

Newsletter 315 April 2022

## Description

# Friends of Chiltern Mt Pilot NP Newsletter #315 April 2022

**FRIENDS OF CHILTERN MT-PILOT NATIONAL PARK, Inc.**

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Dear Friends,

The April field day featured two groups: (i) Bartleys Block bird walk and wattle planting, (ii) weed removal at the Grasslands Block.

### **Bird walk, Bartley's Block – Margaret Considine.**

Birding at Bartley's was good, but the day was overcast with reduced bird activity and the light made views difficult. Still the Scarlet Honeyeater behaved, and many species of honeyeaters were seen. Other species of interest were the Varied Sittella and the ever popular Speckled Warbler. We saw in the order of 32 species. The Sunday before another birding group saw about 43 species but that day was clear and sunny, and birds were particularly active, with large numbers of Grey Fantails moving about.

The walk was intended for anyone interested in learning their birds or going for a bird-watch. The group, comprising 13 people, including two visiting Tasmanian birdwatchers who joined in, had a good time, as well as consuming two of the Friend's famous morning tea buns. Afterwards, we, with the help of David King, planted 20 Ploughshare wattles (*Acacia gunnii*) in the area near the gate, and weeded any obvious scoundrels imbedded around the planting site.

Bird List (32 species): Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Fuscous Honeyeater, White-plumed Honeyeater, Noisy Friarbird, Red Wattlebird, Scarlet Honeyeater, Black-chinned Honeyeater, Brown-headed Honeyeater, Eastern Spinebill, White-throated Treecreeper, Varied Sittella, Yellow Thornbill, Weebill, Speckled Warbler, Grey Fantail, Striated Pardalote, Grey Shrike-thrush, Rufous Whistler, Golden Whistler, White-browed Babblers, Red-capped Robin, Yellow Robin, Mistletoebird, Gang Gang Cockatoo, Little Lorikeet, Pacific Black Duck, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Welcome Swallow, Australian Magpie, Grey Butcherbird, Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike and Eastern Rosella.



Speckled Warbler (above) (*Pyrrholaemus sagittatus*) and male Red-capped Robin (below)(*Petroica goodenovii*).

Photos: Neville Bartlett



### **Grasslands Block – Mick Webster**

An excellent April Field Day today, the rain stayed away and my little group attacked the briars (and a few pademelons and blackberries) at Grasslands with enthusiasm – about 100 plants grubbed out and half a bucket of hips collected, so hopefully less seeding next year.





A collection of briar hips that will not seed this year. Photo: Mick Webster

**Editor's Note:** Friends have received a 'Bush for Birds' grant for spraying weeds and revegetation work in a gully on the North Eastern side of the Grasslands Block. More details will be available in the

next newsletter.

### **A Journey into History – Donkey Hill becomes Donchi Hill – Eileen Collins**

In 1998 when the management plan for the new National Park was being drawn up submissions were made to change the name of Donkey Hill to reflect history.

The oldest living member of the Donchi family at that time was Mrs Vera Donchi, then aged 94 and living in Melbourne. Vera was born on the Donchi property and in an interview, she gave me this background to the Donchi family.

Her grandfather, Mr Baptista Donchi, came to Australia from Taglio, Lombardy, Italy in the early 1850's.

While crossing the Monaro Plains he met and married Jane Higgins. Together they crossed the Snowy River and made their way to Chiltern. A timber home of three rooms and a detached kitchen was built at the foot of the hill that we now know as Donchi Hill and just above Black Dog Creek. A dam was constructed and an orchard and vegetable garden established.

Two sons of the the marriage also built homes on the property and Vera was the daughter of one of these sons. Baptista Donchi was a charcoal burner, supplying the mines and blacksmiths. He also cut sleepers, slabs for houses, timber for mine props and was a part-time miner. In 1863 he was naturalised in Beechworth.

In early family records the name was spelled as Donghi and this could well explain the origin of the name Donkey Hill, a corruption of Donghi. Vera Pearce was delighted when told that Parks Victoria would rename the road Donchi Hill to reflect history.

