



NEWSLETTER: DECEMBER 2022

**SEANA CAMP HOSTED BY PENINSULA FNC
Merricks Lodge, 30/9- 2/10/2022**

There is always a lot of trepidation in organising a SEANA Camp. Our two big worries were Covid, which we were lucky to escape, and inclement weather. It had been a very wet Spring, and we had visions of our excursion participants huddled under umbrellas and wondering why they were there. The weekends before and since have all been sodden, but by the most extraordinary luck our weekend was all glorious sunshine.

Our previous camp, in March 2013, was also hosted at Merricks Lodge, but the excursions were mainly to Point Nepean and the Southern Peninsula. This time we just ranged around the nearby areas, to our favourite places. These were: for orchids and flowers: Crib Point and Stony Point; geology: Cape Schanck and Bushrangers Bay; birding: Woods Reserve on Saturday, Coolart on Sunday; botany and birds: Greens Bush and Main Ridge NCR, and general interest: Eatons Cutting, Red Hill and Seawinds, Arthurs Seat.

On Friday night our speaker was our member Roger Standen, who spoke about invertebrate life and interactions at Woods Reserve. He put up a moth sheet and light both nights at the camp in the hope that we would see moths, but it was too chilly and the moths stayed away. He also led a birding excursion to Woods Reserve on Saturday, with many interesting birds seen.

On Saturday night Leon Costermans spoke about his new Geology of Victoria book, *Stories Beneath our Feet*. Leon is a longstanding friend of our club and the local environment. He has led the Friends of Langwarrin Flora and Fauna Reserve since they started in 1988. He is famous of course for his *Native Trees and Shrubs of SE Australia* book, first published in 1981, and 30,000 copies sold so far, and the little green *Trees of Victoria and Adjoining Areas* book, which has sold an astonishing 400,000 copies. In between these he led walks for the VNPA, and published their booklets. He has been working on the geology book for 17 years, and the care shows in the finished book. It wasn't available at the camp, but is out now.

Leon's aim with the book is to make geology accessible and understandable for the average person, particularly 'environmental geology'. Geology is the most 'conceptual' of the sciences, as you have to build up a picture of how the

landform came to be there. Current textbooks are too technical for the layman (Leon's has a glossary of 800 terms). Part 1 is Foundations for Understanding- the Earth and its crust, the dynamic Earth, stories in strata- a 600 million year story. Part 2 is Processes and Environments- crustal forces and effects, igneous rock, 'old' rock become 'new' rock- sedimentary rocks, how moving water shapes the land, the dynamic coast, glaciation and geological influences on present life – relationships between rocks, landforms, climate, soils, flora and fauna. Part 3 is Exploring the Region- SE Australia from Port Phillip to the

coasts, Gippsland, the Newer Volcanics, the Western & Central Uplands, and the Murray Catchment. There is a lifetime of learning and interest in it.

We had 67 registrations and 62 participants at our camp. I would like to thank our members for making it happen, and making it enjoyable; Merricks Lodge for the great meals and hosting; our

speakers Roger and Leon; and the SEANA participants who all contributed their knowledge and fellowship. It was a very enjoyable weekend.—**Judy Smart**



Lake at Merricks camp. Photo: Heather Ducat



Cape Schanck & Fingal: Geology

The focus for Saturday's full day excursion was the volcanic and seismic landscape of the southern Mornington Peninsula. I was surprised to find 18 people signed up; I didn't realize so many were interested in geology.

Our energetic walk for the morning was along the clifftop to Bushrangers Bay, with excellent views of the 80 m. high cliffs of basalt topped with dune limestone; it is some of the most spectacular coastal scenery in Victoria. Sunny conditions enlivened the colours of the volcanic formations, Cape Schanck and Pulpit Rock certainly lived up to Lieutenant James Grant's description of 'a promontory of colourful, curiously-shaped rocks'.



Bushrangers Bay

The coastal vegetation was bright with flowering species including Coast Tea-tree (*Leptospermum laevigatum*), Common Boobialla (*Myoporum insulare*), Coast Flax-lily (*Dianella brevicaulis*), Coast Beard-heath (*Leucopogon parviflorus*) and even a few orchids: Pink Fairies (*Caladenia latifolia*) and Maroonhoods (*Pterostylis pedunculata*).

Birds were scarce: only Silvereye, Little Wattlebird, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Fantail, Yellow Robin and Singing Honeyeater, all busy in the flowering species. Of special interest was a sighting of possibly, a Dusky Antechinus in a thick mound of Seaberry Saltbush and a couple of Tiger Snakes.

Bushrangers Bay was a welcome location for morning tea and a chance to see detail of the volcanic landscape, including the successive lava flows, red tuff and eroded soil layers, all displayed in the cliff at the eastern end of the beach. The activity has been dated at about 50-40 million years ago and is referred to as 'Older Volcanics'.

On our return to Cape Schanck, after a couple of long flights of steps, waning energy and protesting knees caused the group to spread out a bit, Velimir at the front, William

in the middle with most of the group and I brought up the rear, with a couple who walked at a snail's pace. We all made it to the car park -- eventually!

After lunch at 'The Pines' picnic area we walked the short Fingal Track which gives access to two lookouts. The clifftop path looped through a closed canopy of Coast Tea-tree and Moonah (*Melaleuca lanceolata*), decorated with curtains of Bower Spinach. Although weedy, flowering species in the understorey included Slender Bush-pea (*Pultenaea tenuifolia*), Running Postman (*Kennedia prostrata*), Thyme Rice-flower (*Pimelea serpyllifolia*) and White Correa (*Correa alba*).



