



Newsletter 016 December 1994

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FRIENDS OF CHILTERN PARK

Convener: E.Collins 057 261 484

Newsletter No. 16 December 1994

Dear Friends,

Breakfast at Cyanide Dam was enjoyed by seventeen members to close the 1994 programme. Highlights of the breakfast session were strawberries from Jenny and cherries from Judith topped off with a Koala in the treetops.

Good times have to be paid for so it was off to work. Philip began the Regent Honeyeater survey work. Regents were nowhere to be seen on his patch and he found very little to attract them in the way of blossom. Another group went to Magenta with Scott. They would see the baby Regents which had fledged on December 5th and to pay for the privilege they would pull up plants of Twiggy Mullein. I notice that the fruit tree was spotted and removed. Good work! The Briar Roses didn't attract the attention of the weeders—next time perhaps? .

The big job was to remove a large patch of Cootamundra Wattles from the Yackandandah Road. Robyn produced a chain saw, and John felled the offending trees. The young Eucalypts which were struggling up to the light will have much less competition and should do well.

The rubbish gatherers had an exciting time. Coiled in one of the rusty tins was a Blind Snake. It was quite active but was finally caught and placed in the lunch box. Yours truly paid for the prize when a Bull Ant fastened itself to my wrist. It seems Bull Ants are frequently found amongst piles of old rubbish

and Blind Snakes feed on ants and termites. Those present were amazed at the beauty of this animal which measured 280 millimetres.. It had smooth glossy skin in tones of grey. The underside was pale cream with touches of pink. The mouth was underneath the head and resembled a shark mouth. The eyes are reduced to small dark spots under the scales of the head. It emitted a high pitched squeak when caught. Three species occur in this region and this one was *Raniphytophiops australis* (Cogger). Blind Snakes are non-venomous and harmless.



It so happened that Barry Trail and friends were camped at Cyanide this weekend. Barry has studied the gliders of the park and one of his pursuits on the weekend was to inspect some old trees. What he found amazed him. A group of us decided to watch the tree at dusk and we were rewarded by five Tuans (Brush-tailed Phascogales) leaving their hollow, scampering up and down the tree trunk and finally descending to the forest floor to search for food. While we sat watching a Yellow-footed Antechinus hunted for food around the base of the tree and a Fox came slinking through the undergrowth. We hope he went hungry! Although the spring has been disappointing from a wildflower point of view the animals have made up for it.

There are many young Swamp Wallabies about and Echidnas are frequently seen.

REGENT HONEYEATERS. The recovery team is getting into gear nationally and it is fitting that Chiltern Friends are involved in this work. I have just spoken to Natasha who is co-ordinating the national effort and she informed me that the Chiltern and Albury nestings have been the only reported success this season. Other nests have been abandoned, parasitised, wrecked or had young eaten by predators, such as Currawongs and Kookaburras. Life is tough if you are a Regent H/E. In October we found eleven birds on a weekend and were hopeful that nesting would take place. Of the two pairs that we found nesting only one succeeded. The others, which were feeding young, abandoned their nest and left the area along with two other pairs. It is not clear whether the young were taken or whether the food supply was inadequate. A Grey Butcher-bird was in the area and they are fond of nestlings! ,

FROM THE MEETING.

1. Incorporation is almost complete.
2. The interpretive trail project at Bartley's has been put on hold. The notes to follow will explain why.
3. Notice of the 1995 Friends Conference was presented. It will be held at "Kangarooobie", Princetown on

Labour day weekend, 11-13 March. If you are interested please contact me for details.

4. 1995 programme. The committee will meet in January to draw up the programme. If you have a special request please present it for inclusion.

5. Newsletter. The next newsletter will be printed after the FEBRUARY meeting and will contain the 1995

programme.

6. Ranger John has proposed a new project for 1995. At the southbound stopover on the freeway there is an access track to the park. It invites travelers to walk to the mine sites (which are fenced off). John proposes that we place an information board at the start of the track and do some track formation work. Funding for this may be sought from relative bodies.

7. January Campout Saturday 7 and Sunday 8. It is hoped that we will have a Bat Person with us. Bats happen to be Natasha's special interest and she will try to be with us that weekend.

8. February meeting. Saturday 4 February. Chiltern Valley No.2 Dam. Time 5pm.

9. Membership 1995/6. Since we will be incorporated we need to have our membership year end on June 30.

The meeting resolved to make membership \$10 for the eighteen months. We hope that we will have your continued support. Membership renewal forms are attached.

10. Turquoise Parrot surveys are due now. If you are unable to complete your patch let me know promptly

1994 ACTIVITIES.

Friends have carried out a variety of activities this year. Included among these are revegetation, weed removal (every meeting), planning interpretive trail, surveying nest logs, searching for Regent H/E and pegging out the survey quadrants. Learning geology via the geology tour, and planting 1500 trees at Chiltern tip, and, taking an active part in Clean up Australia Day.

Our guests have included, Tony Long, Bruce Quin, Natasha Schedvin, Glen Johnson, his wife Maria and children Tessa and Darcy. The camp out and stag watches have been fun and fun is part of our charter! ,

NEWS

Congratulations to Scott who has completed his honours year and to Colin on completion of another year's study. Steve and Arlene have made a successful start in the native plant propagation field.

Several hundred of their seedlings were planted by Friends this year. . . .

The storm which devastated our township two weeks ago left its mark on the lovely Chiltern Valley No.1 picnic area. John and his staff have worked hard to make this an attractive area. Valley 1 took a dreadful beating and is a very sad sight.

REVIEW OF HISTORIC SITES notes from the historic places researcher.

Since gold was discovered in Victoria in the early 1850's miners have tunneled, sunk shafts and excavated away whole gullies and hills. The miners named almost every bump and dip in the gold-bearing country and their colourful labels such as 'Golden Gully', 'Linger and Die Gully', 'Stricken Gully' bear witness to their fortunes. . . .

Their efforts transformed the 19th century bush and for a while in the 19th century made the country more powerful than the city.

Over time, much of the evidence of historic gold mining has been altered or obliterated by a succession of mining booms or re-development of mining land for other purposes. What remains is under constant threat to the same process and the ever increasing age. ' . . .

Archaeologist David Banner, employed by CNR, has been compiling an inventory of historic gold mining relics in Victoria (on public land) and is at the moment looking at old mine sites in Chiltern Regional Park.

Through using a combination of historical records and local knowledge David hopes to track down some of the more unusual and unique sites which can then be given better protection and interpreted for public inspection and enjoyment. .

THANK YOU

Our Ranger, John McDonald, would like to thank everyone who has contributed in the field this year. Natasha sends Season's Greetings to everyone and hopes to see us at the campout. I would like to endorse John's thanks to those who worked in the field. To those who have supported us from afar, thank you, your support is valued and I trust you will continue your membership.

I have enjoyed writing your newsletter and I would welcome contributions for future editions.

I wish you all a safe and happy festive season, Eileen. ,

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