Mrs Pearce rarely spoke on the telephone and I required an appointment to call and speak with her.

She was a delightful lady.

### **2022 AGM**

The 2022 AGM has been deferred slightly this year and will now take place at the usual time on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2022. It is hoped that it will take the usual format of an afternoon walk followed by a dinner, the AGM and a guest speaker.

### **Ranger's Report – Scott Cunningham**

There has been plenty of work and changes to staff during what has been a dry and consistent Autumn so far. Brian has taken some leave and I am attempting to fill his shoes in his absence! We have had a new ranger (Jake) start in early March and he has hit the ground running, assisting Laura with pig trapping and planning the upcoming round of fox baiting, scheduled for after Easter.



One burn has been completed at Babbler Track and all other scheduled burns have been delayed until next season due to the seasonal conditions. We are continuing with road maintenance with planned drainage works and have submitted a damage report to seek funding to repair some roads affected by the February storms.

We hosted a fieldtrip for the recent NSW weed conference, highlighting the impact volunteers can have on managing pest plants and the effect of biocontrol on various weeds. Thanks to Neville and Mick for their input on the day, the information and dedication of our volunteers was noted by all and very much appreciated.

We have been supporting various volunteer groups to apply for funding through the Bush for Birds program and hope that this will assist the Friends in their efforts to obtain a grant to further revegetate the Grassland block. Annual volunteer plans are on their way to being completed for most groups, thanks to all that have contributed and provided suggestions and directions for the next year.

On a final note I am in the midst of planning an increased effort to manage illegal trail bike riding and firewood theft this winter. The beginning of this process is an increased presence on social media. If anyone would like to view and or distribute (Facebook etc.) the first of a series of videos can be found here: <https://youtu.be/4-VtiYYB6Q8>

### **Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot Survey Day – Glen Johnson (DELWP)**

You're invited .... Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May is Swift Parrot/Regent Honeyeater survey time in Chiltern!

More info:

DELWP Hume Facebook post: <https://www.facebook.com/DELWPHume/posts/354176553422101>

Ecoportal Link:

<http://ecoportal.net.au/event/regent-honeyeater-swift-parrot-survey-chiltern-nat-park/>

Click on the 'download flyer' Ecoportal link for more details including meeting point map.

Please Register: RSVP essential to enable event planning, catering (lunch provided) & to enable participants to receive key maps, website links and information ahead of the event. Please email [Glen.Johnson@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:Glen.Johnson@delwp.vic.gov.au) **ASAP** before 5<sup>th</sup> May (include any dietary preference).

Please circulate to your networks and contact Glen if you have any queries

**Editor's Note:** Swift Parrots have recently been sighted at the Warby Ranges and at CSU in Thurgoona, so they are certainly in the region.

**Rainfall** March 2022: 32 mm. Total for year-to-date 2022: 311 mm.  
In 2021 we had 239 mm up to the end of March.

The average annual rainfall for Chiltern is 689 mm.

## **NEXT MEETING – SATURDAY 7<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022**

The field day will involve planting shrubs at the Northern end of the Rutherglen Natural Features Reserve along with mammal nest box checking and the ongoing search for olives.

Contact: Jennifer Davidson (0418 169 917 or 02 6032 8442)

Meet at the Chiltern Post Office at 09:00am

or proceed directly to the Northern end of the Rutherglen NFR off United Road and enter via Bath Lane.

**NOTE:** not the Southern end on Research Station Road!

After the work at the Rutherglen Block is complete, some of us will join the Regent Honeyeater/Swift Parrot survey (see above).

We request that people attending abide by the prevailing COVID-19 advice:

<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/covid-19/directions-issued-by-victorias-chief-health-officer>

## **Dates for 2022-23**

**For 2022:** Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May, Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June, Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> July, Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> August, Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> September, Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> October, Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> November and Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> December.

**For 2023:** Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> February, Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> March, Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> April, Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> May, Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> June, Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> July, Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> August, Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> September, Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> October, Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> November and Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2023.

**Rule of Thumb:** For even months, the field day is held on the first Sunday of the month and for odd months, it is held on the first Saturday of the month.

## **Category**

1. Newsletters

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