



FRIENDS OF CHILTERN MT- PILOT NATIONAL PARK Inc

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Here is the final Newsletter for 2025!

Our sincere thanks to Dianne for standing in as Newsletter Editor for these last 2 editions.

We will continue to produce bi-monthly newsletters, with Tanya as our new editor in 2026 ☺

Heat Policy for Field Days - Tanya Thompson

Last summer/early autumn, we found ourselves scrambling to decide what to do on Field Days when the weather forecast predicted excessive heat. Should we cancel the day? Change the starting time?

From that experience, the committee has now developed a **Heat Policy**.

Attendees are asked to check the weather forecast on the BOM website/app, after 5 pm **on the day before the Field Day**. If the forecast (on the BOM) for the Field Day is **35°C or above**, the starting time will be **8am** at Chiltern Post Office instead of 9am.

Field Day 1.11.25

We had 11 members join us for our November activity. It was a cool, crisp morning given the time of the year, just right for what we had planned: olive removal and a mammal nest box inspection. Our day started with an unplanned activity on the way to the Rutherglen Nature Conservation Reserve. A storm had rolled through overnight which resulted in several large branches across the road. Luckily, with plenty of willing hands (and the right tools), we quickly cleared the road. Many hands really do make light work!



Next challenge was the gate as the lock and the ring latch required some careful manoeuvring, but we got there in the end.

We began by checking the exclusion area that protects the beautiful **Mountain Swainson-pea** (*Swainsona recta*). There were also many other native flowers in bloom, which made for a lovely start to the morning.

Then the group split into two teams. Those armed with the heavier tools headed off in a grid pattern to track down olive trees. Whilst the second team checked nest boxes. It was great to see that most of the olives were quite small this year, a good sign that all the hard work from previous years is paying off.



By the end of the day, we'd removed more than 400 olive trees, with one very determined volunteer tallying an impressive 63! It's amazing what a difference this makes to the reserve. Without regular olive removal, the site would be overrun in no time. We saw hundreds of kangaroos, of all ages and sizes, bounding up and down the Reserve. Many birds were chirping and one brown snake was wriggling quickly away from our volunteer.

A big thank you to everyone who came along and lent a hand — your enthusiasm and teamwork made the day a real success. Every hand helps protect our local environment! Tanya Thompson



Final nestbox checking for the year was undertaken. With one Squirrel Glider and one Tuan (Brush-tailed Phascogale) seen in residence, and to our surprise a Brush-tailed Possum was found in a nest that had lost its lid! Mick Webster



2025 Nest Box Report – Mick Webster

Overall, for the year, numbers of animals in boxes were well down on the last two years -17 total (out of 120 boxes) in all 3 areas (N Chiltern, S Chiltern and Rutherglen), compared to 31 in 2023 and 41 in 2024 - but probably in line with long term averages. We see more animals in boxes in wetter years.

Ranger's Report – Scott Cunningham

Parks Victoria's restructure is continuing with a date for implementation set for mid-December. With this in mind, we do not expect any additional rangers for Beechworth until early next year.

The past 2 months have been a busy time of training our new staff, planning for Good Neighbour pest plant works and general patrols. Reedy Creek continues to take up most of our time with an ever-increasing number of prospectors and campers.

The winter period saw an increase in off road trail bike activity and illegal track construction, predominantly in the Chiltern blocks and a weekend operation was again conducted to target this. With the warmer weather approaching this should ease and allow us to rehabilitate some areas.

The declared fire danger period has now begun, the clearing of tracks for access has been prioritised and we are hoping for a quiet and uneventful festive period!

My thanks to all volunteers for the past years efforts and I wish you a merry Christmas.