Distorted basalt columns

The first lookout gave us a wonderful view of the western side of Cape Schanck promontory with its red tuff and black basalt shore platform and the 40 m. high cliff of distorted basalt columns topped with about 40 m. of dune limestone (Calcarenite). It is thought that the distortion of the columns was caused by activity on the nearby Selwyn Fault as the lava was cooling. To the west of the fault there is further evidence of movement on the fault with the Calcarenite at sea level, only a short distance from the cliff. We continued to the second lookout, eyes glued to the path after sighting another Tiger Snake, we weren't the only ones enjoying the afternoon sun. This lookout is perched near the top of the promontory and the view was across the 'slump zone' of the fault and looking north-west along the length of the Nepean Peninsula towards 'The Heads', 28 kms. away.

Again birds were in hiding but the highlight was watching a Peregrine Falcon shoot the breeze close to the cliff, a Kelp Gull, Silver Gulls and a very vocal Crescent Honeyeater which was difficult to see in a thicket of Tea-tree.

Thank-you to Velimir and William for their assistance in keeping our large group together, not easy on the undulating and bushy tracks. Thanks also to the guests who filled in some gaps in my botanical knowledge.—
Heather Ducat (Text & photos)

Excursion to Cape Schanck 1/10/22

On a sunny still morning we began by walking from Cape Schanck to Bushrangers Bay. The route started out along the clifftop through coastal vegetation with views back along the cliffs towards the Cape Schanck lighthouse and Pulpit Rock. Some flowering plants we saw included Coast Twinleaf (*Roepera billardierei*), Coast Flax-lily (*Dianella brevicaulis*), Coastal Grousel (*Senecio pinnatifolius* var. *lanceolatus*), Pink Fairies (*Caladenia latifolia*) and Maroonhoods (*Pterostylis pedunculata*).

Eventually we descended down onto the beach where there were good examples of the different basalt layers that had formed over time. Unfortunately the tide was too high to do the short walk to Burrabong Creek for a close-up view of a cliff of freshwater limestone capped by Dune Calcerenite but we were able to view it, and some Red Tuff (volcaniclastic rock composed of solid volcanic ash) at the waters edge, from the cliff track above.

Cape Schanck was named in the 1800s after a Captain John Schank, R.N. but the name was mis-spelt. The name Bushranger Bay is derived from an event in 1853 when two convicts hijacked a schooner to escape from Van Diemens Land and demanded to be put ashore in this bay. They made their way inland, violently shooting and pillaging as they went, but within twelve months they were

apprehended in Kilmore and eventually hung in the Melbourne goal.

Our next stop was for lunch at the Fingal Picnic Ground, off Cape Schanck Road, and from here we did the short 1.8 km Fingal Circuit walk. This clifftop walk took us to two lookouts to see distorted basalt columns one way and in the other direction we had clear views along the Nepean Peninsula where we could see evidence of the Selwyn Fault. Our leader described the network of faults including the Tyabb, Selwyn, and Flinders faults and another one through Dromana, that criss-cross the peninsula making it quite a vulnerable area should these faults become active in the future.

Flower plants in this area were Slender Bush-pea (*Pultenaea tenuifolia*), Coastal Groundsel (*Senecio pinnatifolius* var. *lanceolatus*), Running Postman (*Kenmedia prostrata*), and Thyme Rice-flower (*Pimelea serpyllifolia* subsp. *serpyllifolia*).

Birds recorded on the day were Silver Eyes, Little Wattlebirds, Grey Shrike Thrush, Grey Fantail, Perigrine Falcon, Kelp Gull, Silver Gull, and a Crescent Honeyeater. —Geraldine Harris – Castlemaine FNC

Woods Bushland Reserve – Bittern – Devilbend

A small group of nine interested people, including myself leading and Bett Mitchell as facilitator, enjoyed an amazing morning of birding and other wildlife encounters in Woods Bushland Reserve as part of the spring SEANA camp on October 1, 2022.

Within 300m of leaving the carpark, a female Koala and her youngster were seen, to the delight of the group. A range of orchids (eg Common Bird Orchid (*Chiloglottis valida*), Waxlip (*Glossodia major*), Lady Finger (*Caladenia catenata*) and Rabbit Ears (*Thelymitra antennifera*) – our group’s emblem that I had not seen at Woods before) and other plants were the subject of ID challenges among those who know about these things (read not me!).



into the sun to really give us the best looks you could hope for.

Small groups of between 3-7 Red-browed Finches darted from the track into the adjoining bracken, only to return to feed when we stopped and waited. Bett wondered if the Olive-backed Oriole would be around, and whilst I assured her it had been there on my recce, it was pleasing to hear it. Following up on the call we found the bird calling where everyone could get great views of it. One group member had never seen one before, so she was thrilled with that. The bird moved to another tree which Bett said was the one she had seen it in the year earlier! It was the call that also alerted us to the Sacred Kingfisher, which called from a dead tree right between members of the group, so again we could all see it.

The weather was stunning. Calm, cloudless and about 19 degrees and this added to the enjoyment of the walk. A Shining Bronze-cuckoo gave those who saw it first amazing views as it was only metres away. It flew on but still gave clear views for us, with sunlight highlighting its colours.

With all these cracking birds, we were a bit blasé about some of the regulars. However, the rosellas could not be ignored as they battled for their hollows with other pairs of either the same, or the other species. One pair of Crimson also seemed to be having trouble getting rid of a member of their last season’s clutch as they readied themselves to go again.

The bird list of 39 was an excellent return as the quality

There was a group of about eight Varied Sitella that fed around a couple of tree canopies for some minutes, giving everyone a great view. This was also the case with a patient female Crested Shrike-tit and more-so by a Brush Bronzewing that stood and showed off on the track, moving

was high and a number of ‘guaranteed’ birds like Rainbow Lorikeet avoided us.

