Brisbane Ranges Friends News

FEBRUARY 2014

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Upcoming Events

Saturday 9 February- FoBR working bee at Anakie Depot and Waterwatch at Sutherlands Creek. Pizza oven lunch if conditions are right.

(if Waterwatching, meet at Steiglitz Courthouse at 10am)

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An Evening in the park at Lower Stony Creek

We finished up 2013 with a relaxing evening in the park. We needed to start off by having a chat with a group who managed to park their car inappropriately, but it was all relaxation from then on. As soon as we were organised we headed off for a walk up to the historical Lower Stony Creek dam. The evening was pleasant, an elusive Koala was heard but not seen and many birds joined us.

This event also provided us with an excellent opportunity to recognise and remember Friend Ann Stokie who died in February 2013 following an illness. As well as being a lover of the Brissies and a FoBR friend, Ann was a passionate advocate for the Malleefowl. Along with husband Peter, Ann made a valuable commitment to the malleefowl monitoring and the Victorian Malleefowl Recovery Group which is dedicated to the preservation of this magnificent and endangered bird.

A special seat built by Col Smithyman is now in an ideal position overlooking the dam.

A short presentation was made at this special location to remember Ann.

We all returned to fire up the BBQ and chat and relax for the evening.

Welcome to another FoBR year!

We trust you are all fresh and ready to go for some great activities in our park this year.

We are really hoping for safe and pleasant summer weather.

Our first activity is planned for Sunday 9 February with a morning working bee at the Anakie Depot and if weather is appropriate we may even be able to light the pizza oven! (byo pizzas to cook)

If weather is too hot and/or Total Fire Ban we will need to cancel the activity of course!

The Waterwatch team plan to monitor again.

For those who wish to Waterwatch, meet at Steiglitz Courthouse at 10am to save travel time.

Walk in the park or relax in the afternoon depending upon the weather. Join us for at least part of the day if you can.

Plants -

We have some of our local plants which were propagated for the Wildflower Show but were a bit slow in developing and not ready for the big occasion, so if you are interested you can come and have a look to see if one or more are just what your place needs. If you are interested and cannot get along then please email us!

Koala Conservation Volunteer Days

Interested in helping create more koala habitat and learn more about koalas with FoBR friend Janine Duffy? She is running volunteer days on **Saturday 15 February** and **Sunday 23 March 2014** in the You Yangs where she has been doing Koala Research since moving from the Brissies after the 2006 bushfires. Numbers are limited and may be booked out. See website and flyer for full details.

The Wildflower Show: 2013 and beyond

We reported on the show in the November newsletter. However, the committee has recently held their debrief meeting and reviewed all aspects of the planning and the big day. It was voted a very enjoyable day and a successful fundraiser of more than $3000 for the group.

We went through the feedback on the completed door prize forms and there were so many encouraging and positive comments by visitors. According to these forms, 2/3 of them were first-time visitors to the show and some indicated they had not been to the Brisbane Ranges before. Bus tours again booked out online with bookings from far and wide - from Ballan, Ocean Grove to Frankston and Eltham.

Totalling up the volunteer numbers over the Friday, Saturday and Sunday of the Show – there were more than 58 (some were serial offenders of course keenly giving their time over the three days – wonderful!).

Our members were out in force on the Sunday Show with at least 30 people ably looking after all aspects of the show – thank you everyone! It does take a full team of people to put on such a professional event.

Huge thank you again to **Helena Lindorff** - our great Wildflower Show Co-ordinator who again lead the show in a most professional and organised way. The active committee throughout featured **Cathy Powers** – our fantastic Merchandise and Workshop Manager and 2IC, **Judy Locke** – not just Plant Sales and Display Manager but leading the propagation and nurturing of all our plants in the 12 months up to the event and **Melissa Doherty** – particularly Guide and Children's Activities. I took on the role of Publicity and getting the message out, after fighting off all the volunteers for this position!

"And what about the Wildflower Show in 2015 ?"

We need to get thinking about the next Show – yes already!

Sadly Helena is now retiring after co-ordinating many shows, so we will need a new co-ordinator for the next show. It is scheduled for 2015 **IF** we get a team to plan and manage it. Helena has everything setup up in such an organised way (as we know she can) that it can all be handed on to a new Co-ordinator who she is happy to mentor – so don't hesitate to volunteer and/ or ask more questions!

We do want your comments on the next show – as mentioned, it will need all of your help again in order to be a success.

We need a Co-ordinator and an active Wildflower Show Committee of another four people at least – as it spreads the work out and actually enables us to even enjoy the process and the big day too.

It's up to us - do we continue?

Please email your comments to friends_br@yahoo.com.au

Caz Bartholomew

For your diary! Join us

Sunday 9 February
Morning working bee at the Anakie Depot with a small group also doing our quarterly Waterwatch monitoring - followed by a pizza lunch ?? [BYO pizzas to cook]. Walk in the park or relax in the afternoon depending upon the weather.

