australis* orchid was in flower and were seriously disappointed to find no plants, let alone flowers. Either the cool start to our summer has delayed the plant growth or they suffered tuber loss when it was so hot and dry over the last few years. Time will tell.



*Spiranthes australis* (Austral Ladies' Tresses)

Regardless, there is always something to find when out in the bush and despite the warm temperatures and the colour brown appearing, there were still two striking green plants to photograph.

The first: *Exocarpos cupressiformis* (Cherry Ballart). This small tree commonly parasitizes eucalypts and superficially resembles the cypress. When the fruit ripens, it turns red and the seed is found on the outside of the fruit, hence the name *exocarpus* (from the Latin meaning outer). Interesting to note that the wood was historically used for making furniture, gun-stocks and tool handles.



I find that this plant is very valuable in the bush because often orchids (in particular winter orchids) are found growing beneath it. I suspect that is because the orchid tubers enjoy the growing environment that the leaf litter creates.

The second: *Pteridium esculentum* (Common Bracken).



Although it can be an invasive weed of agricultural land and even can cause poisoning of stock when other feed is in short supply, it does create a wonderful environment for fungi and orchids.

It can become widespread because of its ability to regenerate from underground rhizomes and when left uncontrolled, it can grow in such dense thickets that it can shade out the under-story and diminish the overall diversity. That is less likely to happen in our drier climate.

Summer also provides us with a chance to see a couple of orchid species.



If you are willing to wade in water (during a normal year), the *Thelymitra circumsepta* flowers in December.



Throughout the park in January you can find hyacinth orchids. The most common is *Dipodium roseum* (Rosy Hyacinth). Since the hyacinth orchids are some of the tallest terrestrial orchids we have, you might even see them from the roadside.

Happy walking in 2011! I'm enjoying the warmer temperatures.

Cathy Powers



## Brisbane Ranges WILDFLOWER SHOW

SUNDAY 9 OCTOBER 2011

Planning is well underway

### How can you help and be involved?

**Promotion** is important in lead up to the show and is NOW being planned. Vicky and Beverley are aiming to improve publicity coverage this year.

You may be able to assist with

- regular correspondence to local papers about Show plans
- hand delivery of posters/leaflets

Please contact Beverley at [bevjp@westnet.com.au](mailto:bevjp@westnet.com.au) or Vicky at [vicky.grosser@gmail.com](mailto:vicky.grosser@gmail.com) to find out more and talk about whether you can help.

## Membership Fees - due February

Just \$11 for single and \$22 for family membership. New members are welcome! Please email Helena at [helena@pacific.net.au](mailto:helena@pacific.net.au) to find out if YOU are due and for bank account details so you can pay straight into the FoBR account.