After lunch we wandered over to Bittern Reservoir, walking through the bush to Devilbend, though water birds were scarce given the huge choice they have elsewhere in eastern Australia. Reed Warblers have been back for some weeks and a Swamp Harrier cruised around within easy viewing distance. Another 16 species were added to the morning’s list.



One of the highlights for me though, was not a bird, but a swarm of mayflies that was only identified as such when we managed to focus on a couple with our binos. They did not land but flew continuously above the track. I had never seen a mayfly in the day before, only when they had come to a light sheet a couple of times. What added to this was nine days later I was at Woods again and while walking

along a kangaroo track through the bracken, I noticed a small insect fly and land on a frond. It was a mayfly!—**Rog Standen (Text & Photos)**

Morning:	
Australian Wood Duck	Sacred Kingfisher
Brush Bronzewing	Galah
Horsefield’s Bronze-cuckoo	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Shining Bronze-cuckoo	Crimson Rosella
Straw-necked Ibis	Eastern Rosella
Brown Goshawk	Superb Fairy-wren
Laughing Kookaburra	
Afternoon*:	
Pacific Black Duck	Australian White Ibis
Musk Duck	Swamp Harrier
Spotted Dove	Noisy Miner
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Rufous Whistler
Masked lapwing	Olive-backed Oriole
Eastern Spinebill	Dusky Woodswallow
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Grey Butcherbird
Little Wattlebird	Australian Magpie
Red Wattlebird	Grey Fantail
New Holland Honeyeater	Little Raven
Striated Pardalote	Eastern Yellow Robin
White-browed Scrubwren	Welcome Swallow
Brown Thornbill	Common Starling
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Common Myna
Varied Sitella	Common Blackbird
Crested Shrike-tit	Red-browed Finch
Grey Shrikethrush	White-eared Honeyeater
Golden Whistler	Spotted Pardalote
Australian Reed Warbler	Pied Currawong
Black Swan	Magpie-Lark
White-faced Heron	

*we saw more of the morning birds in the afternoon, but these were the additional ones.

Greens Bush and Main Ridge NCR

These two Saturday excursions were designated ‘general interest’—an experience of the environment of the central Peninsula, with the hope of seeing some flowers, orchids and birds. Our pre-camp reconnaissance indicated that there were different things to be seen at the two locations.

Nine guests joined myself and facilitator Pam Cairns to walk the long circuit at Baldry’s Crossing, Greens Bush. Unfortunately three decided to cut their walk short when we came to the turnoff for the short circuit, after climbing the stairs up from Main Creek, probably the steepest part of the walk. The rest continued, finding much of interest, particularly wildflowers including Common Heath,

Common Hovea, late flowering Showy Bossiaca, Love Creeper, Common Aotus, and Prickly Starwort. The Mountain Clematis in full flower higher in the canopy put on a spectacular show.

Birds were less in evidence, with the inevitable Crimson Rosellas most prominent, along with Golden Whistlers which were calling all around. Our total of 24 species also included Spotted Pardalote, White-browed Scrubwren, Superb Fairy-wren, an assortment of honeyeaters, and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike. It took a surprisingly long time to hear or see a White-throated Treecreeper, and we topped off the list with a Mistletoebird.

The walk takes you down to twice cross small tributaries of Main Creek, where the vegetation changes from the Messmate grassy woodland of the higher ground to tree-fern territory—only Rough Tree-fern (*Cyathea australis*) was seen; also present were a couple of Blechnum species, False Bracken *Calochlaena dubia*, and Hen-and-chicken Fern *Polystichum proliferum*. Also in this area the White Elderberry (*Sambucus gaudichaudiana*) stood out, looking like an alien although it is indigenous to the area.

The return leg passes through grass-tree (*Xanthorrhoea australis*) territory; a couple were sporting tall flower spikes—this species is generally thought to require fire to initiate flowering. The only orchids we saw were Common Birds (*Chiloglottis valida*).

After lunch at the Baldry’s Crossing picnic area—where we added a couple to our bird list—and a comfort stop at Main Ridge Recreation Reserve, we travelled the short distance to Main Ridge NCR. On a previous Club visit we were struck by the variety of wildflowers at this reserve, but that was later in the year; on this visit the wildflowers were somewhat disappointing. The most notable observation was Rough (*C. australis*) and Soft (*Dicksonia antarctica*) Tree-ferns growing on opposite sides of the track, making the difference between them very obvious.

Our participants seemed to enjoy the outing, seeing some plants familiar to them and some less so. Thanks to Pam for her assistance, and thanks also to Judith Cooke from the Ringwood FNC for her great photo montage. — Lee Denis.



Photo montage by Judith Cooke

Eatons Cutting & Seawinds Garden.

This Sunday excursion was listed as General Interest - wildflowers, birds and history, I even managed to sneak in a little bit of geology, especially after Leon's presentation on Saturday night.

Sixteen people had signed up for our morning walk around the easy 1.3 km. circuit at Eatons Cutting. This track, on the northern flank of the uplifted Arthurs Seat Block, gives a good view of Dromana Bay and the uplifted Bald Hills Block to the east. The central and southern parts of

Mornington Peninsula are crossed by faults running north/south and east/west, forming uplifted blocks which gives this area its hilly terrain.

Armed with a POTENTIAL plant list that Judy had prepared after our September Birding visit, we were soon checking off flowering species, including 5 orchids - Common Bird (*Chiloglottis valida*), Green-comb Spider (*Caladenia dilatata*), Tall Greenhood (*Pterostylis melagramma*), Nodding Greenhood (*Pterostylis nutans*) and

Maroonhood (*Pterostylis pedunculata*). A few people who had been on the excursion to Crib & Stony Point were surprised to find some of the same orchids in such a different habitat - generally quite bushy with granite as the underlying rock.



