

The

Ballarat

Naturalist

April 2005



Trailing Goodenia
Goodenia lanata
(Club Logo)

Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat Inc.:

President's Report to Annual General Meeting on 4th March 2005

It gives me pleasure to present the President's report for the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat Inc. for the 2004/2005 year, my first as President of the Club.

Our membership remains around 50 and attendance at meetings and excursions has been very pleasing with an average attendance of 30 at meetings and 12 on excursions. The club has continued to meet at S.M.B. Horticulture School, corner of Gillies and Gregory Streets, Wendouree on the first Friday of each month with excursions on the first Sunday, except January.

Speakers have all been interesting and informative and on behalf of members I wish to thank them all for being willing to travel and address us. Dr. Jan Watson began with "Beneath the Waves – the Marine life of Port Phillip Bay". Her achievements and ongoing involvement demonstrated what can continue to be achieved in later life. This was followed by Helen Burgess's presentation "From Ecuador to Iguazu" with contributions from Avis Barlow. In June we had club members Fran Hanrahan describe the "Desert Life of Namibia" from her personal experiences living there, Gail Whyte talked about "Weeds" and Greg Binns and Maureen Christie covered "Bird Reserves of the UK".

David Clarke covered "Australia's Unique Landscape", Patrick-Jean Guay "Non-passerine Birds of North America" which complemented a talk he gave on "Passerine Birds of North America" the next week to the local Bird Observers Club, Tim Anderson in October spoke about "Community Forest Management – from Conflict to Co-operation in Opportunity" then Alan Yen spoke about "Invertebrates – the other 99%". In December, Carol Hall stepped in when a speaker was unexpectedly unable to attend. She enthralled us with slides and a presentation titled "The Pacific North West of America". The General Meeting presentations finished off with the members' night titled "Coastal Ecosystems" in March.

In September/October six members ventured to the Australian Naturalists Network (ANN) get together in Perth and at the February meeting Carol Hall, Maureen Christie, John and Elaine Gregurke, and Claire and Peter Dalman provided a presentation which covered their wider experiences in the west.

The Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture was again a highlight with Paul Sinclair from Environment Victoria speaking about "Healthy Rivers".

Excursions have allowed us to explore the Australian bush in the company of like-minded people. We are fortunate to have a variety of habitats within easy reach. We visited the Jubilee Mine Historical Area, Macedon Ranges, explored Fungi in the local area, were led to Significant Trees of Ballarat North, went on Goldfields Water-race Walking Trails, visited the Pyrite Ranges, explored the "Orchids in the Enfield Forest", inspected the Anchor Plants at Chepstowe and Mooramong, visited the Bellarine Peninsula and will walk the Upper Yarrowee River Trail in March.

The Club's "campout" to Apollo Bay stayed at the Star of the Sea Convent with 12 members attending. A highlight was the number of Albatross easily seen from the beach and also beach erosion following stormy weather. The sight of cones on the Norfolk Island pine in the adjacent paddock was also an unusual observation which prompted their collection and inspection. Club members also attended the South East Australian Naturalist Association (SEANA) campouts at "Kangarooobie", Princetown in March 2004 and in the Little Desert in November 2004.

A Christmas function was held at the home of Lyndsay and Lorraine Fink and I again extend the appreciation of club members to them for hosting this event.

Members, particularly John Gregurke and Carol Hall, continued to work with people researching the birds of Lake Wendouree with the focus this year being on Musk Ducks.

This year we had a major sort out of the library with members devoting a Sunday morning to organising and classifying. We also received a donation of relevant books from Kit Williamson.

I continue to be amazed at the knowledge and expertise within the club and the willingness of members to share that with others through presentations at meetings and leading excursions. It certainly extends knowledge and interest when members who travel to unusual and distant places share their experiences and personal reflections.

I extend congratulations to Greg Binns who was awarded an Order of Australia medal in the Australia Day honours. As a long time member of the club, executive and continuing committee member, Greg has been a strength to the club over many years and I see him as an "elder statesmen" who continues share his extensive knowledge to the benefit of members, the environment and the community generally.

