

FRIENDS OF BRAESIDE PARK NEWSLETTER

September 2011, no. 5



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The opinions expressed in this
newsletter are the authors' and
do not necessarily reflect those
of Parks Victoria or its staff.



Special tour of the Royal Cranbourne Botanical Gardens. Friday 2 December.

By Elsie Anderson

Cranbourne is famous for its Australian Garden - but there is so much more there to see. Ricardo Simao has arranged a special tour for the Friends of Braeside Park that includes a guided walk looking at bandicoot conservation and the feral proof fencing, an overview from Trig Point to note proposed bio-links and also the work controlling mynahs. A walk of 3-4 km is involved. A self guided walk in the Australian Garden can be included.

Meet at the Gardens Car Park at 10.30. The guided walk will end at 12.30. BYO lunch and then enjoy the Australian Garden.

Booking is essential as numbers are limited. Ring Elsie Anderson (9583 6099). We will hire the Dingvley Community Bus if numbers make this desirable.

Editors note

If you haven't been to Cranbourne Botanic Gardens before then I can highly recommend this trip, especially at this time of year when the heathland species will all be starting to show their vibrant colours and its well worth taking your camera as the flowers seem to be particularly photogenic!.

Wednesdays with Ernie's 'A Team'

By Bev Bancroft

GRASSLANDS

Monthly mowing, hand weeding & rabbit proof fence checks have continued. 2,000 Wallaby grasses, Pimelea, Poa, etc have been planted mostly in the bare areas - after more hand weeding !!!
Chocolate Lillies, Dianella, etc are starting to flower. Spring in the Grasslands will be wonderful.

GUARDS & FRAMES

Trailer loads of guards and frames were collected from the Melbourne Water site (Caterpillar Dam). Plantings here were very successful. The dam is full and the ducks are making use of it.

MULCHING

Car parks 6 & 7 were readied for the September community plantings.

WEED REMOVAL

Weeds were removed mostly in the area around Boomerang dam which is nearly full and the frogs were busy singing. There has been a lot of regeneration of Acacias and Eucalypts.

MENTONE GIRLS GRAMMAR

A new group of students have been mulched the community garden and cut back a lot of the previous

planting in their area. They have cleaned some Lomandra, Themeda & Acacia seed ready to be planted in seed trays for next year. They have also tried their hand at cuttings and general maintenance in the Poly sheds including weeding and consolidation of plants.

KILBREDA

We have some girls doing the Duke of Edinburgh award on weekends learning about propagation, etc for the environmental part of the award.

More help is always needed and everyone is most welcome.

- meet at the Park Office
- Wednesdays 9am - 10.30am, morning tea provided

Thanks To The Helpers

Those who helped produce the newsletter:

Elsie Anderson
Bev Bancroft
Ian Parsons
Park Rangers

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Friends of Braeside Park ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

Activity	Time/Day	October	November	December
Committee Meeting	4th Monday, from 1.00pm at the Visitor Centre	24	28	No Meeting
Community Garden	9.30 - 12.00, 3rd Sun of the month at nursery	18	20	18
Community Projects Weekday	9:00 - 12:00 noon Wednesday at the Park Office	7 14 21 28	2 9 16 23 30	7 14
Nursery open for plant sales	10.00 - 12.00 3rd Sunday of the month	18	20	18
Plant Propagation Nursery Facility	10:00 - 12:00 noon 1st Sat & Mon 3rd Sun	3 5 18	5 7 20	3 5 18
Plant Propagation Nursery Facility	1.00pm - 3.00pm Wednesday	14	2	-
Water Quality Monitoring Meet at the Park Office	9:00 - 12:00 noon 3rd Tues	20	15	20
Community Projects Weekends	9:00 - 12:00 noon, follow the signs	-	-	-
Special Activities	Times to be advised	16th Oct Spring Walk	26th Nov Bird Walk	End of Year BBQ

Bird Walk - Saturday 26th November

From the Editor

Do you sometimes walk through the park and see birds and wonder what species they are, or if they are permanent residents or just passing through? If you are interested in learning more about the birds in the park or just want to spend a pleasant hour or two enjoying the park surrounds with like minded people why not join Ian and Margaret (members of BAYBOCA) for a bird walk. Meet at the Visitors' centre car park at 8:30am for the walk followed by morning tea. Oh and if you happen to own a pair of binoculars bring them along for a better view of the shier species who hide up in the tree tops.

