



Brisbane Ranges Friends News

Feb 2016

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Upcoming Events

Sunday 14th Feb, 10AM at Anakie Depot
Waterwatch and Phascogale site survey

Sunday 13th Mar, 10AM at Anakie Depot
Velvet Daisy-bush survey

Note that on days of Total Fire Ban, activities will be cancelled. Brisbane Ranges is in the Central fire district.

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*Brush-tailed Phascogale
Photo: Trevor Pescott*

Brush-tailed Phascogale Project

Colin Cook

Whew! I'm glad it's over and I'm even happier with the outcome. FoBR was successful with its crowdfunding campaign and we now have a very plump budget for the phascogale project which will allow the project to run over several years.

Special thanks go to:

- All of the donors to the campaign
- Diana Kuchinke for her unasked for but extremely welcome commitment to spreading the word about the campaign.
- Ballarat Wildlife Park for their generous donation of two family passes as campaign rewards.

The grant money from DELWP is required to be spent before Nov 2016 and will be used to construct and install 50 nest boxes in the Brisbane Ranges. We'll also be purchasing a nest box inspection camera, which will allow us to inspect the inside of nest boxes without having to climb a ladder. We will also be conducting surveys for the presence of existing hollows in areas where the nest boxes are to be installed, to see if there is a relationship between the number of existing hollows and nest box occupancy. FoBR members will have the opportunity to be involved in:

- Tree hollow surveys
- Camera trap surveys for phascogales
- Nest box installation
- Nest box monitoring

We will be working with a number of other agencies and groups on this project. We hope to encourage and be part of a network of similar groups throughout central and north-eastern Victoria who are using nest boxes to support threatened mammals.

Phascogale project partners:

- **Mark Trengove:** a Friends member and consulting ecologist, will be helping design the tree hollow and habitat survey techniques.
- **Parks Victoria:** as the responsible manager for the Brisbane Ranges National Park, especially when deciding on suitable locations for nest box installation. We are also consulting with the PV team responsible for many PV fauna monitoring projects.
- **Secondary Schools:** Newcomb Secondary College and Wyndham Central College, who already conduct environmental education activities in the park. Wyndham College will be constructing the nest boxes.
- **WERPP:** The Woodland Ecosystems Resilience Partnership Program (WERPP) is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Brush-tailed Phascogale FFG Act Action Statement. The WERPP is not a recovery team per se, but more of a working group that coordinates management actions that occur within a variety of woodland systems across the State. At present WERPP is made of Biodiversity team members from some of the DELWP regions (Hume, Loddon-Mallee and Grampians) and Parks Vic (Warrandyte/Kinglake area).
- **SWIFFT** (<http://www.swift.net.au/>): The State Wide Integrated Flora and Fauna Teams is a combined initiative between the community, conservation, education and government sectors. It is freely available to anyone in the community who has an interest in nature conservation or threatened species. SWIFFT actively encourages contributions from members of the community, conservationists, field naturalists, farmers, land carers, researchers, scientists, management agencies and environmental consultants.
- **CeRDI** (<http://www.cerdi.edu.au/>): The Centre for eResearch and Digital Innovation is located with the Federation University Australia Research Portfolio. Through research, knowledge transfer and commercial activities CeRDI promotes innovation through the application of new technologies. They work with many community groups to develop online solutions to conservation projects.
- **Central Victorian Biolinks** (<http://www.centralvicbiolinks.org.au/>): CVB was formed in 2010 in response to community group instigation. It has the goal "To improve the connectivity, condition and resilience of landscapes and halt the further decline of species". They cover most of central Victoria and two of their main aims are to improve alliances between community groups in the area and improved use of science, mapping and knowledge to improve conservation decision making. Through their Glideways project, they have a great interest in fostering an alliance of groups using nest boxes for arboreal mammals.

For your diary! Join us

Sunday 14 February

Waterwatch testing in Sutherlands Creek, followed by a walk through a potential phascogale nest box site to survey for large trees with hollows (or their absence). We're also allowed to look at anything else interesting along the way.

Sunday 13 March

Velvet Daisy-bush monitoring

Your articles: We would love to publish your stories of bushwalking and other activities in the *Brissies*.

