

Newsletter 331 September 2023

Description

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September Frog walk, dinner, AGM and Frog talk

We were treated to a frog walk by Dr Alexandra Knight that started at the picnic area at Chiltern Valley No 1 Dam and then progressed to the wet area on Pit Road near to the intersection with Wenkes Road.

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Dr Alex explaining about frog habitat.



The wet area near the entrance to Pit Road where there was a cacophony of frog calls.

Above Photos: Neville Bartlett

It was certainly an advantage to have an expert on hand who could point out when various frog species were calling. The species identified were: Spotted Marsh Frog – *Limnodynastes tasmaniensis*; Eastern Banjo Frog – *Limnodynastes dumerilii*
Sloane's Froglet – *Crinia sloanei*; Eastern Sign-bearing Froglet – *Crinia parinsignifera*
Common Eastern Froglet – *Crinia signifera*

Many of us were unaware that the endangered Sloane's froglet could be heard calling amongst the cacophony of other frog calls. It is highly recommended that you use the FrogID app on your phone. After registering at frogid.net.au and downloading the app, you can have experts identify the frog calls that you record and you can contribute to the research conducted by the Australian Museum and other research organisations. The FrogID website is well worth a visit to learn more about the project.

Dinner was followed by the 2022-23 AGM (see details of the new committee below) and then a more extensive talk by Dr Alex Knight explain the role of frogs as ecological indicators. Frog numbers are in decline world wide due to a variety of factors including: habitat destruction, invasive species, water regulation, Chytrid fungus and climate change. Frogs are important as indicators of: water quality, soil quality and habitat quality.

Thank you very much to everyone present who quickly cleaned up restored the hall to its original setup.

Wildflower Walk – 13th September 2023 – Neil Blair

11 enthusiastic people participated in the first of the Spring public wildflower walks, led by the FOCMPNP, for 2023. It was a beautiful sunny morning and the Park was looking just grand.

The morning was spent along the Tower Hill Rd at its junction with Cyanide Rd.

We started with a brief talk on the evolution of Wattles from Gondwana to the present day and looked at some of their botanical features including leaves, phyllodes, glands, inflorescences and buds. We found 8 species in the immediate vicinity to highlight the wonderful variety of these features in the various wattles – *Acacias dealbata* (Silver Wattle), *A. gunnii* (Ploughshare Wattle), *A. implexa* (Light wood), *A. paradoxa* (Hedge Wattle), *A. pycnantha* (Golden Wattle), *A. rubida* (Red-stem Wattle), *A. ulicifolia* (Juniper Wattle), *A. verniciflua* (Varnish Wattle).

Our attention then turned to the forest we were standing in, noting the 3 dominant Eucalypt trees – *Eucalyptus sideroxylon* (Ironbark), *E. macrorhyncha* (Stringybark) and *E. albens* (White Box) and how their domination and density give us the name of a Box Ironbark Forest.

Using the Friends Wildflower Guide we then looked to identify the middle and lower storey plants that were flowering at this time. The higher understorey was dominated by the above wattles but the lower understorey had a good number of flowering shrubs especially in the Pea family (Fabaceae) – *Dillwynia phyllicoides* (Small-leaf Parrot-pea) and *Dillwynia sericea* (Showy Parrot-pea), *Daviesia leptophylla* (Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea), *Gompholobium huegelii* (Common Wedge-pea), *Hardenbergia violacea* (Purple Coral-pea). Other shrubs included *Melichrus urceolatus* (Urn Heath), *Leucopogon virgatus* (Common Beard-heath), *Grevillea alpina* (Mountain Grevillea), *Hibbertia riparia* (Erect Guinea-flower).

Among the herbs contributing to the ground cover we noted *Stackhousia monogyna* (Creamy Candles), *Drosera hookeri* (Pale Sundew), *Gonocarpus tetragynus* (Common Raspwort), *Microseris walteri* (Yam-daisy/Murnong), *Wurmbia dioica* (Early Nancy), *Xerochrysum viscosum* (Sticky Everlasting) and 5 orchid species – *Caladenia fuscata* (Dusky Fingers), *Diuris pardina* (Leopard Orchid), *Glossodia major* (Wax-lip Orchid), *Pterostylis nutans* (Nodding Greenhood), *Pterostylis pedunculata* (Maroonhood).

The Parks' great botanical biodiversity can be appreciated knowing all the above and more was found in a 40 meter stretch of road.

It was a lovely morning enjoyed by all.



The area near the intersection of Cyanide Road and Tower Hill Road. **Photo: Neville Bartlett**

Wildflower Walk – 20th September 2023 – Neil Blair

The second of Friend's Spring Wildflower Walks was held on Wednesday morning, 20th September, on a cooler, cloudy day at Honeyeater Picnic Area. There were 12 participants.

We started the morning with a discussion on Eucalyptus noting that its origins being Australia and its immediate northern islands, especially Timor, suggests that this Genus is not Gondwanian but evolved after Australia became an island continent, 50 Million yrs ago, and the fossil record reveals that it, along with the Wattles, became widespread in the Pliocene (2.6 – 5.3M yr ago).