Bowra Station, Queensland - Botany and Birds

By Val Lamay

We didn't see the elusive Grey Falcon on our trek to Bowra Station in August, but we saw something equally as rare: the Mulga in bloom. More below on the Mulga. 'We' included fellow BOCA members Kathy, Julie and Margaret.

North on the Kidman Way through Central NSW, 6 - 9 August

Battling downpours of rain, we nevertheless enjoyed the trip to Griffith. Moody's Swamp, south of Tocumwal, has the highest level of water seen in many a year. At Finlay, we stopped to check on the numbers of Nankeen Night-Heron at the lake in McAllister Park. We counted twelve, but on the return trip ten days later, there were none to be seen.

Heading north on the Kidman Way we gradually began to see inland birds: first Emus (some with stripy chicks) at the bottom of the Kidman Way, then Apostlebirds along the highway every few kilometres, Black Kites overhead, then lots of Brown Falcons perched and in flight.

We stayed two nights at Griffith in order to have a day trip to Fivebough Tuckerbill Wetlands near Leeton. What a disappointment that excursion was! The wetland website gives scanty directions to the wetland and the miniscule downloadable map is not much more help. When we finally arrived, of course the rain was bucketing down. The map showed two bird hides, but we could not see them. No map or signs at the main car park to direct one to the hides. Deep mud and rain to walk through along the unlabelled tracks. With one of our group mobility-challenged we did not wander through the reeds to find the hides.

We did manage to spot some Avocets, Black-winged Stilts, grebes, Black Duck and Grey Teal, and Variegated Wrens on the eastern side of the wetland as we drove around it. A trip into Leeton to the Info Centre, which amazingly was open on a Sunday, yielded a better map of the Wetland plus the information that there is no access to Tuckerbill Wetland. Luckily the hail came down while we were in the Info Centre.

Continuing north, we saw the first Bluebonnet Parrots south of Hillston. Many were on the road, along with Apostlebirds and Galahs; were they picking up spilled grain or drinking water from the wet pavement? We had to slow down as they were reluctant to fly away. We saw our second Wedge-tailed Eagle of the trip at a dead 'roo south of Bourke.



The rain cleared near Cobar and we saw the first Mulga trees (*Acacia aneura* possibly variety *latifolia*). We had been seeing the lovely drooping Wilga (*Geijera parviflora*) much further south. In some areas all the trees and shrubs were pruned evenly to about a metre above ground; sure enough we soon spotted goats. Small flocks were common from south of Cobar until the open Mitchell Grass plains north of the Queensland border. Overnight at the Cobar caravan park, which was thronging with Apostlebirds, House Sparrows, and Crested Pigeons—thanks to a resident scattering food for them.

Mulga Forest, Photo: Val Lamay

Bowra Station, 9-14 August--Hall's Babblers



At last, sunny Queensland! Near Bowra Station we counted over 100 Emus in a grassy paddock. Perhaps an Emu farm? On the track near the Bowra Homestead, Fairy Martins were gathering mud from a puddle which never dried out even though the days got sunnier during our stay. The magic puddle was being topped up with water by Kim and Wendy, volunteers in charge of visitors at the Station. Meanwhile the Fairy Martins were doing their best to mud-clad the Homestead where the volunteers lived.

The 10th dawned frosty, but we had lots of birds around the Bore Lake near

Fairy Martins, Photo: Val Lamay

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Nursery News

By Elsie Anderson

Our plant igloos are almost empty - this is good not bad news. There will be an October planting by Climate Positive. After that soil conditions make further planting unwise.

We are using this interval to repair heat beds and tidy up round the nursery. The girls from Mentone Girls' Grammar have been a great help in this work. Shortly we will be sowing seeds then pricking out seedlings to fulfil our commitment to the Park for 2012 as well as having plants for sale to the general public.