Eatons Cutting track

About 24 species in flower kept cameras busy, with birds taking second place. We recorded 17 species including a male Golden Whistler that perched for ages, long enough for all of us to have a really good look.

We travelled to Seawinds Garden for lunch, followed by a walk through the indigenous garden and to the Flinders Cairn on Arthurs Seat, and returned via the 2 lookouts in the garden. The Northern Lookout gave a good view of Mt. Martha, Schnapper Point, Mt. Eliza and a smudge of city buildings on the horizon. From the Bay Lookout we had an

excellent view of sandbanks and the East Channel near Rosebud with the Nepean Peninsula curving around to The Rip.

Further options were to walk the McKellar Circuit, to look around other parts of Seawinds or ride the Eagle Gondola. A few people had a pleasant stroll around the garden, no takers for the Eagle and a few of us enjoyed a coffee and a chat before the trek home. Thanks again to Velimir for his assistance, counting heads and dispensing local knowledge.
—Heather Ducat (Text & Photos)



Seawinds Gardens

Crib Point/Stony Point Excursions

Looking for orchids and heathland flowers at Lorimer St, Cyril Fox Reserve Milne St, Woolleys Beach Crib Point & Stony Point railway line.

When we did our reconnaissance visit to these sites 2 weeks before the camp it rained all day. It rained often in the weeks before, but the weekend of the Camp was perfect orchid spotting weather, and all the participants got to see 15 orchids overall, plus many other flowers, listed below.

The birds were good too—about 33 overall, with the highlights being Olive-backed Oriole and Sacred Kingfisher.

Excursions were led by Judy Smart, helped by Eleanor Masterton. As always, the participants knew as much as the leaders, and contributed greatly to everyone's knowledge and enjoyment. To add to our luck, on both days our group ran into Rudie Kuitert, the local orchid expert, who was attempting to photograph pollinators on Caladenias. Our large groups wandering past and asking questions didn't help, and the pollinators didn't show up, but Rudie retained his good humour and identified some orchids for us.—Judy Smart

ORCHIDS

Lorimer St

- Caladenia catenata* - Spider orchid - white fingers
- Caladenia clavigera*
- Caladenia parva*
- Cyrtostylis subulata* - large tongue orchid (in bud)
- Diuris orientis* - Donkeys
- Glossodia major*- waxlip
- Thelymitra antennifera* - Rabbits ears
- Thelymitra aristata* - tall sun orchids

Cyril Fox Reserve, Milne St

- Diuris orientis* - Donkeys
- Lyperanthus suavolens* - Brown beaks

Woolleys Beach

- Acianthus pusillus* - mosquitos
 - Caladenia catenata*- white fingers
 - Caladenia parva*
 - Cyrtostylis reniformes* - small gnat orchids
 - Diuris orientis* - Donkeys
 - Pterostylis nutans* - nodding greenhood
- Stony Point railway line**

Diuris orientis - Donkeys
Prasophyllum elatum - Tall leek-orchid
Prasophyllum spicatum - dense
Thelymitra antennifera - rabbits ears
Thelymitra flexuosa - twisted sun orchid

FLORA LIST – in flower, and caught my eye

Acacia paradoxa
Acacia suaveolens
Amperea xiphoclada
Billardiera mutabilis – apple berry
Bossiaea prostrata
Brachyscome cardiocarpa - Swamp daisy
Chamaescilla corymbosa - Blue stars
Comesperma volubile - love creeper
Coronidium scorpioides – Sunray
Daviesia latifolia - Hop Bitter-pea
Dillwynia glaberrima -parrot pea
Dillwynia sericea

Epacris impressa – heath
Goodenia geniculata
Hakea ulicina – furze hakea
Hibbertia riparia – erect guinea flower
Hypoxis vaginata - Yellow stars
Isopogon ceratophyllus – horny cone-bush
Kennedia prostrata – running postman
Leptospermum continentale – prickly tea tree
Leucopogon virgatus – twiggy beard-heath
Pimelea humilis – dwarf rice flower
Pimelea octophylla - woolly rice flower
Platylobium obtusangulum – common flat pea
Stylidium graminifolium - trigger plant
Stylidium perpusillum - tiny trigger plant
Thysanotus tuberosus – twining fringe lily
Wurmbea dioica - Early Nancy
Xanthorrhoea minor ssp *lutea*- dwarf grass tree
Xanthosia huegelii



Photo montage by Judith Cooke

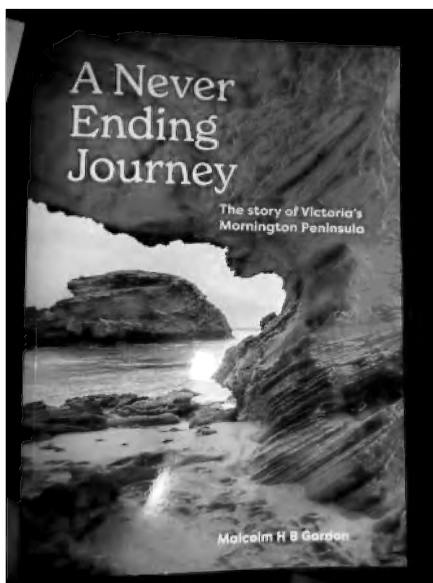
SPEAKER REPORTS

A Never Ending Journey – The Story Of Victoria's Mornington Peninsula Malcolm Gordon 14/9/2022

Malcolm Gordon is originally from NZ, but a long time resident of Mt Martha. He taught Geography and English in his teaching career, but has also authored books, starting with *Surviving the Outback*, written in the 90s when outback tourism was just getting going. From there he went on to running educational tours for schools, mainly in the outback. He wrote a field guide to the Mornington Peninsula, *Victoria's Mornington Peninsula*, in 1997, and decided to update it and correct some of the inaccuracies he read elsewhere. He finished up writing a much larger and very handsome, well illustrated book on the natural, cultural and farming history of the Mornington Peninsula, which quite a few of us could not resist buying.