My sincere thanks go to everybody who has helped in countless ways to the smooth running of the club this year, especially all committee members. My particular thanks to

executive members who are relinquishing tasks. To John Gregurke who continued as secretary for a fifth year and to Carol Hall for her work as Newsletter Editor. Also my sincere appreciation to Bob Curtain for his work as Treasurer and his meticulous attention to the details of finances which have ensured this aspect of club management is well under control.

FNCB MINUTES OF 52nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

4th March 2005

1. Opening and Welcome

The meeting was opened at 7.35pm. 34 members and visitors were welcomed.

2. Apologies

Received from Helen Burgess, Elaine Gregurke, Del McDonnell, Marie Netherway, Genni Binns.

M: Elizabeth FitzPatrick S: Ken Hammond C.

3. Minutes of 51st Annual General Meeting.

M: Carol Hall S: Lyndsay Fink C.

4. President's Report.

M: Peter Dalman S: Bill Murphy C.

5. Treasurer's Report (unaudited)

M: Bob Curtain S: Peter Billing C.

6. Vote of Thanks to Bob Curtain who is retiring from the committee.

Bill Murphy thanked outgoing Committee members, especially Bob Curtain. John Gregurke was thanked for his outstanding work as Secretary over the last 5 years.

7. Election of Office Bearers.

Nominations received:

- President: Peter Dalman.
- Vice President: Greg Binns
- Secretary: Carol Hall
- Treasurer: Les Hanrahan
- Newsletter Editor: Fran Hanrahan
- Committee: Helen Burgess, Maureen Christie, Claire Dalman, John Gregurke, Fran Hanrahan, Pat Murphy.

These members were declared elected unopposed.

7. General Business.

- Club subscription. Committee recommends subscriptions be increased by \$3 for individual members and \$6 for Family members to bring total estimated subscriptions closer to the estimated annual cost of operating the Club so assets are not depleted by operating costs. Student, Distant Member and Newsletter postage to remain unchanged.

New Subscription recommendations:

Family - \$42;

Ordinary Individual Member (adult) - \$25;

Distant Member \$15;

Student - \$12;

Newsletter postage - \$6.50

M: Fran Hanrahan S: Greg Binns C.

- Meeting closed at 8pm.

Special arrangements for April *Little River Earth Sanctuary* excursion.

Members to arrive at the Sanctuary at 5pm bringing picnic tea, torches and insect repellent. Tour begins at 6pm. Cost \$22. For directions see VICROADS map 77 H8. Heading east along the *Little River – Ripley R.* after it crosses the Bacchus Marsh - Geelong Rd. the Sanctuary is on the right, a little before the road bends South East. For further information visit the website: www.esl.com.au/littleriver.htm

FNC Ballarat MINUTES OF MARCH MEETING

4th March 2005

1. Apologies:

Received from Helen Burgess, Elaine Gregurke, Del McDonnell, Marie Netherway, Genni Binns

M: Claire Dalman S: Pat Murphy C

2. Minutes of previous meeting.

M: Peter Billing S: Lyndsay Fink C

3. Business Arising:

Book sale - deferred to next committee meeting.

4. Correspondence.

IN:

