



FRIENDS OF CHILTERN MT-PILOT NATIONAL PARK, Inc.

Newsletter No. 350 – July-August 2025

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Editorial Changes

This is my last newsletter as editor as I now need to focus more time and energy on other aspects of my life. If anyone is interested in taking on the role of editor, please get in touch with one of the committee members. I am happy to discuss details of what is involved.

From Tanya Thompson:

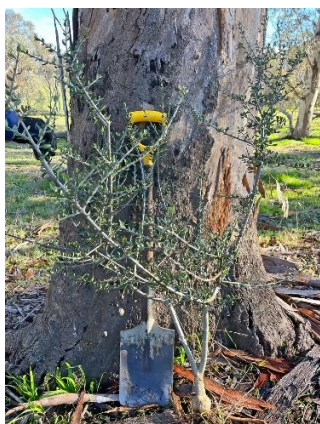
This group has for many years relied on staunch volunteers who are now at a point in their lives where they need to take a well-deserved break. We thank each and every one of them for the tireless efforts they have made over, in some cases, decades. As such we are now looking for a volunteer to take over the role of composing the newsletter. This is not an onerous task on its own but when combined with other roles it is the one that takes up more time than people have available.

Please consider putting up your hand for the role of Newsletter editor. Neville will be able to talk to you about what is required and mentor the new volunteer.

July and August Field Days

Friends Field Day, Saturday 5th July 2025 – Jennifer Davidson

There was an excellent attendance at the July field day. The planned activity was to remove feral olives and other woody weeds from bushland at Mt Ochertyre at Browns Plains. While not a part of the National Park this area of public land is administered by Parks Victoria. Friends have been carrying out weed control here for a number of years. It would be nice to think the number of olives is decreasing but this is not the case as a large number of unmanaged trees flourish on nearby private property and roadsides.



Photos: Tanya Thompson

Many hundreds of plants were removed with mattocks and shovels or treated by cutting and pasting. Treatment of regrowth from large plants and ongoing removal of new plants will remain an important task into the future.

Friends Field Day, Sunday 3rd August 2025 – Liz Maartin

It was a fantastic winter morning in the Park with clear sunny skies for our August Field Day.

Our wonderful PV Rangers had dug 116 holes in preparation for the day. This allowed our 15 energetic participants to get the job done quickly as we planted, set up guards and stakes, and watered plants in. This area between Depot Rd and Tuan Track has seen illegal vehicle traffic and it is hoped that 98 plants and guards (plus extra logs and branches) at the northern end, and 18 at the southern will act as a deterrent!

Scott identified a second area (off Greenhill Rd) which was seeing illegal use, so off we headed and dug 33 new holes, planted, put guards up, watered and dragged big branches across that area too.

The plants were made available to us through Ovens Landcare Network (thank you Kerrie and her team) and included: *Indigofera australis*; *Duodena viscosa* and Common Cassinia.

We also had 3 types of Acacias: *A. pycnantha* (Golden Wattle); *A. verniciflua* (Varnish Wattle) and *A. acinacea* (Gold Dust Wattle).

Thank you to everyone for their good humour and enthusiasm, and for bringing the tools we required. Thanks to Mick and Murray for using their handheld auger drills, these made all the difference loosening up the pre dug holes and digging new ones.

We have more plants to get in the ground, including *Eucalyptus Blakelyi*. While the weather is favourable, we will do an extra planting on Friday 15th August (details have been emailed out).

Thanks again to the committee for helping to organise everything. And to Scott and Liam from Parks Victoria for their support and company on the day.





Photos: Liz Maartin

Ranger's Report – Scott Cunningham

There have been several changes to staffing at Beechworth over the past month. Brian is enjoying long service leave until November with the Team Leader position backfilled by Liam Mahney. Liam has worked as a ranger at Wangaratta and may be familiar to some. There's also been some movement on recruitment of rangers for Beechworth, with Kyle Campbell successful and beginning July, please say hello if you see him out and about. Brad Matthews has taken on a full-time role at Mt Buffalo, leaving us with another vacancy that should be filled by the end of July. All going well we should have a staff of three rangers and one team leader soon!

Our efforts over the past two months have focussed on end of year reporting, planning, recruitment, and subsequent training of new staff. An increase in off-road trail bike riding in the Barambogie and Chiltern sections has seen some enforcement action and efforts to rehabilitate and obstruct the illegal network of tracks. The efforts of Friends to revegetate some of these areas is proving to be a great assistance.

