



What did the Friends do in April 2012? Phytophthora cinnamomi monitoring

The weather was glorious and the volunteers enthusiastic (well, mostly) as we headed off for another session of monitoring some Phytophthora sites. We headed for a site just off Lease Road at the Durdidwarrah Road end and quickly located the quadrats. Carolyn gave a knowledgeable rundown of the site measuring technique and each group picked a quadrat and got down to the business of measuring, measuring, measuring.

We tackled the "healthy" site first, although even this was showing some signs of PC damage. After a relaxing lunch by the roadside we dealt with the "unhealthy" site. This went very quickly; one quadrat had only one grass tree in it. Soil samples were taken from each quadrat, both "healthy" and "unhealthy", and sent to Deakin University to be tested for the presence or otherwise of Phytophthora.

How is Phytophthora being managed elsewhere?

Along with control measures to manage the risk of spread and public education, the actions of the Friends of Brisbane Ranges in monitoring the state of the Park's PC infested sites is a very important activity. It is also important to learn from others...

A recent media release from the Department of Environment and Conservation, Western Australia, tells that a vehicle access track within the Fitzgerald River National Park on the State's south coast has been closed indefinitely because of the risk of Phytophthora dieback. It was a track that extends 22km and leads to a campsite and fishing spot. The action is reported as the only viable option to minimise the potential for dieback to spread further.

Like the Brisbane Ranges, the outstanding natural values of this national park had to be protected. Some of the actions taken by park management included:

- Gate, bollards and signs have been installed at the track entrance.
- Regular monitoring of the area and the issuing of an infringement notice to anyone found within the closed area

Other options under investigation include providing an alternative route to access to the campsite and working with Murdoch University on techniques to combat the pathogen, such as

- the use of semi-permeable and impermeable membranes
- hydrological monitoring
- installation of fencing around known infestations to prevent animals spreading the disease.
- application of metham-sodium and high intensity phosphite to plants
- the closure of tracks in wet soil conditions
- promoting the wash down of vehicles prior to entering the park

Ongoing surveys are being conducted to detect any new infestations, so they can be treated through containment or eradication, depending on the size of area affected.

MAY 2012

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Upcoming Events

Sunday 13 May 2012

Waterwatch Sutherland's Creek and reservoir.
and
Planting and weed removal at Anakie Gorge

Thursday 14 June 2012

Platypus Talk with Brisbane Ranges Landcare Group



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Platypus mysteries to be revealed

The platypus is one of the world's most amazing animals. This furry, warm-blooded mammal lays soft-shelled eggs like a lizard, uses its bill to navigate underwater, and sorts out arguments with the help of venomous spurs. The platypus is also among the most popular of Australia's animal icons - a great flagship species for freshwater conservation. But what about the platypus's own environmental needs? How is the species faring in the wild? And how can local people become involved in monitoring local populations?

A leading expert from the Australian Platypus Conservancy, Geoff Williams, will be at the Brisbane Ranges Landcare meeting 14 June to talk about the amazing platypus, explain its conservation requirements and how to go about helping these animals

Geoff was formerly Director of Healesville Sanctuary before establishing the Conservancy in 1994. The APC is a non-government, non-profit organisation which is dedicated to researching platypus and providing advice to the community about platypus conservation requirements.



Australian Platypus Conservancy



The talk will be at Balliang Hall, opposite the Balliang CFA Fire Shed at 7:30pm on Thursday 14 June. The talk will be followed by a short meeting of the BRLCG that visitors are welcome to attend. Admission is free and free refreshments and a tasty supper will be provided. The event is hosted by Brisbane Ranges Landcare and is supported by Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority. Bookings are essential. For more information and to register please contact William Hogg at Port Phillip Westernport CMA 0418 596 179 or email: William.hogg@ppwcm.vic.gov.au.

Mammal monitoring update

I've just completed the mammal trapping for the year and the results look good. Trapping was carried out near Miners Track, Nelson Track and Sheep Track. All sites had 18 traps for three nights giving a total of 54 trapping nights. All trapping was done under a DSE Research Permit.

Miners Track:
2 Agile Antechinus

Nelsons Track:
7 Agile Antechinus and 5 House Mouse. One antechinus was retrapped on a second night, but 7 different individuals were trapped over 3 nights.

Sheep Track:
7 Agile Antechinus and 1 House Mouse

Looks like the antechinus (antechinii?) are having a good time in the Brisbane Ranges at the moment.. Colin Cook



Photo Museum of Victoria

About the Agile Antechinus

The Agile Antechinus (*Antechinus agilis*) is a member of the Dasyurid family. Dasyurids are carnivorous marsupials and have been described in the past as "native cats" and "marsupial mice". The family includes animals such as Antechinus, Quolls, Tasmanian Devils, Phascogales, Planigales and Dunnarts. There are 10 known species of Antechinus, 4 of which occur in Victoria.