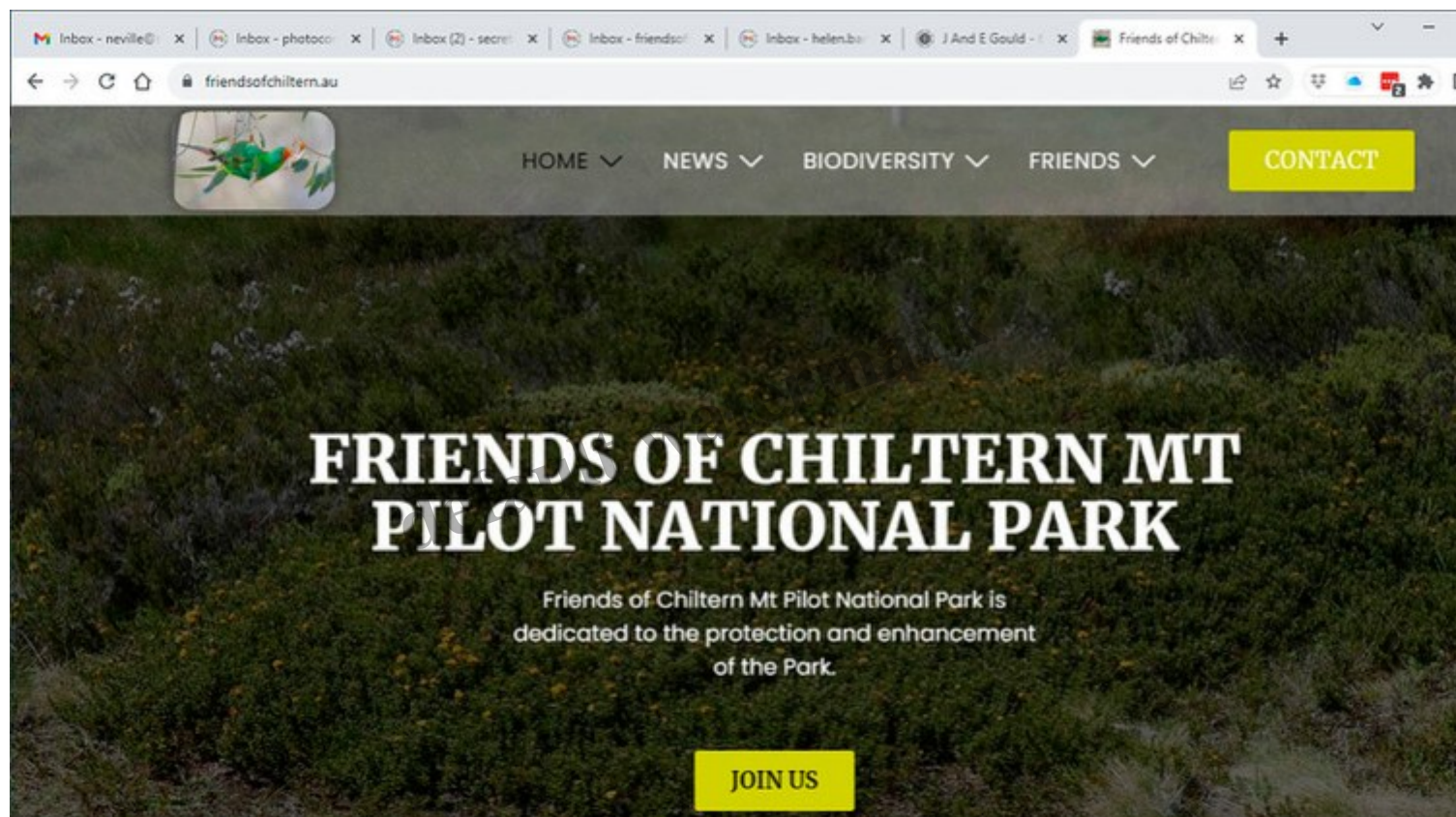
Today it remains a very complex Genus with splitting off of Angophora and recently Corymbia and the creation of many sub-groups so that each species has near and distant relations. True hybrids between distant subgroups are rare and usually infertile but intergrades between close relations can be common and are fertile. These are more common in regrowth of disturbed areas such as the Chiltern forest making the task of identifying a species all the more difficult and although the bark can be of assistance it generally requires a look at other morphological characteristics (such as juvenile and adult leaves, buds, fruits) to make an identification. We looked at the surrounding trees noting these features in Ironbarks (*E. sideroxylon*), Red (*E. polyanthemos*) and White (*E. albens*) Box, Long-leaved Box (*E. goniocalyx*) and Stringybark (*E. macrorhyncha*) and a number of intergrades.