Send in your contributions to friends_br@yahoo.com.au

Velvet Daisy-bush

Chris Lindorff

The Velvet Daisy-bush (*Olearia pannosa* subsp. *cardiophylla*), will be well known to many Friends members, being the subject of interest in years past as the group assisted with the monitoring and surveying of a number of this species' populations in the national park. Velvet Daisy-bush is classified as 'vulnerable' in Victoria and is listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. The state government has recently released funds to support critical actions to benefit threatened species, and the Velvet Daisy-bush is a fortunate recipient.

The project, led by Trust for Nature and partnering with Parks Victoria and the Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI), will survey all currently known populations of the plants in Victoria. The daisy occurs across four broad population areas, including the Brisbane Ranges, Anglesea, Rushworth, and Wedderburn. The surveys will record plant abundance, health, and current threats. In the Brisbane Ranges, herbivore exclusion fencing will be erected around two populations for protection against browsing by wallabies and rabbits. The plant response to grazing exclusion will be measured and hopefully see these small populations improve in health, flowering abundance, seed set and survival of new seedlings.

The project is keen for the Friends of Brisbane Ranges to continue their participation in the understanding and welfare of the Velvet Daisy-bush through the surveying of some populations within the park during the March meeting. Using a recording sheet developed by ARI, the group will assist with surveying various attributes of the plant at two locations, including a fenced area that can be a longer-term monitoring site for the group.

We enjoy an enormous diversity of native plants in our park and this one special plant will thank you for your efforts to conserve it. Please come along to learn and enjoy our park.



Velvet Daisy-bush
Photo: Chris Clarke via
Natureshare

Burchell Track in January

Vicky Grosser

On the first weekend in January this year I walked the first half of the Burchell Track in the Brisbane Ranges. This was my second time walking the track, and I just love it, even when it's so dry!

On the Saturday night Kristen Cook joined me to camp at the Little River camp site, where we got scared by a very loud bleating goat, and played cards and board games until dark.

The next day we walked part of the track alongside the dry Little River bed, up the ridge to McLeans Highway where Colin and Wendy joined us for a picnic at Stoney Creek Picnic ground. We then all had a good stretch up the Wuddawarung Track which links to part of the Burchell Track.

I first walked the whole Burchell Track over 4 years ago in the November. This was when the new detailed map with the tracks and topography marked on was produced by Parks Vic, with help from a number of Friends of Brisbane Ranges members. Helena Lindorff joined me then for the two nights camping and last two days of the walk. It was wonderful learning more of the wild flowers which she generously named for me as we walked. Judy Locke had planned to join Helena and me but wasn't able to walk with us in the end. Instead she joined us for dinner at the Old Mill Camp site, bringing a delicious salad plus wine and a dessert!

In the years since that first walk of this track I've become more familiar with the Park and love the sounds and smells as well as the peace of walking on tracks where I rarely see another person.

I so appreciate being a member of the Friends group. Whatever our other interests and preoccupations in our lives, we all rock up with our minds and bodies ready for some work together, to preserve this beautiful land for nature to thrive in, including the native animals. I left country farm life as a child, and it has taken me many years to feel truly connected to the bush in this Park, following years of living in cities. I have many of you to thank for my learning, including some walks over recent years with Wendy who seriously is the fungus queen (so to speak!). I know I ask the same questions again and again until I can retain knowledge that you are all sharing with me. I now bring my city friends to the Park to walk and share what I can with them.

As Kristen and I walked up the ridge from Little River this January, I noticed some tiny eucalyptus trees taking hold in the harsh soil. I don't know what this area looked like before 2006 (when I moved to live in this region). I have heard a number of Friends group members talk about the impact of the fires that year, which had burned particularly ferociously in this part of the Park.

As 2016 starts and the exciting Phascogale nesting box project commences I am sure we will have many adventures together. Catch you then!