- Victorian Naturalists Vol 121 (6) December 2004
- Castlemaine Naturalist Vol 30.1 #318, February 2005
- South East Australian Naturalists' Association Inc. Minutes of General Meeting at Little Desert, Minutes of 5 Feb 2005 Committee meeting, Agenda for AGM and General Meeting at Autumn Camp at Eildon, SEANA Membership Renewal form.
- Cobboboonee Forest brochure
- Environment Victoria - EV News, Issue 212, Jan/Feb
- Friends of Brisbane Ranges News sheet, December 2004
- Field Nats News No 140, March 2005
- Field Naturalists Club of Vic: Brochures Open day and 125 years Symposium - Leaves from Our History.
- Letter, Field Naturalists Club of Vic - Advice of availability of grants, closing date 31 March 2005 and Request for donations to FNVC Environment Fund.
- Australian Natural History Medallion: Three new committee members to fill vacancies, New logo competition details - entries to go to 90 affiliated clubs for comment. Medallion sponsored by Andrew Isles for three years.
- Department of Justice: Proforma for completion by Public Officer and advice of \$35 fee (retained by Greg Binns as Public Officer).
- Geelong Field Naturalists' Club: Geelong Naturalist, March 2005.
- Maryborough Field Naturalists' Club: Newsletter, Aug 2004 - Feb 2005.
- Threatened Species Network: The Web, Summer 2005.
- Corangamite CMA: Regional Catchment Strategy update.
- City of Ballarat: Insurance Survey.
- VNPA: Appeal.
- Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability: Victorian State of the Environment Report workshops.
- Australia Post: Post office Box renewal.
- Bendigo Bank: Statement.
- Fungimap: Receipt for \$200 donation.
- Thanks: John and Elaine Gregurke; Greg Binns
- Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria: Newsletter, March 2005.

OUT:

- Sympathy Card: John and Elaine Gregurke.
- Congratulations to Greg Binns on OAM Award.
- Fungimap: \$200 donation.

That the correspondence be accepted:

M. Ken McDonnell, S. Elizabeth FitzPatrick. C.

5. Business Arising from correspondence:

Free place at Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Symposium, May 28 & 29.

6. Reports

- Treasurer's Report: M: Bob Curtain S: Jack Netherway C
- Celebration of Yarrowee River trail. Claire Dalman summarised promotion of Trail held at Regent Cinema Feb. 17.

7. General Business

- Volunteer to write up excursion report for the Newsletter - John Gregurke.
- Syllabus: April excursion and December guest speaker still to be arranged.
- April Excursion: Little River Earth Sanctuary, guided tour \$22. 18 people expressed interest. Details to be finalised at next committee meeting.
- SEANA: That Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat give permission to publish club name, postal address, meeting time and place, name of president and secretary, on the SEANA website. Should we publish any other information eg contact telephone number or email address? Meeting decided that postal address only should be made available.
M. Eileen Anderson. S. Ken McDonnell. C.
- Lyndsay Fink had been asked by Pax Hill Scouts as to where Gould League Posters could be obtained. DSE in Mair St advised as first port of call.

8 Show and tell

9. Field Reports

- Belinda Taylor: near Haddon Common - Shingleback lizards, not seen in area previously. At Sailors Falls, a Dunnart near base of eucalypt mid-afternoon.
- John Gregurke: Lake Burrumbeet - 1000 Shelduck in Dobson's Bay. This was one third of total Shelduck on the lake. 2000 Red-necked Avocet with some Black-winged and Banded Stilt on northern side of the lake.
- Val Hocking: Ballarat East - Rainbow Lorikeets visiting flowering gum.
- Dulcie Brooke: Cumberland Track, Marysville, a fleeting glimpse of a lyrebird and a group of lyrebird calls also heard.
- Carol Hall: Eight Great Egrets with two Pelicans and numerous Sacred Ibis sheltering closely together in lee of island providing protection from ferocious easterly wind off Fairyland, Lake Wendouree.

10. Excursion Arrangements

Excursion arrangements: Sunday 6 March, Meet at Ballarat Market Place (Creswick block 9.45am overlooking Nerrina wetland; clean up trail whilst walking (Clean-up Oz Plaza), 9.30am for excursion to Upper Yarrowee River Trail. Meet Gavin Cerini at his Day).

- **11. Syllabus Item:** Club Members "Coastal Ecosystems" slides. Presentations from Ken Hammond, Greg Binns, Carol Hall, Claire and Peter Dalman, Lyndsay Fink.

