

April 2016

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Upcoming Events

Sunday 10th Apr, 10AM at
Anakie Depot
Grass Tree monitoring with
VNPA

Sunday 8th May, 10AM at
Anakie Depot
Waterwatch testing and TBC

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*Velvet Daisy Bush at Daisy Track
Photo:Chris Lindorff*

Velvet Daisy Bush Survey

Chris Lindorff

A small, yet enthusiastic, contingent of FoBR members came together for the regular Sunday activity in March. The theme of the day was the Velvet Daisy-bush (*Olearia pannosa* subsp. *cardiophylla*), a species classified as vulnerable in Victoria, with a stronghold in the Brisbane Ranges. Present was Wendy, Howard, Dana, Barbara, and me. Meeting at the Anakie workcentre, we began by talking about the proceedings for the day, including visits to see the plant and undertake searching, monitoring, and some protection works. Before departing the workcentre, we all became familiar with the appearance of the plant by examining the stock growing in the 16" pots at the community nursery. Of course, the plants are not flowering this time of the year, but the leaves are very distinctive.

Our first stop was to Daisy Track in Steiglitz, where surveying in previous weeks had discovered 22 plants growing across rocky outcrops above the Sutherlands Creek. At this site, 9 of the plants had been caged with weld-mesh to protect them from the impacts of wallaby browsing, and a tenth plant was ready for us to cage that morning. Wendy's keen eyes discovered a further 3 plants within the population, bringing the known total to 25 plants at Daisy Track. All plants are suffering badly from a combination of wallaby and insect attack on the leaves, and stress from drought conditions. It is hoped that the caging of the plants will enable them to recover from wallaby browsing and hopefully flower and set seed in coming seasons. Trust for Nature, in partnership with Parks Victoria and Arthur Rylah Institute, are undertaking detailed assessments (measurements) of each of the 10 caged plants, along with 10 nominated uncaged 'control' plants.



*Caged Velvet Daisy Bush
Photo:Chris Lindorff*

After lunch, we visited two of the three known populations at Anakie Gorge. Plants were searched and GPSed at these two sites, with 5 plants and 30 plants found. The natural protection from the steep slopes is giving these plants a fighting chance, although most were drought stressed, and little or no recruitment was observed. At each site, general population assessment forms were filled out, similar to the VROTPop forms familiar to FoBR members in previous survey years.

The state-funded project under the Threatened Species Protection Initiative, will see the surveying of all known Velvet Daisy-bush populations in Victoria. In the Brisbane Ranges National Park, 10 plants have also been caged at the Nelson Track population. This population was surveyed by FoBR in 2007, following the 2006 wildfire. Plants responded well to the fire and in excess of 100 plants were recorded. In 2001, an accurate count and mapping of plants determined the population to be 100 plants, so the fire was deemed to be either beneficial or at least not detrimental. The most recent survey of this population in March 2016 has discovered only 23 plants in total, with all plants suffering from wallaby browsing and drought-stress. It is possible that the caging of the plants at Nelson Track may indeed save the population from extinction, with the next nearest population at Anakie Gorge over 500 metres away and separated by deep gullies and rocky

Barbara, Dana, and Howard working on the cages
Photo:Chris Lindorff

For your diary! Join us

Sunday 10 April

Grass Tree monitoring at Kangaroo Track

Sunday 13 March

Waterwatch testing

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



Waterwatching in Sutherlands Creek

Deirdre Murphy

Testing water quality is one of the many monitoring programs the FOBR does in the Brisbane Ranges. In February keen Waterwatch surveyors took to Deadmans Track, approximately a kilometre downstream of Steiglitz Courthouse, and set up our work space in the Sutherland gorge. A large rock becomes the water testing table where we measure water quality parameters. These tests include dissolved oxygen content, pH, salinity, phosphorus content and turbidity. In this dry summer period, the evaporation and lack of rain can make changes to the instream flow and the amount of water in the creek. Here the water is becoming scarcer and the indicators of water quality are showing decline.

Our group are keen to survey the waterbugs that rely on the series of rock pools in the gorge. The bugs are not the only animals using the creek. We can see turbidity in one pool due to the washings from panning gold prospectors. Another pool shows cloudiness due to visits from other animals maybe wallabies? However there is a large refuge pool that looks perfect for aquatic macro-invertebrates: It has fringing vegetation, instream rocks and sufficient depth to water heating too much. It is here we use a dip net to sample and large white trays to sort and identify the creatures. We find worms, mites, snails, shrimp and a variety of insects - whirligig and diving beetles, dragonfly larvae and various bugs (backswimmers, water treaders and boatman). The diversity and abundance of creatures provide a good indicator of waterway health and this creek shows fair condition.

Join us on our next trip in three months time (May). We hope to see seasonal changes (in particular, rain in the catchment) and water flowing again to drive improvement in water quality parameters and waterbug populations.



Phascogale Project

Colin Cook

In February I attended Wyndham Central College, along with a few taxidermy specimens as props. I was giving a talk to students who will be involved in making the nest boxes. This took place in a room which is destined to become an environmental education room for the school, a project which has been championed by the teacher Allan Bernardi.

The school will be making the nest boxes early in the next term, and we should be able to start installation sometime after May/June.

During March I gave a presentation at the Glideways forum in Seymour on the phascogale project. This was attended by many conservation and Landcare groups from central and north-eastern Victoria, as well as attendees from councils, Parks Vic and DELWP. Hopefully this initial get together will develop into a collaborative network for groups interested in helping our threatened gliders, possums and phascogales.



A captive audience
Photo: Allan Bernardi

AAFBG Conference

The Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens will be holding their conference in Geelong from 29 April to 1 May. The theme is "Regional Relevance: botanic environments and their survival in a time of global warming." Cathy Powers will be giving a presentation on the significant species project in the Brisbane Ranges. More information can be found on their website.

<http://www.friendsbotanicgardens.org/events/invitation-to-2016-aafbg-conference.htm>

Proposed 2016 calendar

| | |
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| 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.