Bird Banding

From Report by Malcolm Brown

There has only been one banding day since the last newsletter but it was a pretty good day with twenty one birds caught, with three of them re-traps and fortunately it also wasn't too cold.

Results are as follows:

- 9 Superb Fairy Wren, (one 1st year bird and 3 of which were re-traps)
- 4 Spotted Pardalote
- 3 White-plumed Honeyeater
- 2 Brown Thornbill
- 1 Eastern Spinebill
- 1 Grey Fantail, (1st year bird)
- 1 White-browed Scrub Wren

We're seeing a few younger birds from last year and a couple of 5 year Superb Fairy Wren. Also, a number of Pardalotes which are great birds to have in the hand (and in your garden (*editors note*)).

Bird Sightings in the Park - July/August

From Report by Steve MacDonald

Bird Sightings for the months of July and August follow:

Fairy Martin (*Cecropis ariel*) sighted in the Heathland. The Tree Martin (*Cecropis nigricans*) has been recorded in the heathland previously, but this is the first record of the Fairy Martin.

In and around the wetlands some birds have been sighted that haven't been seen for a while, they are the Pink Eared Duck (*Malacorhynchus membranaceus*), the White necked Heron (*Ardea pacifica*) and a female Musk Duck (*Biziura lobata*).

Also two pairs of Eastern Spinebills (*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*) have been seen in the Heathland as has a Horse Field Bronze Cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx basalus*).

Birds of Prey sighted over these months are as mentioned in previous reports the Square Tailed Kite (*Lophoictinia isura*).

Procrastinating Pardalotes

By the editor

Many of you may remember from the January newsletter my article on the joys of a native garden and the fauna that it can attract, including in my case a pair of pardalotes who last spring and summer took up residence in a hanging basket and raised two sets of chicks. After the second brood has successfully fledged, mum and dad moved out of their residence and went back to hanging out in the tree tops where we still regularly heard them and occasionally caught a glimpse of them.

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Bowra Station, *continued*

the Homestead. Highlights were the Chestnut-crowned Babblers, several Crested Bellbirds, and Black-fronted Dotterels on the lake. At Bird Call, we heard Brolgas calling most evenings.

The 11th started well with a Red-backed Kingfisher perched near the cottage. We spent the day searching the western part of the Station for Hall's Babblers and Redthroats in vain. But we did get to meet the legendary former owner, Ian McLaren, who though he is meant to be 'retired', was on a quad bike trying to round up some of the remaining cattle on the property. Ian was full of information about the favoured habitat for our target species. We did have a good raptor day, seeing Little Eagle, Wedgie, Brown Falcon and Kestrel. Forty Apostlebirds thronged near our road and two Pink Cockatoos were hiding in the trees. And near the Homestead we had a few Double-barred Finches—such a cute and tidy bird, as well as Red-winged Parrots.

Acting on a tip from Bird Call, on the 12th we went up to the end of Sawpit Road to find Hall's Babblers. After a long tramp through the Mulga Forest we finally caught up with a group of ten Hall's Babblers. A new species for two of our group! Nearby Kathy spotted the rarely seen White-browed Treecreeper. Mistletoebirds, Brown Honeyeater and Double-barred Finches rounded out the species in the Mulga forest.

We also went to Gumholes Waterhole and were fortunate to see two Black-breasted Buzzards flying overhead. One was very rufous on the underside, so it could have been an immature bird. On our travels that day we also saw Diamond Doves, Sittellas, Red-capped and Hooded Robins, Zebra Finches, Chestnut-crowned and White-browed Babblers, lots of Jacky Winters, Variegated Wrens and a fleeting glimpse of a Brown Quail.



On our last day at the Station we had a look at the White-winged Wrens, nesting in a pile of fencing wire Ian McLaren specially provided for wren shelter. We also searched nearby saltbush country for Budgies and Bourke's Parrot without success. But on the way back to the campground we struck a birdy patch with Black-faced Woodswallows, Hooded Robins and Peaceful Doves. Arriving in fading light at the cottage, we spotted two Echidna males trailing in a line after a female on heat.