We then proceeded on a walk down Cyanide Rd with the aim of identifying all the shrubs and groundcover, flowering and non-flowering, that we observed on the walk and we succeeded in this goal. Included in the topics we observed and discussed were:

1. a young Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*) showing the progressive change from a true leaf to a phyllode
2. the great variety in the Pea family noting flowers coloured blue (Purple Coral-pea – *Hardenbergia violacea*, Twining Glycine – *Glycine clandestina*), pink (Austral Indigo – *Indigofera australis*), yellow (Common Wedge-pea – *Gompholobium huegelii*) and the yellow-orange-red-brown of the 'egg and bacon' type. The latter comprising many species in a number of Genera, those seen being a Parrot-pea (Showy Parrot-pea – *Dillwynia sericea*), a Bitter-pea (Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea) and a Flat-pea (Handsome Flat-pea – *Platylobium montanum*).
3. the presence of 4 heaths. Daphne heath – *Brachyloma daphnoides*, Urn Heath – *Melichrus urceolatus*, Honey-pots – *Acrotriche serrulata*, Common Beard-heath – *Leucopogon virgatus*.
4. identifying native from non-native plants with 'Dandelion' flowers. Non-native (Cat's-ear/Flatweed – *Hypochaeris glabra/radicata*), Native (Yam Daisy – *Microseris walteri*, Showy Podolepis – *Podolepis jaceoides*)
5. Six orchid species. Blunt Greenhood (*Pterostylis curta*), Nodding Greenhood (*Pterostylis nutans*), Dusky Fingers (*Caladenia fuscata*), Pink Fingers (*Caladenia carnea*), Leopard Orchid (*Diuris pardina*), Scented Sun-orchid (*Thelymitra megcalyptra*)
6. 2 hemi-parasitic plants. One a tree (Cherry ballart – *Exocarpos cupressiformis*) and the other a herb (Lesser Broomrape – *Orobanche minor*).

7. identifying some of the more non-descript green groundcover plants including Raspwort (Common Raspwort – *Gonocarpus tetragynus*), Geranium (Grassland Crane’s-bill – *Geranium retrorsum*), Pennywort (Stinking Pennywort – *Hydrocotyle laxiflora*), Woodrush (Common Woodrush – *Luzula meridionalis*), Mat-rush (Many-flowered Mat-rush – *Lomandra multiflora*).
8. Two Sundews (Pale Sundew – *Drosera hookeri*, Tall Sundew – *Drosera auriculata*) were identified and the sticky glue blobs on the leaves noted, along with some ingested prey, leading to a discussion of their carnivorous habits to overcome nitrogen deficiency in the soil.

It was a lovely morning spent in our beautiful Park.



New Friends website

Over the last several months, Tony Marsh has been upgrading our website so that it uses more modern software and is easier to maintain. It has been quite an effort to transfer all of the functionality of the old website and links to the many thousands of images that are featured.

To check it out, go to: <https://friendsofchiltern.au/>

We would welcome comments, corrections and suggestions. The new website is expected to replace the old one in the coming weeks.



Small-leaf Parrot-pea (*Dillwynia phyllicoides*) – September image in the 2023 calendar

This species is flowering at the moment (see the first wildflower walk report above).
Small-leaf Parrot-pea (*Dillwynia phyllicoides*). **Photo: David Skinner**

2024 Friends calendar – call for images

There will be a Friends calendar for 2024 in two formats (A3 and A4) as was the case for the 2023 calendar. We are seeking images that show aspects of the Park. Images will be reviewed by a selection panel on Friday 29th September 2023. As the intent is to have the calendars ready and printed a little earlier than the last few years, images are needed as soon as possible.

Friends Office-bearers and Committee for 2023-24

President: Neil Blair **Vice-president:** Jennifer Davidson

Secretary/Public Officer: Tony Murnane **Treasurer:** Neville Bartlett

Webmaster: Tony Marsh

Newsletter Editor: Neville Bartlett

Committee: Helen Carse, Richard Jerome, Quentin Bell and John Hawker.

Rainfall August 2023: 60 mm. Total for the year to date 2023: 543 mm. The corresponding total last year was 669 mm after a very wet August. The average annual rainfall for Chiltern is 689 mm. Data supplied by Mick Webster.

NEXT MEETING – SUNDAY 1st OCTOBER 2023

There will be a wildflower walk in the Donchi Road area.

Meet at the Chiltern Post Office at 9:00am.

Please bring suitable footwear, sun protection and morning tea.

Dates for the remainder of 2023 and 2024

Several wildflower walks that are open to anyone will be held during spring. The planned dates are:

Wednesday 11th October 2023: Tower Hill area. Meet near the Chiltern Information Centre at 9:00am.

Saturday 4th November 2023: Mt Pilot section.

For 2023: Saturday 4th November and Sunday 3rd December 2023.

For 2024: Sunday 4th February, Saturday 2nd March, Sunday 7th April, Saturday 4th May, Sunday 2nd June, Saturday 6th July, Sunday 4th August, Saturday 7th September, Sunday 6th October, Saturday 2nd November and Sunday 1st December 2024.

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

Date Created

2023/10/03

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