He spoke first about the geological history, the two major faults and the formation of Western Port Bay and the Nepean Peninsula in relatively recent times (the last 10,000 years). He noted that the removal of rock formations near the entrance to the Bay have caused the erosion of Portsea Beach now.

Mt Martha during the WW2 years was closed to the general public, due to the importance of the Balcombe Camp, and a series of camps, training schools and hospitals nearby.



Henry Bolte had plans to make Western Port Bay 'the Ruhr of the south', with a nuclear plant on French Island among other ideas. He did not take into account the closed nature of WP Bay, with little water circulation out to Bass Strait.

For the Aboriginal history, Malcolm consulted with Carolyn Briggs, an elder, and Gary Presland. There was a semi permanent camp of 100 dwellings at Tyabb, eel traps in Balcombe Creek, and the Bunurong/Boon wurrung people did not need to travel much, as has been written by Bruce Pascoe.

Farming history- dairy farming was the major agricultural activity, but there was never a substantial butter factory. Wineries and vineyards have replaced earlier schemes, such as passionfruit farms. The OT Dam we visited recently was constructed to irrigate orchards for cordial making.

Only 6% of the original vegetation is left, and the Mornington Peninsula is always under pressure from new residents making the area more cityfied.

We met Malcolm's wife Gill Gordon some years ago, when she led a campaign to stop Sunshine Reserve in Mt Martha being subdivided. We visited Sunshine Reserve at the time, which was a beautiful piece of

bush and creek land, and upgraded with weeding and trackwork, a great result.—**Judy Smart**

*

Cape York with a Tour Group Judy Smart, October 12, 2022

Max and I booked a camping tour of Cape York 2½ years ago, and after 2 cancellations we went on the tour June this year. The tour was 15 days of mainly camping, with some cabins; 17 passengers in 3 4WDs and 3 driver/guides. It is 1000km from Cairns to Pajinka (the Tip), over corrugated roads with many creek crossings.

The population of the Cape is 18,000, of whom 60% are Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders, who between them speak 30 languages. Land use is 57% cattle leases, 20% indigenous owned, including entire West Coast, and 20% National Parks and other.

The soils are laterised, extremely eroded and unworkable, so cattle stocking rates are low. As stations come onto the market Traditional Owners buy them.

The rock art at Laura has a long history- Aboriginals lived at Laura 37,000 years ago, the first rock art is dated to 14,400 years ago, and most is from the last 2000 years. In the 1870s a rich alluvial gold field was found at Palmer River nearby, leading to conflict with the Traditional Owners and much bloodshed, then the eviction of the aboriginals. In the 1970s the rock art was protected.

The Overland Telegraph line was constructed in 1885, and in use till 1962. The surviving telegraph stations are now general stores and camping grounds. The original track is a 4WD enthusiast testing track. Much of the terrain is an almost level plain, with rivers and vast floodplains, and the Peninsula Ridge, the Great Divide, so rivers flow from it west into the Gulf of Carpentaria or east into the Coral Sea. The rivers were lined with majestic paperbarks, Melaleucas,

rather than river red gums as in the south.

CY flora has a high rate of endemism—260 endemic species known. There are tropical rainforests, grasslands, heath lands, mangrove swamps, and a lot of tropical savannah, open grassy woodland. Most of CY retains its original vegetation, in good condition. One surprising vegetation class was the big area of dense heathland—nothing growing over 2m, with *allocasuarinas*, wattles, *hibbertia*, and tropical *Banksia- B dentata*.



Palm Cockatoo

There was a memorial plaque in this to the Edmund Kennedy expedition of 1846, an extraordinary and foolhardy attempt to establish a trade route to the Tip for trade with the East Indies. 13 men set out from Cardwell, most dying of fever, starvation and spearing. They would all have died but for Jackey Jackey, a NSW Aboriginal guide who saved several of them. By contrast, the also-ill fated Burke and Wills expedition was 14 years later in 1860.

In the Heath lands is the only safe swimming place on the road, Fruit Bat Falls, on the Elliot River, which is crocodile free. Carnivorous pitcher plants, *Nepenthes mirabilis*, grew in the damp conditions around the falls. They are found from China, through SE Asia, to Cape York.

The group camped for 4 nights at Seisia, a beautiful coastal settlement 40km from the Tip, and the departure point to Thursday Island. Seisia was settled after WW2 by Torres Strait Islander refugees from Saibai Island, near PNG, which had no fresh water. The Dept of Native Affairs permitted and encouraged the translocation, and the local Aboriginals were not consulted. The birdlife at Seisia was prolific, and the stars were the Palm Cockatoos, who visited the Beach Almond trees every morning.

On one of the ferry trips we passed Possession Island, a small rocky island, supposedly the place where Captain Cook claimed New Holland as a British possession. Why would Captain Cook have used this insignificant island to claim sovereignty, when he had just spent 6 weeks at Cooktown? It seems that the Admiralty's instructions did not authorise Cook to annexe New Holland, but when he

got to Batavia he learnt that the French had preceded him across the Pacific. He re-wrote his hilltop signalling drill as a possession ceremony retrospectively.

Another colonial site was Somerset, near the Tip. In 1864 the British and Queensland governments built a base there with a magistrate, John Jardine. His sons, Frank and Alexander, drove cattle there overland from Rockhampton, to establish a cattle station. Jardine River is named after them. There was a great deal of frontier violence with the Aboriginals, so their name is not celebrated. The Jardine River National Park is being renamed. In 1876 the administration of Torres Strait moved to Thursday Island, but the Jardines lived on there until 1919. The only trace of the settlement once there now are the family graves.