Echidna's on a mission!
Photo: Val Lamay

Homeward bound

More wattles were blooming along the highway as we headed south. When I was having a comfort stop behind a Mulga, I noticed it had a few flowers. Mulga flowering is an uncommon event, as they need heavy rain with follow-up rain before they will bloom; not a spectacular display but a privilege to witness. We also identified Umbrella Wattle (*Acacia bivenosa/ligulata*) south of Cobar; it's so widespread it has lots of names, including Small Cooba, Wirra and Sand Dune Wattle.



Acacia bivenosa
Photo: Val Lamay

South of Mount Hope we did a side trip into Nombinnie Reserve, a lovely patch of mallee. We heard Southern Scrub Robins and spotted White-eared Honeyeater. Plenty of blooming plants taxed our ID skills, including a bush pea and a leafless thing which may be *Bossiaea walkeri*, the Cactus *Bossiaea*.

Back in northern Victoria, we stopped at Moody's Swamp. Here there were lots of Great Egrets and Eurasian Coots, three Darters, two Whistling Kites and some Black Ducks. No Brolgas to be seen, sadly.

The trip highlights for me were seeing so many Emus, especially with chicks and also the plants in bloom. On my last day's drive from Benalla home, the Hume Highway was a ribbon of gold with wattles in bloom. What better welcome home than that?

The Annual General Meeting Report

By Margaret Hunter

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Braeside Park was held at the Visitor Centre on Sunday 21st August with a good attendance including Ian Parsons, and long time doyen of the Friends, Eric Mitchell. The meeting was also attended by Lorraine Wreford, the State Member for Mordialloc, and Councillor Paul Peulich from the City of Kingston.

After the formalities, Des Lucas, the Ranger in Charge at Braeside and the Sandbelt parks since 1996, gave an informative presentation, with an accompanying slide show, entitled The Changing Faces of Braeside Park. This was an opportunity for members and friends present, to learn about little known developments past, present and future occurring at Braeside including the opportunity to ask questions .

Des spoke to the interested group about the initiatives taken in the park, including the latest addition to the picnic tables located near the Visitor Centre, made from re-cycled materials and the re-design of the car parks to better accommodate the many visitor to the park each year. There have been recent issues with the Cypress Trees, which are an important feature of the driveway to the park office and the visitor centre, and are now amazingly 70 years old. There are on-going safety issues with falling branches, which need to be addressed with maintenance work and possible sculpturing work, both of which come at some expense. The automatic gate at the park entry has recently been commissioned and is improving access to the park, also completion of the link to the ring road now avoids visitors going onto Lower Dandenong Road.

The wetlands at the Governor Road end (south end) of the park are now full due to the previous 12 months high rainfall after 13 years of drought, with the Long Swamp being a highlight of the park and remaining full after the February storms. This has brought the birdlife back to the park and to the wetlands, despite the loss of one red gum tree due to the high water table. Rainfall has been exceptional, and it now hard to predict future conditions in the park, but a visit to the wetlands at Governor Road is well worth considering to see the water and birds return after a long absence. Des answered many questions from the group, and his information on the park and its past, present and future development was a highlight of the Annual General Meeting.

The Friends Group is in need of new committee members to add to the current committee, with meeting times flexible, so if any readers are interested, Please contact the president or secretary for more information. The Community Garden is also progressing well with a range of groups involved which is pleasing Why not come along to our talk and walk during seniors week and our Spring Walk on 16th October when we will be visiting the heathland and other areas of the park. We look forward to seeing you there

Committee Meetings and Members

By the editor

Most of us members probably don't give much thought as to the function of or the people who form the Friends of Braeside Committee. The Committee members perform a very important role in the running of the Friends group, in fact without a committee there would not be a Friends group! Has that piqued your interest, would you like to learn more, or even become a committee member yourself? If the answer is yes to any or all of these then why not drop in to one of the committee meetings and find out what goes on.

The committee meetings are currently held on the 4th Monday of the month at 1pm in the visitors centre and normally last for about an hour and a half (dates are in the Activities calendar).

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Come the end of winter Mum and Dad were back checking out the previous residence. The hanging basket in question had been left in the same spot and even though I had wanted to remove the plant and replace it I hadn't as this would have destroyed their nest.