Agile Antechinus are larger than a House Mouse, with a body length of 80-120mm compared to 60-90mm for a mouse. The eyes have a distinctive bulging appearance and the tail is lightly furred, whereas the mouse has a naked tail.

The Agile Antechinus mostly eats beetles, spiders and cockroaches, but can also eat small lizards and soft berries. They are very active hunters, with swift movements and an acrobatic climbing ability. They will gather together in communal nests, except during lactation when females are solitary. There is a short 2 week mating season, followed by the death of all adult males. It is abundant over its range, but can suffer setbacks due to clearing, forestry operations and control burns as it relies heavily on logs and fallen trees for shelter and hunting opportunities.

For your diary!

•Sunday 13 May

FoBR activity - Waterwatch Sutherland's Creek and reservoir. Planting and weed removal at Anakie Gorge

•Sunday 17 June

FoBR activity - Remove Clow Street fence and prune/replant fruit trees - Steiglitz

•Sunday 8 July

FoBR activity - Koala Survey with Janine Duffy

•Sunday 12 August

FoBR AGM and Waterwatch survey.

Celebrations!

FoBR will be celebrating our 30th birthday in October so you will be hearing more about how we plan to celebrate this occasion.

Reconciliation in the Park

Join Geelong One Fire Reconciliation Group and Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd to celebrate and recognise our unique Australian aboriginal culture.

Many attractions including face painting, damper on a stick, boomerang making, gum leaf playing and BBQ just to name a few. Sunday 27th May, 10am-3pm at Johnstone Park, Geelong

Waterwatch Training

For those interested in doing Waterwatch monitoring at the Lower Stony Creek dam Creek, Deirdre will be offering training sessions in May and June. The focus will be on monitoring the impact of the recent water release and the recovery of the dam and creek. Dates and times are flexible (Mon to Fri). If this sounds like something you would like to do, please phone 52249408 or email deirdre.murphy@ccma.vic.gov.au

What's your news?

Send in your written pieces, funny photos or freaky facts and we can post them in the newsletter. Email us at Friends_email with your name and we will do our best to include your contribution in the next newsletter



Cathy's Column: Murphy's Law (part 2)

Well, now I can finally quit looking and hoping. Success and relief were feelings I had when the first green leaf of an orchid appeared in one of my little pots. I now have leaves of *Pterostylis sp.* (greenhoods), *Thelymitra sp.*, *Diuris sp.* and looking forward to the potential for some helmet orchids.

Pterostylis nutans
(Nodding Greenhood)



This all leads me to suggest that if you are interested in learning about these plants, purchasing orchid tubers and following the progress is a great way to understand some of the growing habits in the natural environment.

The *Diuris sulphurea* leaves are about 8cm long already and look like grass. The *Thelymitra* leaves are almost as long but have a much more fleshy appearance (but still tend to look like grass). Since neither of these types of orchids flower until spring it is interesting that the plants' leaves are already appearing above the soil surface and you can bet that this is also happening in the Ranges. What this proves is that we really don't notice most orchids until they actually produce a bud and/or flower.

So the question is – 'Is this method of growing orchids better than my partner's?' Probably not but it does work – Whew!

We went for a walk in the Ranges last week and found some beautiful *Correa*s in flower. I did a Google search, looked at the website of the Australian Native Plants Society – Australia (ANPSA) and discovered that they cite two examples of *Correa reflexa* from the Brisbane Ranges. Justifiably so since we do have some spectacular flowering plants in our area.

Correa is a relatively small genus of endemic plants with eleven species and a huge number of cultivars. There are also a wonderful array of natural hybrids that can be found. Most species are small to medium shrubs but there is one species known as the 'Tree *Correa*' which can achieve a height of 2 – 8 metres.

Correa is named in honour of the Portuguese botanist José Correa de Serra. The flowers are tubular bell shaped, have four petals usually fused and reflexed. Six to eight stamens can extend a little beyond the

end of the petals which present the pollen to the birds and insects. The flowers can be found in a large array of colours.

Correa reflexa (the species found in the Brisbane Ranges) is the most widespread and variable member of the genus.

We have two colour forms of the *Correa reflexa* and at least one natural hybrid. The most dominant colour form is what I would term as traditional *Correa reflexa*



Reddish tones with beautiful yellow and reflexed tips. The yellow form of this species is just as gorgeous.