12. Supper

NB: Subscriptions for 2005 now due.
Please note the new rates -
as outlined on page 1, in Annual General Meeting Minutes

Members Slides on Coastal Ecology



Greg Binns

The first pictures shown were of close views of patterns between tide marks – of deposits of colourful shells of many shapes and textures, and of the picturesque forms of *Caleolaria* worm tubes and limpets where their zones meet on the rock face. Next were banded and finely-ridged bivalves, *Notocallista Kingii* deposited in fine greyish sands at Macquarie Harbour (SW Tasmania) The patterns formed by receding tide movement of the sand running over fine ridges of the shells are very spectacular.

A volute, *Pterospira roadnightae* was shown extended from its shell in a rock pool at Apollo Bay, Vic. Studies of beached-washed bodies of Silver Gull and Fairy Penguin (both fresh!) with accompanying sea weeds and shells followed. The presentation concluded with a 'shot' of a large male fur seal alone in a sandy cove amongst rocks at Peterborough, Vic.

Carol Hall

The gannet colony (6000 strong) at Lawrence Rocks off Portland has grown to the extent that Point Danger, the nearest point of the mainland, has been adopted by 1000 more birds. An electric fence was installed across the neck of the headland to keep foxes and people out and the colony continues to grow. My slides showed the geography of the site followed by a sequence of 8 slides depicting a pair of gannets courting and mating, seen

in October 2003. At this stage nest-building was occurring (one egg is laid) and a further visit in January of 2005 enabled me to see half-grown young, white to begin with and becoming mottled grey as they develop. The gannets have been recorded flying to Western Australia and as far as Mauritius.

Lyndsay Fink

Three slides of coastal areas of Sarah Is., Macquarie Harbour, Tas., as this island was once a convict settlement the entrance to the herbier was called the Gates of Hell; a slide showing the great Franklin River with the tannin dissolved in its waters colouring the salt water of Macquarie Harbour; slide taken at Burnie showing the 'Nut' which is a basalt core from an ancient volcano; a view of the coast at Townsville showing the shark-proof fenced-off area of the water which is also jelly-fish free; a view of Victorian coastline towards Wilson's Promontory; Lake Eyre with water in it. As an extra, Lyndsay also showed a slide of historical importance to the club as it contained past members and a present one when he was younger.

Peter Dalman

Claire and Peter Dalman showed slides from their 2002 trip to King Island. Included were views of island vegetation and seascapes. Grassy, a former mining town is now a holiday centre and home to Ballarat and Clarendon College Year nine students. Scheelite was formerly obtained. Today island goods are delivered via the Searoad Mersey ship at the Grassy harbour and local produce dispatched. Numerous fairy penguins wander freely each evening. Scenes of bull kelp harvesting and drying were shown. The island is a major international supplier of this rich source of alginates. After processing in Scotland we apparently use something every day which includes King Island kelp. Penny's lagoon, a perched lake was shown as was a collection of colourful sponges, seaweeds and shells on Martha Lavina's beech, close to the breeding grounds of orange bellied parrots.

Ken Hammond

Some of Ken's slides showed the different ecosystems in rock pools at Apollo bay, others showed beautiful coastal scenery created over a very long time by wind and ocean at Childers Cove near Warrnambool. There were also a couple of close up shots of seaweed, Neptunes Necklace (*Hormosira banksii*), and one of Dwarf Kelp (*Ecklonia radiata*).

Please note: Syllabus 2005 – 2006 is now available.

NB: A change of date - September excursion is **not** Sunday Sept. 4 but Saturday Sept. 3 because the Sunday is Father's Day

Excursion - Upper Yarrowee River Trail

6 March 2005

The Yarrowee River Trail is a 16 kilometre walking and cycling trail from Gong Gong Reservoir at Brown Hill, through the city to Sebastopol. Work began with revegetation at

Yarrowee Flora Reserve in 1982. Since 1997 rehabilitation has involved many community groups working on weed control, planting of native vegetation and track building. On our March excursion we visited the upper section of the trail where the weed control and dense plantings have transformed the river to a delightful bushland area.

