



## FRIENDS OF CHILTERN MT-PILOT NATIONAL PARK Inc.

Newsletter No. 353 January – February 2026

Website: [friendsofchiltern.org.au](http://friendsofchiltern.org.au)

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### Heat Policy for Field Days

The Heat Policy worked well this month as the lead up to the February Field Day was extreme. Thankfully the day was mild in comparison to the over 40°C temperatures we experienced in the days leading up to 1 February.

- 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: Sunday 1 February 2026

#### Yeddonba Aboriginal Cultural Site

Our first Field Day for 2026 was held on a beautifully *cool* morning, following an awful week of heatwave conditions! The event was widely advertised and, as a result, very well attended. A total of 35 people enjoyed the Yeddonba Aboriginal Cultural Site walk, a fascinating talk by John Hawkins, and a delicious morning tea. In addition to the rock art, there are amazing rock formations and views along the walking track.

“Considered a sacred site amongst local Indigenous people, the Yeddonba Aboriginal Cultural Site illustrates the art of the Dhudhuroa people, the dominant Indigenous clan of the area and a sub-clan of the Pangarang people of the Goulburn Valley.



Rock art wall

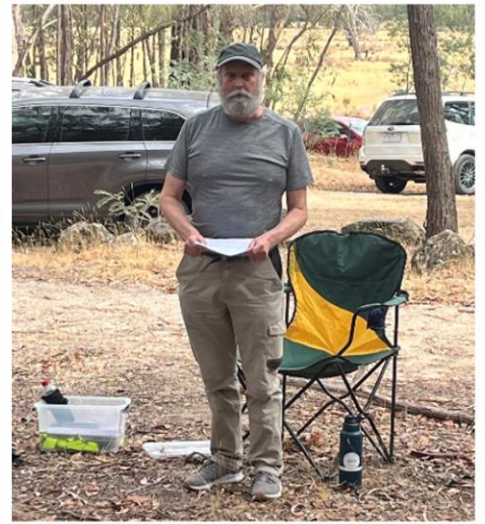


Rock formations

Mount Pilot was used by a number of clans as a waypoint on a migratory path and as a spiritual and ceremonial site. The Yeddonba site boasts many significant areas including a rock shelter and bush tucker area. The site is of particular archaeological importance as it features an Aboriginal red-ochre painting, which is believed to be of a Tasmanian Tiger (thylacine), supporting the belief that the animal once inhabited the mainland. The thylacine, along with the goanna and snake, were the spirit animals of the local clans with the site serving as an important ritual location for the clan leaders....”  
<https://www.victoriashighcountry.com.au/listing/yeddonba-aboriginal-cultural-site/>

John Hawkins shared his local knowledge about the history of the area and the site, which is thought to be over 2,000 years old:

- **1824** – First European contact occurred when the Hume and Hovell expedition passed through the region.
- **Pre-1830 settlement** – A smallpox epidemic swept through the area.
- **1835** – Settlers claimed the land, leading to inevitable conflict and the deaths of Indigenous people.
- **1852** – The gold rush completed the disconnection of Indigenous owners from their land. Yeddonba was kept secret by Indigenous people but continued to be cared for by local elders.
- **1959** – The Department of Forestry bulldozed a road near the site. Richard Hudson and his sister later discovered the rock paintings while exploring the area. They notified authorities and showed the site to anthropologists from Melbourne, which led to a scientific paper being written about Yeddonba.



John Hawkins

John also told us about three animals once found in the area: the **thylacine** (now extinct), the **stick-nest rat**, and the **white-footed rabbit rat** (now extinct).

Thank you, John, for such an interesting and informative talk! Thank you, Tanya, for the wonderful morning tea! And thanks to everyone who joined us ☺

*By Liz Maertin*



A great view from the walking track.

### **Water for wildlife**

As extreme heatwaves and dry, sunny days can be fatal to birds and other wildlife, this is a timely reminder to provide fresh water sources. Birds cannot sweat and often rely on bathing and drinking to manage their body temperature.