When you are standing on Pajinka, the Tip, looking north PNG is only 150k away; the Torres Strait islands are very close. The land bridge to PNG only flooded 8000 years ago. Torres Strait is named after Luis de Torres, a Spanish explorer who was there in 1606. In the same year a Dutch explorer, Janszoon landed near Weipa. Pajinka was closed for a while, due to vandalism by tourists, writing graffiti on the rocks.



Kennedy Palm

Thursday island became the Port and administrative centre after Somerset, and is a small island with a pearling history — before plastic was invented buttons were all made from pearl shell, and the shell was more important than the pearls were. TI had a population of Japanese divers, who were interned during WW2. The adjacent island, Horn island, is much bigger and was an important air base during WW2, with 5000 troops stationed there, some Americans as well as Australians, and a Torres Strait Islander battalion of 880 men. Nearly every Torres Strait Islander man enlisted. A local couple, the Seekees, conduct tours there and conserve the sites, with no help from the Australian War Museum.

The next stop was Weipa, which is on a pretty little bay, with prolific birdlife. There is so much bauxite that they only mine the top 2 metres, to make rehabilitation easier. From there we drove due east to the Lockhart River. The weather had been unseasonably cool, but on the east coast it

was cold, windy, and rained often. We stayed in cabins in the rain forest, and I was lucky enough to see a Spotted Cuscus. The birds were heard but not seen, high up in the canopy.

We travelled south east through Lakefield NP, the home of the Kennedy palm (*Corytha utan*), an extraordinary plant. Everything is big—the fronds are 7m long; it only flowers once, at maturity, with a flower head 3-4m high and 500kg of fruit, and then the whole plant dies. We travelled on Battlecamp Road, named for an Aboriginal uprising during the 1870s mining era – 500 Aboriginal warriors challenged 130 miners with guns, and were massacred.

Cooktown has gold rush era buildings, a beautiful little botanic gardens, and a fascinating museum in the old

Convent building. We saw all this through pouring rain, likewise the rainforest at Cape Tribulation.

The Esplanade at Cairns was a favourite place; I saw new birds there every day. I was very struck with the Bush Stone-curlews living on vacant blocks around the town, and embarrassingly for me showed a photo of a Striated Heron and called it a Bush Stone-curlew.

The roads in Cape York are being improved all the time, and it is getting easier to visit, as long as you have a 4WD for the corrugations and creek crossings. There are frustrations with being on a tour, but if you don't want to do the drive then I think it is better to go on a tour than to not go. We went with Cape York Tours, who I would recommend.—**Judy Smart (Text & Photos)**

*

Flora of Falls Creek Robyn Tyson, APS Mornington, November 9, 2022

APS Keilor group ran a group visit to Falls Creek over the Australia Day weekend, 2021, and several Mornington members were able to join them. Falls Creek elevation is from 1210m to 1830m at highest.

There are 5 EVCs:

Tussock grassland - less well drained areas

Tall alpine herb field - well drained slopes

Alpine bog/fen - along creek lines

Short alpine herb field - under long lasting snowline - so a short flowering season

Feldmark - exposed rocky ridges

The 2004 bushfires killed the Snow gums *Eucalyptus pauciflora*, which have not re-sprouted. Direct seeding has been tried, with little success. This has left a landscape of dead tree trunks with an understory of tough shrubs.

Robyn showed us photos of what was flowering when she was there:

Tussock grass land - *Brachyscome nivalis*, *Celmisia longifolia* and *Craspedia glauca* - one of 6 species seen. Flowers compete for pollination by insects, so they are large and showy.

Short alpine herb field – plants characterised by tiny, tough leaves, such as *Pentachondra pumila* and *Baeckea*

gunniana

Creek line - *Callistemon sieberi* and Leek orchids - *Prasophyllum suttonii*

Bog fen - *Polystichum proliferum*, *Euphrasia glacialis*, *Prostranthera lasianthos*, *Styphelia suaveolens*, *Xerochrysum subungulata*

Tough shrubs - *Hovea longifolia*, *Mirbelia oxyloboides*, *Oxylobium sp.*, *Kunzea ericifolia*, *Ozothamnus cupressoides*.

Feldmark vegetation was seen at an old volcanic cone, with basalt columns, and Mt Cope. A surprising plant was *Exocarpus nanus* - a prostrate dwarf cherry ballart.

Tall alpine herb field - *Brachyscome spp.*, *Aciphylla glacialis*, *Prostranthera cuneata*, *Pimelia ligustrina*, *Podolepis robusta*, *Xerochrysm acuminatum* and *Dianella tasmanica*, but with green berries instead of the usual purple.

The photos were a feast of daisies, mint bushes and especially everlastings. The alpine summer is not far away, and seeing Robyn's photos got me thinking I must go up there this summer.—**Judy Smart**

EXCURSION REPORTS

Studio Park & The Pines: 15th October

Studio Park is a small Council reserve adjacent to McClelland Gallery in Langwarrin. The story goes that both were part of 40 acres (about 16 hectares) of land bought in the 1920s by artist Harry McClelland and later donated to the public by his sister, with half becoming Studio Park. Studio Park then comprises a little over 8 hectares of mostly heathland, with some lower swampy areas. The most conspicuous feature on this visit was the Wedding

Bush in flower. On previous visits we found quite a few orchids, but not on this occasion.

Our bird list for the day came to 22, with the standouts being both Shining and Horsfields Bronze-cuckoos heard, though only the latter was seen.

One swamp wallaby was seen, but there were numerous signs. Since the reserve is completely enclosed, with back

fences of houses on two sides, McClelland Gallery and some sand mines on the other two behind high cyclone wire fences, these wallabies are presumably confined to the 8 hectares of the reserve.



