

Newsletter 204 March 2012

Description

The March 2012 newsletter reports on the amazing conditions in the park following a massive rainfall event and the Best Friend Award to Eileen Collins.

Dear Friends

Summer has gone and the torrential rain has left its mark on many places. The park certainly took a drenching with many tracks badly scoured and quite a few trees fallen. Despite the rain the roads and main tracks have generally held up well.



All the dams have overflowed the most spectacular being Cyanide Dam and Depot Dam, the latter is still out of its boundary.



The new infrastructure and re-designed car park at Honeyeater Picnic area came through with flying colours. The two dams at Bartley's block overflowed and flooded the gully leading to the wells.



The March activities went ahead despite the showers. Tony brought along the Baranduda Landcare pole camera to test on our boxes. It gave excellent views of the box contents. Of the seven boxes we looked at three contained animals and one had bees in residence. All species were recorded, Squirrel and Sugar Gliders in the newer boxes and a Tuan in one of Bruce Quin's original boxes. This box often has Sugar Gliders in it and we found them in an adjacent box. Maybe the Tuan is a bully? This is the first record of a Tuan on the southern side of the freeway. Bruce informed me that Tuan like nests were found in boxes during his study time but never an animal.



We visited Honeyeater Picnic area and walked around the dam under the shelter of umbrellas and listening to the incredible noise of the frogs, a frogorama indeed! To hear the frogs [click here](#)



There have been many animal refugees from the rains, including Blue-tongue Lizards and Bearded Dragons and a few snakes. Any ground dwelling species would have found life tough under the extreme rainfall.

The summer rain also brought up some nasty weeds. At the Tuan enclosure a stand of 25 Fierce Thornapple plants (*Datura ferox*) grew and set seed very quickly. These have been de-seeded and removed.



Inkweed has emerged on the margins of Depot Dam and in a couple of spots along Depot Road. They are marked for removal. This year we will have to monitor the weed sites regularly so that work of

previous years is not undone.

Around the park

Grey Box and Red Stringybark is in flower but very little birdlife is using it. According to our local beekeeper there is little value in the flow. Little Lorikeets are common, Bee-aters, a few Dusky Woodswallows, Weebills, Silvereyes and Black-chinned Honeyeaters are all calling.

As a result of the heavy rains the Valley Dams are full and presently the waterbirds are not so plentiful. Waders have moved on as the dam margins are flooded. It will be interesting to see if they return as the levels drop.

The fox baiting program is underway. So far we have had about 25-30% bait uptake. Baiting program was from 20/02/12 to 20/03/12. Pigs continue to be a problem. Please report any sightings to Parks Victoria on 0357 208 194 This will assist with the location for setting the traps.

Regent Honeyeater Survey Dates

May 19/20 and August 4/5 Please correct them on your programme.

Rainfall

January: 65.3mm over 6 days February: 196.2mm over 8 days Yearly total to date: 261.5

NEXT MEETING : SUNDAY APRIL 1st

Meet at Chiltern Post Office at 9.00 AM BYO chair, water, binocs, friend, repellent. Track clearing Chiltern Valley No 2 Dam is our target. We will begin to uncover the old track which goes around the dam alongside the reed beds to the hide . Bring along rake, shovel or whatever tool you think is useful and you are happy using. Contact in the field: Eileen 0407 486 480 or 57 261 484 or Neville on 0412 399 439

Best Friend Award

During 2011, Eileen Collins was nominated for a Best Friend Award by the Victorian Environment Friends Network. The network has presented 50 such awards to members of Friends' groups since the award inception in 1991. Eileen's successful nomination for the award was announced at the Friends Network conference in September 2011 over the same weekend as our own AGM so this created the opportunity for the award to be presented in Chiltern. February was avoided because it was likely to be rather hot so arrangements were put in place for the presentation to take place at our Friends' day on Saturday 3rd March 2012.

The exceptional rainfall in the days leading up to the day encouraged us to hold the presentation in the

senior citizens hall in Chiltern. Michael Howes, Maelor Himbury and Geoff Durham represented the Friends Network and about 40 people were at the gathering. After brief speeches by Michael Howes, Head Ranger Brian Pritchard and Martin O'Brien, Geoff Durham presented Eileen with her award certificate.

Brian described Eileen as a volunteer ranger because of her dedication and commitment to the park. Geoff emphasized that the award is very special because it is recognition by Eileen's peers of her outstanding contribution on a very broad range of activities over more than 25 years.

In her response, Eileen reflected on some of the major events that had concerned the Friends group over the years and mentioned several people who had made substantial contributions to the group. These included Scott Jessup, Dr Barry Trail and Susan Duncan, Steve Bush, John and Jenny Reeve, David Monaghan and Tony Marsh.

Finally, Eileen thanked her husband Roy for his encouragement and support. The presentation was followed by lunch and a quick visit to the park for the visitors from Melbourne who were keen to see a tuan that had been found during the morning taking refuge in one of our mammal nest boxes. More rain fell during the afternoon and another downpour followed early in the evening. Neville Bartlett,

Secretary.

Category

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Author

eileen

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