

Newsletter 286 Aug 2019

Description

Friends of Chiltern Mt Pilot NP Newsletter 16 August 2019

Dear Friends,

August Field Day

The day started with a visit to the *Cryptandra amara* (Bitter Cryptandra) site off Rileys Road. This patch of Cryptandra is the only one in the Park and it is just coming into flower. As this species suffers from grazing pressure, a small fenced enclosure installed by Parks Victoria is helping to protect some plants but there are many other plants outside of this rather small area that are in need of some help. Wire netting tree guards have been installed by Friends and the effect is quite stunning. Any plant or part of a plant that is outside a guard is mercilessly eaten whereas inside the guards the plants are thriving. We are progressively adding more guards as plants are located.

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Bitter Cryptandra (*Cryptandra amara*) – photo: Neville Bartlett



The area and the effect of using tree guards – photos: Neville Bartlett

We then moved to the Old Indigo Cemetery area, near the corner of Cemetery Road and Chandlers Track, to inspect mammal boxes. The results were encouraging with gliders being found in 4 (3 with Sugar Gliders and 1 the a Squirrel Glider) plus one empty Tuan nest out of the 8 boxes. We tackled the task at hand with greater knowledge as we had been treated to a recent visit from Bruce and Darren Quin (see later section).









Gliders in their nests – photos: Neville Bartlett

Then we literally stumbled onto some interesting looking fungi growing amongst a group of Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*). Karen Retra was with us and she quickly identified the fungus as *Cordyceps gunnii* (now known as *Drechmeria gunnii*). In last month's newsletter (#285), Karen wrote about the strange world of this fungus. Here is a condensed version of what she described:

The fungus is a Cordyceps* that parasitises caterpillars. The Cordyceps spores are tiny and it's thought the caterpillar ingests them while moving through the leaf litter. The spores germinate inside the caterpillar and the resulting mycelium feeds on the caterpillar and completely fills its body cavity, effectively consuming it from inside out, killing it in the process and transforming it into a mummy.

Having extracted what it needs from the caterpillar, the fungus waits for the right conditions to put up a reproductive structure (stroma, sometimes referred to as the 'fruiting body') above ground from which it releases its spores. And so the cycle begins again.

* Note: *Cordyceps gunnii* is now known as *Drechmeria gunnii*.

Karen was very excited with our find and we quickly located more fruiting bodies.

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The fruiting body visible above the ground (about 60 mm high x 10 mm wide) – photo: Neville Bartlett





More black fruiting bodies with white spores – photos: Neville Bartlett

Editor's Note: Karen will be giving a presentation at our AGM on 7th September and we look forward to learning more about wild insect pollinators.

Visit by Bruce and Darren Quin

Late in July, Mick Webster, Tony Murnane and I, met up with Bruce and Darren Quin and then we inspected some mammal boxes in the Northern section of the Park near the Northern intersection of Donchi Hill Road and Bullant Track. Bruce has been associated with the Park for many years and leads the scientific aspects of the mammal monitoring project that Friends contributes to by carrying

out regular inspections. Bruce provided us with much insight into what to look for and also provided us with feedback about recent Turquoise Parrot surveys that he and Darren have conducted in the area over the last few years.

Eileen Collins – OAM Celebration

Eileen Collins will be presented with her Order of Australia Medal (OAM) at Government House in Melbourne on the 17th September 2019. We are planning to have a local celebration of this award at 12 noon on Sunday 20th October 2019 near the bird hide at Chiltern Valley Number 2 Dam.

Eileen has sold her house in Chiltern and settlement will be early in September so that will be behind her well before the gathering in October. The weather should be warmer without being too hot.

Mark the date in your diary. More details to follow in the next two newsletters.

Around the Park

The second Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot survey for 2019 will took place on Saturday 3rd August and two Regent Honeyeaters delighted the survey participants. The birds observed were Orange-Metal Blue-Yellow (OMBY), a female last observed in early May at Bar Trail in Chiltern, and a male Orange-Metal Pink-Pink (OMKK), a male last observed at Whorouly 40 kilometres South West of Chiltern in September 2018. Five Swift Parrots were also observed in the Park. Dean Ingwersen came up from Melbourne and provided us with an overview of the latest recovery program plans.

A Rose Robin was sighted near Greenhill Dam on the survey day early in August but it has eluded attempts to find it since.

The amount of blossom in the Park is steadily increasing and it is a delight to once again see fallen blossom on the roads in a few places.

Golden Wattles (*Acacia pycnantha*) are now flowering and it is well worth a visit to the Park to see them.



Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*) – photo: Neville Bartlett

Deer scats have been found in the Park and deer have been observed in the Rutherglen Natural Features Reserve.



Deer scats – photo: Mick Webster

Such sightings have become more common in recent years as these feral animals have spread throughout North Eastern Victoria.

Ranger's Report – Hannah Clemen

It is a relatively quiet time with our project firefighters finished until next spring and a number of people

taking winter holidays. In the meantime we have been doing winter park and depot maintenance, and planning the implementation of our 2019-20 projects, including tracking the movements of feral pigs in the Park ahead of a new control program to commence in the months to come. We encourage people to report to us the times, dates and locations of any observed pest animal activity as this data is very helpful in our funding bids for the future. We are also currently working on cultivating a strain of cochineal insect that eats wheel cactus, a weed of concern in the western part of the Park.

Rainfall For July: 62mm. Year to date: 302mm.

NEXT MEETING – SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 7th 2019

A walk in the Park followed by dinner and the AGM.

Our guest speaker after the AGM will be Karen Retra who will talk about wild insect pollinators.

Meet at the Post Office at 1.00pm. Field contact: Neville on 0412 399 239

If you are coming to the AGM, please let Neville or Tony know what you plan to bring so that we can balance what food is available. We are exploring the possibility of purchasing a few dishes from local sources.

Membership It's Time to Renew

Memberships expired on June 30th. Thank you to all who have taken out membership this year. We hope you will continue your support. Friends have achieved a great deal during the past year. Surveys for plants, birds and monitoring, maintaining and surveying mammal boxes, tree planting, weed control and provision of brochures, interpretive signage and park furniture are just some of our contributions. Your support for our activities is valued and your membership renewal is vital to our cause. Membership expires on June 30th of each year.

Please ensure your contact details are current.

Please find enclosed my membership of \$15 for 2019-20. The fee covers the whole family and includes 11 newsletters.

Name:.....

Telephone:.....

Email:..... Receipt required: Yes / No

Address:..... Postcode:

If you wish to use electronic payment the details are:

Acc Name: Friends of Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park

Bank: WAW Credit Union Co-operative Ltd (Cuscal Limited)

BSB number: 803070

Acc number: 81167

Please add your surname to the transaction.

Please advise Tony (anthonymurnane9@gmail.com) or Neville (neville@nrbartlett.com.au) when you have made the payment to help us keep track of payments.

Category

1. Newsletters

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