And then you get the natural hybrids which can be some combination of both but the one colour I most often see has the pinkish tones.



The other interesting thing about *Correa reflexa* is the variability of the leaves which can be smooth to rough. Those plants I have encountered in the Ranges have been with the rough texture and slightly hairy (kind of like a Ranger we all know). Since autumn and winter is the flowering time, it is appropriate to get out and have a look for yourself. They are just waiting.

I would like to introduce you to some of our white moths. One is of particular interest is *Termessa nivosa*. The adult moth is white with a coloured edging around each forewing. This edging is black except at the wingtips where it is orange. There are two black spots on the termen of each forewing, and one on the tip of each hindwing.

The moth *Thalaina clara* is a silky white, with a rusty 'N' shaped pattern outlined in black on each fore wing.

Termessa nivosa (L) and *Thalaina clara* (R)



Some specimens of *Thalaina selenaea* have a rust coloured stripe diagonally across each forewing. Originally, the male and female *Oenosandra boisduvalli* moths were thought to be different species because they look so different. The female adult moth is white with a broad black line along each forewing ending in a black bar at the base. The male has fawn forewings speckled with black dots.

Thalaina selenaea (L) and *Oenosandra boisduvalli* (R)



The pick of the bunch is *Palpita unionalis*



The reason this moth is significant is because it is not a Victorian moth according to all records. It is a Queensland moth and there was some discussion of the species ID but this is the best 'guestimate' without experts sighting the specimen. (only me, myself & I and, of course, Canon). The adult has shiny transparent wings. The forewings have a brown leading edge, and two black spots in the middle. It is found in countries such as Europe, the Middle East, Africa and of course Australia. It is known for its migratory habit and has the reputation of being an international pest.

Winter is fast approaching and along with it comes more moisture plus cooler temperatures. It also is a time of fewer insects (except perhaps mossies) so all this provides a great time to walk and enjoy our plethora of nature.

Have fun!
Cathy

Parks Vic News—The Lower Stony Creek Dam Drawdown



The Lower Stony creek reservoir drawdown is currently happening and it is expected to be complete by end of next week (11th May). The photos above show water levels as of Monday 30th May.

Following discussions between PV, Barwon Water and DPI, a contractor, hired by Barwon Water, will be tasked to capture all fish species prior to the complete draining of the reservoir. The contractor will have the responsibility of disposing of all exotic and dead fish with indigenous species being held in the Barwon Water Anakie basin located in Staughtonvale near the hall for release once the reservoir is refilled.

This will occur following completion of the works however the time frame is uncertain due to weather constraints and the complexity of works required once the valve and wall are accessible.

Barwon Water has agreed for Parks Victoria to retain the old scour valve which will eventually be displayed near the info panel on site with accompanying interpretation. Depending on the condition of the water supply apparatus located upstream of the wall, this may also be retained by Parks Victoria for display and interpretation on site.

Once known, fish numbers and species as well as the success of the release will be published in the future newsletters.

And the last word from Boxy...



Ok, ok, I said ok, I know it has been a fair amount of time since I wrote something for the newsletter so here goes. Actually not quite sure what to write since now being the RIC I have staff to do the work for me while I sit back, feet on the desk drinking coffee and just generally throwing around orders, I wish!!!!

Firstly I would like to thank Judy (Locke) for *giving* me the opportunity to once again write something, so thanks very, very, very much Jude! I really, really, really appreciate it!

All right, enough of the serious stuff, what's been happening in the vast world of park management and in particular the icon park of the Geelong District? I am not going to elaborate as which park that may be cos if ya don't no now ya neva will!

Firstly I have been offered and accepted the Ranger In Charge Moorabool as an ongoing position, so what does that mean? Well not much really compared with the last 12 months except there is now more stability in the way the area is managed. And what does that mean you may ask as well? Ok here goes, the changes in staff responsibilities, areas of management which have seen Judy take on responsibility for all things related to the Anakie Depot, FoBR, Back To Steiglitz Assoc,

Steiglitz Historical Group and the Steiglitz Historic Park will continue, giving Judy a greater focus outside the office where her skills will be most appreciated. Judy will also assist in the daily management of the BRNP. At this stage Scotty Nicholson is still seconded to the Team Leader position and is responsible for the BRNP. I realise that this is only a temporary solution, however hopefully now we can move forward and have the position filled on a permanent basis to give some stability to this role. As for the rest of the positions all stays as is.

And what of the BRNP? I have no great plans to speak of except to say that when I look back at why the park was originally declared, the history of the park, the management focus of my predecessors all I can say is why change a good thing.