Here is how to support local bird life in hot weather:

#### **Essential Water Station Tips**

- **Keep it Shallow:** Use shallow containers (no deeper than 2 inches/5cm) so small birds can stand and drink without the risk of drowning.
- **Place in Shade:** Position water sources in the shade to keep the water cool and prevent rapid evaporation.
- **Refill Daily:** Clean and replenish water at least once a day, as hot weather encourages bacteria and algae growth.
- **Add Safety Features:** Place rocks, pebbles, or thick branches in the water container. This allows birds to land safely, gives them a place to stand, and helps insects climb out.
- **Safety First:** Place containers near shrubs or trees, allowing birds to quickly escape from predators.
- **Use Proper Materials:** Choose ceramic, concrete, or plastic, and avoid metal containers, which can heat up quickly in the sun.

### **Weed: Chilean Needle Grass**

A proposed activity during this year is to hold an information session on this noxious weed and engage in control measures in the park.

🚫 **DECLARED NOXIOUS WEED** Origin: South America (Chile, Argentina, Uruguay)



#### **WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?**

- Perennial tussock grass (up to 1.5 m tall)
- Fine, tightly rolled leaves with purple-tinged seed heads and long, twisted, needle-sharp awns.

#### **WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?**

##### **Livestock:**

- Seeds penetrate eyes, skin and mouth, causes abscesses and blindness

##### **Environment:**

- Outcompetes native grasses, reduces biodiversity, invades roadsides, pastures and bushland

#### **HOW IT SPREADS**

- Wind and water, animal movement, vehicles and machinery
- Contaminated hay and soil

#### **CONTROL**

- Treat plants before seeding
- Spot spray or hand-remove small patches
- Do **NOT** slash once seeding
- Follow-up control is essential



### **Committee Meeting**

The committee attend meetings bi-monthly to ensure the effective management of the group. Many times, Kerrie Warburton has attended and provided valuable information to the committee. Kerrie has taken on a new position within Landcare and we extend our gratitude to Kerrie for the considerable time and effort she has undertaken on our behalf over many years. Millie Gunner will take over the role of Landcare Facilitator and we will warmly welcome Millie at our March meeting.

Some of the activities we would like to be involved in during 2026 are: Chilean Needle Grass education and control measures, repairs to Whitebox Track and improved signage, general weed management, mapping weed infestations and vegetation, increase active membership, increase our profile within the community, achieve grant funding.

All members are encouraged to bring their ideas for activities, and what they would like to be involved in. Our next Field Day is Saturday 7 March.

### **Code of Conduct**

2025 saw an increase in governance for the organisation and as such the Code of Conduct was renewed. The new Code of Conduct will be emailed to all members with this newsletter.

### **Financial**

The organisation is financially viable due to the sound oversight of all committee members in the past. The major fund raiser for the year is the sale of calendars, which always turns a profit for the group.

Liz and Kerrie worked on a grant from the Indigo Shire and were successful in receiving \$1700 for an event in May and for bird brochures to be reprinted.

### **Rainfall- Mick Webster**

Total for December is 33mm (mean for December is 50)

Total for year-to-date 516mm

*The average annual rainfall for Chiltern is 693 mm.*

Rainfall for January 4mm. The driest January since 2013, and so far the driest summer since 2003 (the Millennium drought).

The average maximum temperature for January was 35.8c, 4.5 degrees over the long term average for the month, probably the hottest January, and maybe any month, on record. 10 days above 40 degrees.

### **Next Field Day:**

**March 7th Pine Rd weed management:** Tree of Heaven regrowth targeted and possible weed mapping.

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

It is preferred to 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

**April 5th Bartley's Block:** weed removal and mapping at grasslands. Next box monitoring will also be undertaken.

### **Field Day dates for 2026:**

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> February, Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March, Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April, Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> May, Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June, Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July, Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> August, Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September, Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> October, Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November and Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> 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.*

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