I had spotted them flitting around back underneath the veranda and thought they had moved back in to their old nest and saw them fly in and out of the entrance a few times. Then I found soil scattered underneath a different hanging basket and on closer inspection discovered they had been trying to excavate in from the top and had failed as it kept

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Park Report

From Ranger in Charge Des Lucas' monthly reports

Nursery Management: The timing for irrigation lines has been doubled in the last few weeks and the faulty heat bed has been repaired.

There are approximately 4000 plants left for the Climate positive planting on the 12 of October.

Climate Positive Planting: The Climate Positive Planting is programmed for 12th October commencing at 9:00 am and concluding at 4:00 pm. Lunch is provided by Climate Positive – Members of the Friends group are invited to lunch.

Parks Victoria Grants for 2011/12 - there have been three grant applications submitted:

1/ Community Garden – materials for creek bed and continuation of interpretive signs.

2/ Burgan – consolidation and maintenance period – planting and weed control in all areas treated previously.

3/ Cypress Drive – Sculpting of tree trunks.

Pest Animal Program: - Rabbits:

SSAA Program:

Since the program commenced in April of 2010, 2172 rabbits and 24 foxes have been controlled throughout the park.

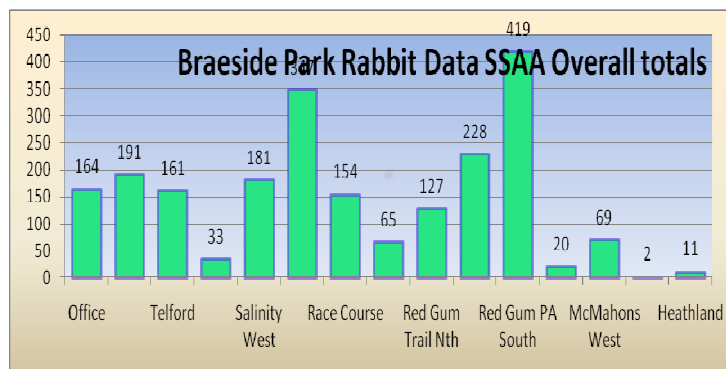
On days when control works are planned, signage is placed at every entrance in the morning and the park slowly locked down until the programmed commencement time. All car parks and trails are physically checked by Ranger staff to ensure all visitors have left the park.

The police communications centre and Mordialloc and Springvale police stations receive a fax on the day of the planned activities.

Detailed reports are prepared on each activity night providing information on who was involved, weather

conditions, issues encountered, number and location controlled.

See the below graph for rabbits controlled – although not all the locations are labelled.



Pest Plants: The Eastern Melbourne District held a project day at the Park on 6th September, where the 20 staff attending carried out control works of the following weeds throughout the Heathland. Coastal Wattle, Coastal Tea Tree, Burgan, Coprosma, Pittosporum, Brooms, Red Flowering Passion Fruit and any other wood type weeds.

Although many weeds were removed there are still plenty more which need attention. This is one of those ongoing projects.

Burn Program: Heathland burn – planning for the delivery has been ramped up. The burn will happen on a day when suitable weather conditions permit.

Link Road: The link road was re-opened in early September to traffic.

Red Gum Picnic Area Access Road: The access road will be re-topped and the speed humps replaced with concrete ones. This work will commence the Wednesday after cup weekend and red gum picnic area will be closed for traffic for a 10 day period.

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collapsing so all they had managed to do was create a furrow in the top of the soil and expose some of the plant roots. So I filled in their work and hoped they would go back to their original nest. A few days later I spotted soil under yet another basket and yes they had attempted and failed in that one too! Yet another repair job. A few days later and yes you've guessed it, yet another hanging basket excavated!

All told they tried 4 different baskets, some with more than one attempt. I felt like putting a sign with an arrow on it above their original nest site saying property vacant. After about 3 weeks of all this activity unfortunately they decided that none of the sites were suitable and have moved somewhere else. However they are close by as I hear them most days around the garden and occasionally catch a glimpse of them too.

What was wrong with the original nest they had happily raised two broods in before, I guess I'll never know?