Dillwynia glaberrima

Having not seen much of note at Studio Park we then went to nearby The Pines in search of orchids, but despite walking a very long way all we found were some Rabbit's Ears and Nodding Greenhoods in flower, and leaves of Red Beaks. The wildflowers were good though, with two Dillwynia species (*D. glaberrima* and *D. sericea*), more Wedding Bush, Prickly Guinea-flower (*Hibbertia acicularis*) and Spike Milkwort (*Comesperma calymega*). There were more birds (29) than at Studio Park. Of particular interest was a pair of Spotted Pardalotes zooming in and out of a nest burrow on the dune face.

Beaconsfield NCR: 12th November

This reserve is located in Cardinia Shire, in Officer, and comprises the surrounds of the Beaconsfield Reservoir; it was designated a Nature Conservation Reserve in 2005 after the reservoir was decommissioned. At present it is closed to public access; access can be obtained by arrangement with the management group, the Cardinia Environmental Coalition (CEC). Its 172 hectares hold a number of different EVCs.

We were shown around by Ian Chisholm of the CEC, who gave us an introduction to the reserve, including some history of the area and the reservoir. Then Ian left us to take some walks through the reserve. The relatively small part

we saw consisted primarily of messmate grassy woodland, with little understory—mostly Cassinias and Olearias. Plants were by and large similar to those growing on the Peninsula, but some that stood out to us were *Stackhousia monogyna* (listed for Langwarrin FFR, but I don't recall seeing it there), a magnificent specimen of Blue Pincushion (*Brunonia australis*), Cinnamon Bells (*Gastrodia sesamoides*) and a tall Sun orchid that, although the flowers were not open, looked like *Thelymitra aristata*. Also noted was a fine slime mould on a dead tree, which I tentatively identified as *Dictydiaethalium plumbeum*—a cosmopolitan species recorded worldwide.



Slime mould

Our bird list for the day came to 24, including a brief sighting of a raptor that could have been a Sparrowhawk or a Brown Goshawk; an Olive-backed Oriole and more than one Fantailed Cuckoo were heard all day, but never seen. There was not a single bird on the water.

The Fauna Survey Group of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria conducted a survey of the reserve in February 2017. Overall 51 vertebrate species were recorded: three amphibians, 31 birds and 17 mammals. Mammals included 3 bats and 4 exotics (Black Rat, House Mouse, Cat and Red Fox). —**Lee Denis (Text & Photos)**

BIRDING REPORTS

Eatons Cutting - 5th September

Although scheduled as a birding excursion, this was really a recce for the camp excursion reported by Heather above. This was a case where the actual excursion turned out better than the recce, although we did see 18 birds, one more than the camp excursion saw.

The camp excursion also saw more orchid species; on this visit we saw only Common Bird Orchids and Maroonhoods

in flower, though we did see the leaves of the Green-comb Spider Orchid that was in flower at the time of the camp excursion.

Birds included a Wedge-tailed Eagle soaring high overhead, Striated Pardalote, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, and Golden Whistler, plus a number of honeyeaters.

One purpose was to prepare a plant list for the camp

excursion. Some of the standouts in flower were *Hibbertia riparia* (Erect Guinea-flower), *Hovea heterophylla* (Common Hovea), and *Acacia verticillata* (Prickly Moses).

Later we transferred to OT Dam where we heard an Olive-backed Oriole but saw little and after toiling up the hill from the dam it was decided to drop that location from the camp programme.

On most of our Spring excursions, both privately and with the Club, many of us were struck by the numbers of Imperial Jezebel butterflies (*Delias harpalyce*), generally high in the canopy looking for mistletoe which is their larval food plant. One was noted at a convenient photographic height on the edge of OT Dam.



Imperial Jezebel (Lee Denis)

Mt Martha Park & Hopetoun Reserve: 10th October

We last visited this park in 2016; the report noted that ‘birds were generally scarce’—our list then (22) was slightly shorter than this year’s list of 25. On the visit before that we recorded 24 species in 2010. Apparently it takes us 6 years to forget how few birds we see there! The fact that those previous visits were in June doesn’t seem to have made any difference apart from the summer migrant Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike being seen on the latest visit—in fact a small flock of five birds.

The combined total for the three visits over 12 years comes to 39, of which 12 species were recorded each time, and 19 species recorded on only one visit. All were bush birds commonly seen on the Peninsula. The all-time highlight was a close encounter with a Southern Boobook on the 2010 visit.—**Lee Denis**



Hopetoun-Norfolk FFR, Mt Martha: 10/10/2022

After lunch at Mt Martha Park we went to Hopetoun-Norfolk Flora and Fauna Reserve, on a whim. We thought we would look for the Mt Martha Bundy—an endangered Eucalypt known only from this reserve and creek line. Unfortunately, being on a whim, we didn’t quite know what

we were looking for.

By a process of elimination we worked out which Eucalypts were most likely the Bundy, and this proved to be the case. In the meantime, we were much struck by the other flora of the reserve. The grass trees (*Xanthorrhoea australis*) were magnificent. Two species of pea were in flower: *Pultenaea daphnoides* and *Bossiaea cinerea*, and both impressive. *Goodenia ovata* covered much of the slope. *Tetratheca ciliata* provided a splash of purple.

Confusingly for me, there were also other native but not endemic plants: *Prostranthera ovalifolia*, Mint Bush, were growing in a number of places. They belong in NSW and Qld, but have naturalised in a few places in eastern Victoria. *Agonis flexuosa*, Willow Myrtle, belonging to SW WA, also had a number of established plants growing wild. There were a few *Corymbia calophylla*, Marri, a WA eucalypt resembling the WA Flowering Gum (*Corymbia ficifolia*). The slopes were densely covered with a form of *Dianella tasmanica*, which the Friends of HNEFR are trying to control, a very big task. Whether these were all garden escapes, or they had been planted in the 1970s I don’t know.