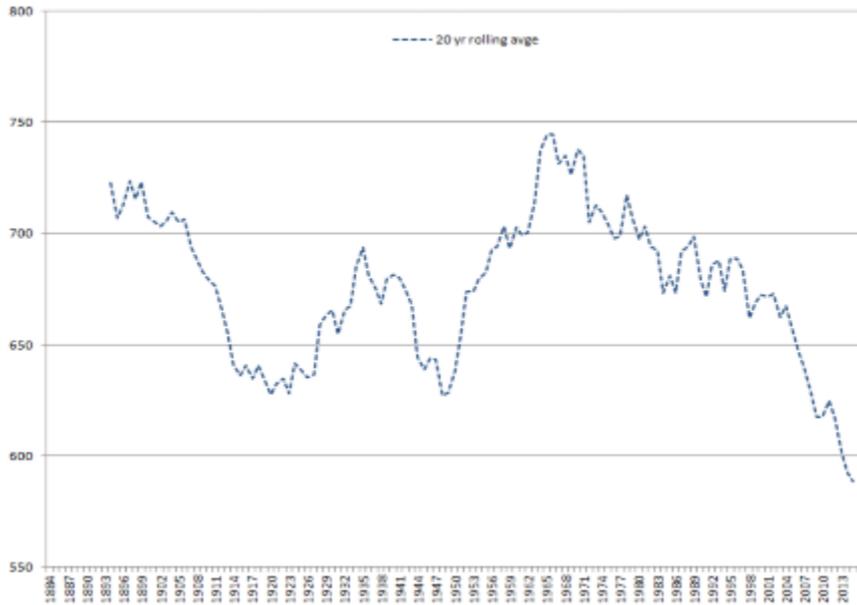


Top: Kristen and some really big rocks at Little River
Bottom: Majestic Grass-tree elder
Left: A camouflaged grasshopper
Photos: Vicky Grosser

State of Rain

Colin Cook

It's been another dry year in the Brisbane Ranges. I've been looking at the rainfall records for a local station which has been recording rainfall since 1875. It's near the park boundary, just near the northern end of Eclipse Rd. Last year's rainfall was 457 mm, compared to an average since 1884 of 671 mm. The average rainfall for the last 20 years has been 588 mm and the average for the last 10 years only 555 mm. Rainfall for 2014 was only 423 mm, so we have had 2 very dry years in a row. Lowest recorded rainfall was 357 mm in 1967, with 2014 being the third driest and 2015 the eighth driest on record. Charting the rolling average for 20 years of data at a time shows how rainfall is steadily declining.



What does this mean for the Brisbane Ranges? Well, combined with rising temperatures, it means that the flora and fauna are under considerably more water stress. This may lead to a decline in the overall mass of vegetation, with some species being more affected if they can't cope with a drier climate. Some dry tolerant species may increase due to reduced competition. Overall flowering and seeding rates may decline, with flow on effects to the fauna which rely on them for a food source. New species may move into the area as they move south to avoid even warmer temperatures or seek new food sources (e.g. a flock of wild budgies was sighted at Hastings recently).

Some of these changes may be very gradual and we won't know they're happening if we don't have a good knowledge of the current situation and can measure any changes. This is where projects like the significant plant species and the Phascogale monitoring projects can play an important role. If we start and continue long-term monitoring, we will be aware of what changes are occurring in the park and can hopefully carry out activities to prevent species disappearing from the park altogether.

Some of the activities we currently do are among those recommended by a recent symposium on how to help nature adjust to climate change (<http://vicnature2050.org/>). Others, such as numbers 2 and 5, will be harder to accept, but above all, we should stick to number 10.

Ten Measures To Help Victorian Nature Adapt To Climate Change

1. Listening, engaging and working with people.
2. Accepting that natural areas will change.
3. Protecting reserves and looking after nature on private land.
4. Removing threats such as weeds and feral animals.
5. Using natural processes like fires and floods to promote diversity.
6. Connecting landscapes and using "climate-ready" plants.
7. Welcoming nature into our cities.
8. Recording changes in our local areas.
9. Promoting diversity in all that we do.
10. Keeping positive, informed and engaged.

Proposed 2016 calendar

| | |
|-----|--|
| Jan | No activity |
| Feb | Nest box habitat survey, Waterwatch monitoring |
| Mar | Velvet Daisy Bush monitoring |
| Apr | Nest box installation?/PC monitoring |
| May | Waterwatch monitoring |
| Jun | ? |
| Jul | AGM |
| Aug | Nest box monitoring, Waterwatch monitoring |
| Sep | Wildflower activity |
| Oct | PC monitoring |
| Nov | Waterwatch monitoring |
| Dec | End of year do |

Of course, the usual proviso of subject to change depending on weather and circumstances.

Last Activity: End of year get-together

Our last activity was the end of year get together at the Anakie Depot. Fortunately the weather stayed mild enough that we could use the wood fired pizza oven, which produced some really scrumptious pizzas. A good end to a busy year.



End of year get-together
Photo: Cyril Curtain