Hawkweed – Mick Webster

Hawkweed is a European invasive daisy that has been found (in 3 species) on the Bogong High Plains around and behind Falls Creek. If they escape down the hill to agricultural land they will become a major environmental problem. This year a program is being run by a group of volunteers under Parks Vic and Department of Agriculture to conduct surveys in hectare grids to track down these pests. There will be two week-long residential programs at Falls Creek from December 14-19, and January 4-9 and I will be running two shorter programs for North-East locals -a single day on Sunday 28 December and two days on the weekend of 10-11 January. Anyone interested can contact me on 0429017229 or websterm@netc.net.au. You would need to be reasonably fit and able to spend a day in the Alps walking slowly and looking at plants.

More details on Hawkweed here https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/biosecurity/weeds/state-prohibited-weeds/hawkweed?fbclid=IwY2xjawOHL05leHRuA2FlbQlXMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZBAyMjlwMzKxNzg4MjAwODkyCGNhGxzaXRIAjMwAAEefbOx1wuCUw1Y_FdugEN4tFw4xLwuh8zf6dEiHZoM2cPKJVcGZPyRukz9xLI_aem_VC47JaAcZnBHZOwOvcP4Q .

Raising the height of wire guards on Banksia marginata – Liz Maertin

Cold mornings seem to have been a feature of spring this year, and it was no exception at 8am on Wednesday 29th October. A small group of us met at the corner of Settlers Rd and Martins Track armed with x 5 rolls of thin chicken wire, clips and tools as we prepared to raise the height and reinforce wire guards around approximately 60 Banksia marginata.



I looked through newsletter archives and found a couple of items by Neville Bartlett which, pieced together, provide some of the history of Friends' efforts to plant and protect the Banksia...

2020:

"In June 2020 Friends members re-planted 96 Banksia marginata (Silver Banksia) seedlings at a site on Settlers Road in the Mt. Pilot section of the Park. This species is native to the area, and a few large specimens remain.

A previous planting of seedlings that took place during the drought was not successful. The wet start to the season and the availability of some locally sourced seedlings has encouraged us to try again. Tree guards were already in place, and the ground was wet. The aim of planting this species is to increase the availability of nectar for birds and other creatures."

2024:

"Over a number of years, there have been attempts to enhance an area of Silver Banksias (Banksia marginata) along a section of Settlers Road. In June 2020, over a hundred plants were added to the few original old Silver Banksias and the new plants have been disrupted by grazing pressure from deer. The success rate of the 2020 planting was very encouraging and, over recent weeks, over 70 healthy plants have been provided with new wire netting guards held in place by second-hand steel droppers that have been collected from the Grasslands Block. Thank you Richard and Tony for your efforts."



And now, in 2025, the raised and reinforced guards will help to protect the plants from the onslaught of Sambar Deer, giving them a chance to grow into mature trees.

Going back to the site in late November to take photos, I noticed there are healthy looking, new shoots on many of the plants!

Thank you, Richard, Tony, Mick and David. And our PV staff Scott and Kyle.

End of Year Gathering – Liz Maertin

It was a mild evening for our end of year gathering on 7th December at Chiltern Valley #1 Dam. A constant breeze was coming off the water making it quite cool (!) so we set up tables and chairs in the shelter of vehicles. We all enjoyed a lovely meal and chat and it was wonderful to see June and Peter Gotham, two of the 'founding' members of Friends.



Thank you all for coming 😊



A change from the planned venue was made after the discovery of Chilean Needle Grass (CNG) at # 2 Dam. Our February newsletter will feature information about this noxious, weed of significance and we plan to hold a Field Day in Spring 2026 where we will work with Parks Vic staff to identify and possibly map CNG in the Park.

Rainfall- Mick Webster

Total for November is 65mm (mean for November is 51)

Total for year-to-date 483mm (mean to 30/11/25 is 643)

Only the 4th month in the last 22 above average.....But maybe we'll have a wet summer!

The average annual rainfall for Chiltern is 689 mm.

Next Field Day:

Sunday 1st February – Walk at the Yeddonba Aboriginal Cultural Site

Meet at 9am at the Chiltern Post Office **unless the heat policy is in effect, then we meet at 8am!**

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 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.

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.



The committee would like to thank everyone for their support in 2025

And wish you a safe and happy Festive Season and New Year