The Mt Martha Bundy has now been named, since 2012, *Eucalyptus carolanae*, after Pat Carolan who brought the species to the attention of Kevin Rule, who formally described it. It is a small to medium sized tree, with thick, rough fibrous bark on the trunk, grading to thin finely furrowed bark on the branches. It has glossy green lance shaped adult leaves, & flower buds in groups of 7. It was previously thought to be a hybrid between *E. goniocalyx* and *E. cypellocarpa*, but neither of these species grow on the Mornington Peninsula.

Village Glen, Rosebud, November 7, 2022

The Birdlife Mornington Peninsula newsletter often has interesting sightings from the Village Glen, Rosebud, put in by residents Val Ford (Editor of Birdlife MP newsletter) and Celia Browne. Our birding group has visited there a few times before, but always in winter. This time 6 of us visited on a beautiful warm Spring day.

Noisy Miners have just moved in to the Village Glen, and started chasing the resident birds, to Val’s disgust. In spite of these unwelcome arrivals we saw or heard a total of 45 birds. The highlights were a Spiny-cheeked honeyeater and good views of a few Australian Reed-warblers.

The beautifully landscaped grounds of the Village Glen are bordered by Chinaman’s Creek and the Tootgarook Swamp, which we walked into a little way. We finished up with lunch on the verandah of the Golf Club, admiring the view over the Tootgarook Swamp. The attractions of life there were very evident!—**Judy Smart**

OBSERVATIONS

Gloria's orchids

In 2020 Gloria Dean, past member of the Peninsula Field Naturalists Club, was moving from her home and allowed Heather and me to rescue the Maroonhood and Blunt Greenhood orchids from her garden. This year, with the help of rangers and contractors we were able to replant the orchids into a couple of local reserves.

The Blunt Greenhoods went into a reserve which has another small population of Blunts, with the hope that it increases the genetic diversity of the population there. The Maroonhoods were placed into another reserve.

I believe Gloria would be very happy with this outcome.—
Melinda Gustus. Photos by Tamara Keyte.



Flowering grass tree usage

A large grass tree in our garden flowered again this spring giving me another opportunity to watch what uses it. The flower spike itself seems to have a life of its own when it is still growing as the top of it bends over quite a bit in several directions from one day to another. However, by the time it starts to flower, it has become rigid and doesn't bend again.

rarely see them when the grass tree is not in flower. An Australian Grapevine Moth (*Phalaenoides glycinae*) topped up on energy one day too.—**Rog Standen**

The flowering occurs in a narrow stripe down the northern side of the spike and then gradually spreads around it. The Rainbow Lorikeets, the most obvious of the feeders, follow the fresh flowers and work their way up and down the edges of the advancing flowers.

Other regulars at the flowers are Noisy Miners that despite their bullying, can't deter the lorikeets and the rest are invertebrates. Plenty of bees and flies are found on the flowers each day and surprisingly to me, are the Yellow Admiral (*Vanessa itea*) butterflies that are seen on it each day. There can be up to four at once. I say surprisingly as I



(Rog Standen)

Hunting Planarian

When the sun finally came out in spring, I went for a stroll along the railway line near Mornington and spent an enthralling few minutes watching a battle between an

introduced Portugese Millipede (*Ommatoiulus moreleti*) and a Blue Garden Flatworm (*Caenoplana coerulea*). What amazing creatures these flatworms, or planarians, are.

They use a sticky mucus to subdue their targeted food source, anything from millipedes and slaters to earthworms, and then proceed to ingest the prey through their mouth, which lies about half-way along the body. Bizarrely, this mouth is also the anus, so once the worm has completed its meal it needs to process it and pass out the waste before it can eat again.

Whilst the flatworm had a good grip on the rear half of the millipede, preventing all the legs from operating, the front half could still drag the millipede along, which it kept doing until the flatworm seemingly had enough and let go. The accompanying photos show the flatworm firmly wrapped around the millipede with the sticky mucus clearly immobilising the legs. The mouth was still attached in the image showing the withdrawal of the flatworm. Finally, the two separated and went their own ways. I assume the millipede would eventually get rid of the sticky mucous, but I don't know about that.

Did the flatworm get dragged off the millipede by its continual movement, or had the flatworm had its fill and decided to retire from the dinner table? I don't know.

Whilst I haven't observed this myself, these flatworms can also self-regenerate. If they get cut up, the bits without the head can grow a new one and become a whole flatworm. They sometimes do this themselves by locking the rear part of the body onto something and pulling away until it breaks off. The broken bit then grows a head and starts off again. Amazing!

Enthralling lives can be encountered by looking closely at what is around us.—**Rog Standen (Text & Photos)**



The rear half of the millipede has been incapacitated by the sticky mucous, but the front half could still drag the millipede around.



The flatworm's mouth can be seen attached to the millipede.



The flatworm is well attached to the rear of the millipede



The flatworm following its release of the millipede

Peninsula Field Naturalists Club Inc

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month with a field trip the following Saturday. Further information and current Programme of Activities can be found at our website.

President:
Coralie Davies

All correspondence to
Secretary
Judy Smart

Annual Subs due July

Adult \$30
Concession \$25
Family \$40

Treasurer:
Linda Edwards

Newsletter edited by Lee Denis

To pay direct to bank account: Bendigo Bank
BSB 633-108, account no. 123350068.
Please email secretary when paid.

www.peninsulafieldnaturalists.org.au

BHL



Blank Page Digitally Inserted