We first stopped at the Nerrina Wetlands. A borrow pit from the construction held water but when full the wetland area would be much more extensive. Black Duck and White Ibis were seen.

Gavin Cerini showed us his block of land east of the wetlands. We climbed a steep escarpment where weed control was underway and trees and shrubs planted during the past 3 years had become well established. of The higher flat area had good patches remnant vegetation with Kangaroo Grass *Themeda triandra* and Wattle Mat-rush *Lomandra filiformis*. The uncommon Trailing Ground-berry *Acrotiche prostrata* was creeping over the ground.



Hillside revegetated.



Ah juicy blackberries

Woody plants that were regenerating included Common Cassinia *Cassina aculeata*, Drooping Cassinia *C. arcuata*, eucalypts and sheoak. Weeds, including hemlock and

grasses grew prolifically where soil had been disturbed. Mature Manna Gum, Narrow-leaved Peppermint and Blackwood grew on the steep slope of the Duggan street reserve.

We walked upstream along the trail. The river was running steadily after recent rain and water was entering from a drain near the Brown Hill Reserve. We joined in 'Clean Up Australia Day' by collecting litter as we walked. A male Golden Whistler called strongly and was eventually located in the streamside willows. Brown Thornbill, Superb Fairy-wren and White-browed Scrubwren occupied the understorey. The branches of a dead willow provided perches for Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Yellow-faced Honeyeaters and Silvereye. Ripe blackberries were eaten as we walked along.

After lunch at Gong Gong Reservoir we walked through the surrounding bushland. We found several clusters of crane flies at the base of trees or on fallen logs. Bull ants were feeding on these clusters.



The black patch is a swarm of crane flies



Where are the crane flies gone?

Common Brown Butterflies were seen in good numbers as we walked up the hill. At one bird hotspot we saw Grey Shrike-thrush, Satin Flycatcher, Rufous Whistler, Brown Thornbill and Grey Fantail and heard Spotted and Striated Pardalote. Two raptors flew overhead. The first was a Brown Goshawk while the second, a falcon with very pointed wings, may have been a Black Falcon. It has recently been sighted at the Ballarat North Sewage Treatment Plant.

Near the picnic area at the Gong new interpretive signs gave information about the importance of wetlands to the environment. The simple food web showed the feeding relationships of wetland flora and fauna.

John Gregurke

SEANA Campout 11-14 March 2005 Eildon Holiday Lodge, Snobs Creek.

Sixty-two Field Naturalists from as far away as Mildura and Sale met on the Labour Day weekend to explore the forests and waterways of the Upper Goulburn region under the guidance of Upper Goulburn FNC. President Joan Edwards (Semmens) introduced a program of excursions and guest speakers which covered subjects as diverse as the history of man's settlement and use of the region, the role of fire in the bush and the conservation of native fish species.



Lake Eildon wall being raised



Ideal spot for twitchers on Goulburn River bank

Those who visited the Snobs Creek Freshwater Discovery Centre were taken behind the scenes where Murray Cod and Trout Cod are reared, as well as Rainbow and Brown Trout for commercial stocking.

Birdwatchers were catered for at Gobur Flora Reserve and billabongs along the Goulburn River, and Joan Edwards, whose book *Bush Seasons* is a record of 15 years' observations in the McKenzie Flora Reserve, took us to this locality which in spring would be a floristic delight, and in autumn gave us good birding including Rainbow Bee-eaters. Some members explored the historical aspects of the Rubicon area.

We were interested to see that Eildon Dam wall is being upgraded to better withstand earthquakes and cope with sudden floods, making use of today's technology. The dam was built in the early 1950s. The reservoir is currently 36% full, an encouraging figure when two years ago it was only 6% full.

As ever we enjoyed catching up with members from other clubs, and the SEANA AGM was held with Helen Langley (Timboon) succeeding Dick Southcombe (Geelong) as President. Rob Moors (Bendigo) and John Gregurke (Ballarat) continue as Treasurer and Secretary respectively.

Carol Hall