Saturday 8 March – event tba

Sunday 13 April
Phytophthera monitoring of our iconic grass trees - VNPA Naturewatch and FoBR followed by walk in the park

Saturday 10 May
Walk in search of any wombat evidence - along Anakie Gorge and aqueduct south of Switch Road, enjoy the bush and remove weeds we find along the way! Waterwatch too in the morning.

Sunday 15 June
Slate quarries with geological expert Gold mining history walk and walk trails off South Steiglitz Road looking for heritage remnants

Sunday 13 July
Combine with Back to Steiglitz to replant orchard with heritage fruit trees.

Sunday 10 August – AGM
Annual General Meeting, Waterwatch and weed removal or special event.

Sunday 14 September
Watsonia removal at Ballan Road firebreak and a check for early wildflowers

Saturday 11 October
Phytophtheragrass trees monitoring - VNPA Naturewatch and FoBR and wildflower talk/ walk at Back to Steiglitz Festival

Sunday 9 November
Waterwatch and hopefully guest speaker/tour

Saturday 6 or 13 December
evening end of year event venue tba

Bushfire in the Brissies

On Friday 17 January lightning again started a bushfire in the Brissies in a very similar location to the devastating 2006 bushfires. Luckily this time most of our park was spared.

On a special walk, we were pleasantly surprised to see how small the burnt area was and what a great job our Parks Victoria and CFA friends did in securing the area.

As trained and DEPI-recognised wildlife rescue volunteers, Marilyn Blankley, Gordon Lyall and Bart and I donned our special PPE [Personal Protective Equipment] as required and gained approval to search the perimeter of the fireground. We were hoping we would not find any burnt wildlife.

There were still leaves on most of the trees above and there was no sign of any animals being caught in what looked like a slower downhill fire. Very Lucky! Hope it is all the fire action we get this year.

Thanks to Scotty, Charlie and the team!! We know they relocated 5 ringtail possums during the fire and were on the lookout for other wildlife.

NO MORE FIRES PLEASE!

They also checked out this wonderful wedgy nest.

A good omen on the way home was to see a relaxed Koala strolling along. It looked like she had been down to the water following the hot weather. Another Koala was seen further on - a positive end to a difficult job.

Caz Bartholomew

Cathy's Column

Can't have One without the Other

Frank Sinatra sang a song that contained these words but he was referring to love and marriage. In my case, I am referring to some of the parasitic plants in our Ranges. To start with, according to Wikipedia, a parasitic plant is one that derives some or all of its nutritional requirements from another living plant. All parasitic plants have special organs named *haustoria* and it is these organs which facilitate the connection to the conductive system of their host.

Exocarpos cupressiformis (Cherry Ballart) is one such plant. It is only partly parasitic (hemi-parasite) because, although it obtains some water and nutrients from roots of neighbouring plants, it also produces its own energy by photosynthesis.

R. Best (NatureShare)

The plant can be a large shrub or small tree with fine cypress-like foliage. In fact, the species name *cupressiformis* means 'cypress-like'.
It is indigenous to all eastern states of Australia (including Tasmania). It is found in a wide range of habitats but more common in higher rainfall areas. I have to ask – what are they doing in my garden since it is so DRY this season???.

Anyway, this plant has dense foliage which provides good shelter for wildlife and the fruit are a food source for many native birds including parrots.

Besides the wonderful foliage, which actually should be used more in the cut-flower industry instead of evergreens from other countries, the bark has such beauty.

The bark is described as finely fissured. Of course, because of its dependence on other plants' roots, in particular Eucalypts, growing in mass numbers is nearly impossible. If you live in the Ranges, you might be lucky enough to have these as garden plants. We are truly the lucky ones. Incidentally, it is reputed to re-sprout readily after fires and suckers vigorously from damaged root sites.

At present, the *Comocrus behri* are flying during the day – taking advantage of the flowering Eucalypts. These moths also enjoy the flowers of another one of our parasitic plants (mistletoe). Its common name is the Mistletoe Moth.

I have found these in tree-tops, in large mistletoes and even in the grasses. The bright orange markings on the body and tufts on the legs make them easy to find, even if you miss the beautiful black and white colour of the wings. They feed on the nectar of the flowers.

Ron and I took a walk along a track known for the Hyacinth Orchids, in particular the *Dipodium roseum* (Rosy Hyacinth). We were pleasantly surprised to find the *Dipodium pardalinum* growing right next to the plants we were looking for. They can look very similar at times and the best way to tell the difference is the labellum.

The labellum on the *Dipodium roseum* has prominent dark stripes and pink hairs.

The labellum on the *Dipodium pardalinum* has reddish spots and white hairs.
The Hyacinth Orchids in our area are leafless epiparasites and rely on the roots of the eucalypts to survive. It is possible that this orchid group is parasitic on the fungus normally associated with the roots of the eucalypt. As I tell all who search for this orchid, no eucalypts, no Hyacinth Orchids. They are impossible to propagate because of this fungus reliance.
It is all interconnected

Cathy Powers