I also hope to have the annual volunteer plan for the friends group finalised soon, providing some direction for activities over the next 12 months.

Grasslands Block – recent history and revegetation progress – Neville Bartlett

The grassland (Oates) block was identified by Trust for Nature (TFN) for proposed purchase as part of their Revolving Fund program.

The purchase was supported by Friends of Chiltern and Parks Victoria to protect the remnant trees and native grasslands that existed on the area as well as it was used by several threatened fauna species including Regent Honeyeaters (*Anthochaera Phrygia*) and Grey-crowned Babblers (*Pomatostomus temporalis*).

This bid was successful and the block was subdivided by TFN to allow resale of the house and surrounds. This area was then resold to private purchaser in 2011.

Following discussions with DSE and Parks Victoria to assess suitability and potential management issues TFN agreed to transfer the remaining area for inclusion in Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park. This was also concluded in 2011. The area now in the Park is 72 hectares.

In 2015-16, Friends planted 80 Hedge Wattles (*Acacia paradoxa*) in the eastern section of the block to reduce erosion around the two dams. A further 75 Hedge Wattles were planted in 2018.

In August 2018, Friends planted 4,000 trees and shrubs as part of a project organised by TFN as part of the Bush For Birds project funded by the federal government and managed by the North East Catchment Management Authority (NECMA). The planting took place in August 2018 over two days with the assistance of Jan Palmer, her daughter and a wonderful planting machine named **Tiger Scrub**.



The two days were very hectic as plants needed to be watered and removed from tubes or hiko trays so that they were ready for the machine to plant and followed up with guards and stakes. This planting was generously supported by the many people who came along to help. Catering was handled by the Chiltern Girl Guides and Chiltern Red Cross.

This planting was sighted at the flatter southern end of the block away from the more precious native grasslands on the steeper slopes. Some fortuitous storms in December 2018 and May 2019 helped greatly for this planting to become well established.

An attempt to re-establish Mountain Swainson Pea (*Swainsona recta*) has only been partially successful with barely any plants still surviving.

In 2022, Friends received a Bush for Birds grant to carry out erosion control work and plant more trees and shrubs near the two dams on the Eastern side of the block.

Weed control has been and continues to be a priority for the Friends group with the removal of briar, blackberries and Bathurst burr.

A recent inspection of the 2018 planting described above shows some magnificent growth. The photos of Tiger Scrub above show a fairly empty area where the planting took place. The views below now show some very substantial vegetation on the site (note the middle band of vegetation in the first photograph)



Photos taken in August 2025: Neville Bartlett

Some of the wattles are quite substantial and reproducing naturally.

Rainfall: June 2025: 73 mm. Total year-to-date 2025 to the end of June: 224 mm. The corresponding total up to the end of June 2024 was 233 mm.

July 2025: 96 mm. Total year-to-date 2025 to the end of July: 320 mm. The corresponding total up to the end of July 2024 was 298 mm.

The average annual rainfall for Chiltern is 689 mm.

Data supplied by Mick Webster.

NEXT FEW FIELD DAYS

Friday 15th August 2025: Revegetation work continued from August meeting (see separate email).

Saturday 6th September: Nature walk, dinner, talk by Prof. David Watson and AGM.

The talk will be:

“The good earth: farmland is crucial for safeguarding wildlife in a warming world”

David M. Watson, Professor of Ecology

School of Agriculture, Environmental & Veterinary Sciences

Charles Sturt University

Dinner will be bring a plate of food and whatever you wish to drink.

Secretary Liz Maartin will send out more details as they come to hand.

Sunday 5th October 2025: Wildflower walk conducted by Neil Blair.

Field day dates for the remainder of 2025 and 2026

For 2025: Saturday 6th September, Sunday 5th October, Saturday 1st November and Sunday 7th December 2025.

For 2026: Sunday 1st February, Saturday 7th March, Sunday 5th April, Saturday 2nd May, Sunday 7th June, Saturday 4th July, Sunday 2nd August, Saturday 5th September, Sunday 4th October, Saturday 7th November and Sunday 6th December 2026.

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.

Subscriptions for 2025-26 are due 30th June 2025.

See details and form in separate attachment.