



FRIENDS OF CHILTERN MT-PILOT NATIONAL PARK Inc.

Newsletter No. 354 March – April 2026

Website: friendsofchiltern.org.au

President- Tanya Thompson
Vice President- Tony Murnane
Secretary- Liz Maertin
Treasurer- Liz Maertin

president@friendsofchiltern.org.au
anthonymurnane9@gmail.com
secretary@friendsofchiltern.org.au
treasurer@friendsofchiltern.org.au

Field Day: Saturday 7 March 2026 Liz Maertin

Pine Road, poisoning Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)

Our March Field Day saw 16 willing workers meet at the Chiltern PO at 9am. We were pleasantly surprised that the temperature was forecast to be in the low 30s.

The group divided and 11 headed to Pine Rd to attack the regrowth of plants. We last carried out a 'cut and paste/dab' on the Ailanthus in April 2025. The results of that work were evident, with the overall number and size of plants much reduced from last year.



It was great to have Scott from PV working with us and a decision was made that it would be more effective to cut and poison only the plants which were over a certain diameter, leaving the smaller ones to grow and be dealt with next year. The reasoning for this is they are likely to take up the poison more efficiently when their stems are larger.

With all the necessary PPE, we worked in pairs, with one cutting the plant as low to the ground as possible, while the other person applied the poison with a small brush.

Thanks to everyone for all their hard work, and to Tanya for another delicious morning tea ☺

Field Day: Saturday 7 March 2026 Mick Webster

5 of us visited the 8 nestboxes near the Pioneer cemetery, with results - one box on the ground still attached to its tree which had fallen over, one unoccupied Tuan nest, the rest unoccupied glider nests.



This box will need to be replaced.



Unoccupied Tuan nest

Information about the Tree of Heaven

Ailanthus altissima is an invasive woody tree that is widespread across most of Australia. Native to Taiwan and China, tree of heaven was introduced to Australia in the mid-1800s as an ornamental garden plant and shade tree. However, it soon escaped homesteads and naturalised in nearby bushland and pastures.



Quick Facts (from Weeds Australia)

- It is a deciduous suckering tree to 10-20 metres tall with large pinnate (divided) leaves with up to 20 leaflets per leaf.
- Invades areas by producing large numbers of wind dispersed seeds, suckering and root segments.
- It establishes dense monocultures which exclude other species.
- Leaves, bark and flowers produce substances which are toxic to livestock, humans, and are known to inhibit the growth of other plants.
- Control of the species is difficult requiring careful removal of potential propagules (seeds, roots and stumps), poisoning and repeated treatments are required.
- Trees that are cut down, burnt or bulldozed encourage profuse suckering and spread.



What are its impacts?

- It exhibits typical characteristics of an invasive weed. It has efficient dispersal and reproductive qualities and the ability to form dense monocultures (Call & Nilsen 2005). Tree-of-heaven is a deciduous tree with a tendency to sucker extensively from its roots, forming dense thickets and outcompeting other desirable plants (DPI NSW 2019). This species primarily occurs in disturbed areas, but its winged seeds can blow considerable distances, and it may also invade undisturbed habitats (DEEDI 2020).
- It is mildly toxic to humans with mild symptoms of headache and nausea if ingested in large quantities. The sap is a skin and eye irritant causing rashes, dermatitis and conjunctivitis, and the pollen can cause allergic reactions such as hay fever (DPI NSW 2019). The toxicity levels are highest in the leaves during the early part of the growing season

(Mergen 1959; GISD 2005). It inhibits post-disturbance succession by other plants by creating a relatively toxic soil environment (Lawrence *et al.* 1991).

Chiltern Festival - Liz Maartin

On Friday 6th March Indigo Shire Council hosted the Chiltern Festival at the Old Courthouse Grounds, Main Street, Chiltern from 5-8pm.

Billed as a “*Get to know your town*” Festival, it was a “family-friendly, outdoor gathering featuring stalls and displays from local clubs, groups and community organisations”. Luke Fitridge the Business Development Officer with Indigo Shire had contacted Friends and asked if we would like to participate by having a stall.



Landcare kindly provided a space at their stall for us so Tanya, Dave, Tony and I set up our table with a variety of brochures, postcards (of birds), calendars for sale, and membership forms.

It turned out to be a worthwhile event for Friends to attend, with many people coming over to chat with us and enquire about our group and its activities.

One person signed up as a member, welcome to Rhiannon 😊

Thanks Tony, Tanya, Dave and our Landcare buddies!

Committee Meeting

We had a quick meeting but covered many topics. Mapping areas in the park during field day activities will be undertaken to inform Parks Vic. Indigo Shire has funded a Mt Pilot Event which will be held on 17 May. The event is aimed at the general community to inform them of areas of interest within the park. Jim Blackney will be the guest speaker with an afternoon tea being available. Cost will be \$5.

All members are encouraged to bring their ideas for activities, and what they would like to be involved in.

Rainfall- Mick Webster

Total for January 4mm

Total for February 83mm

Total for March 121mm (mean is 46mm)

Total for year-to-date 208mm (mean is 131mm)

Total for same period last year was 109mm

Chiltern experienced the driest summer for well over 20 years until the downpour in mid February, which brought the year-to-date rainfall total to 87mm, which is 2mm above the average. In comparison rainfall for January and February 2025 was 56mm.

March was thankfully wet. Quite a turn-around from an extremely dry January.

The average annual rainfall for Chiltern is 693 mm.

Next Field Day:

April 12th Bartley's Block: weed removal and mapping at grasslands. Next box monitoring will also be undertaken.

Our planned activities for the April Field Day will be divided into 3 groups:

1. removal of weeds from Bartley's Block - Howlong Rd, Chiltern
2. nest/mammal box monitoring using pole camera - Chiltern section of the Park
3. mapping blackberry on Grasslands Block - Cnr Old Howlong Rd and Howlong Rd, Chiltern.

Where: meet outside the Chiltern Post Office at 9am. We will carpool from there.

When: 9am-12noon. Sunday 12th April (due to Easter clashing with first weekend of April)

What to bring: water, hat, sturdy shoes, long pants, sunscreen.

If you intend to take part in the weeding please bring: gloves, mattock or pick or small spade.

We will break for morning tea so bring something to drink, and a chair (or rug) to sit on. "Friends" will provide something to eat for morning tea.

Please sign into Park Connect to register your attendance. Don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Kind regards Liz Maertin, Secretary

May 2nd Grasslands: Walk and talk about the history of the area and Friends involvement in rehabilitation over many years, some weeding and mapping.

If there are enough people attending there will be nest box monitoring. This will be decided once attendee numbers are confirmed.

If you are unsure on the day, you can call Liz: 0423 406 858

Field Day dates for 2026:

Sunday 1st February, Saturday 7th March, Sunday 12th 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.

NB: 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.

