



Brush-tailed
Phascogale

Friends of the Box-Ironbark Forests (Mount Alexander Region) Inc.

ABN 40 489 904 108 A0037461H

Ph: 5470 5161 email: info@fobif.org.au
PO Box 322 Castlemaine VIC 3450
www.fobif.org.au

Newsletter No. 39

February 2011

A paper newsletter?

This newsletter is being sent by mail because we figured that members would be printing out the walks program anyway. We are in any case rethinking our ways of communicating with members, and are presently unsure about the effectiveness of sending the newsletter by email. Member feedback on this is welcome.

FoBIF's website is changing!

We are reformatting our website to make it easier to manage and read. For now, www.fobif.org.au will remain operational, and we will run both sites in tandem for a few weeks. Be sure also to check out the updated website for **Connecting Country** for environment news across the shire:

<http://connectingcountry.org.au>

Is your membership overdue?

If it is, you'll find a renewal form with this newsletter.

Mamunya Photo Exhibition and the State Festival

FoBIF's exhibition of photos of local flora and fauna, *Now Look Here*, will be showing at the Bold Cafe in Wesley Hill during the State Festival this year. See the Festival program for opening details.

Application to VCAT on 7 lot subdivision

FoBIF has requested VCAT to review a decision by the Mount Alexander Shire Council to grant a permit for a 7 lot subdivision in high conservation bush at Diamond Gully near Castlemaine. The permit would allow the destruction of biodiversity values in over half of the 7 ha of bush.

The bush at Diamond Gully has been classified as high conservation by a council funded report, as a nesting and foraging site for the threatened brush-tailed phascogale.

VCAT has recently made a 'guideline' decision that for subdivisions where there is high conservation vegetation, the starting point for the subdivision design is the avoidance of clearing of the vegetation. With the Diamond Gully subdivision, there is 4 ha of already cleared land where the building envelopes could be sited rather than in the forest.

After the burn off

FoBIF members have made several visits to the south end of the Diggings Park to monitor the effects of a very severe management burn conducted near the Wewak track in Autumn last year.

On our latest visit, on 7 February, we came to the following tentative conclusions:

1. Recovery of species has been good. Good rain has provided excellent recovery conditions, and we will report on the detailed monitoring of the area by Castlemaine Field Naturalists in due course, as well as DSE monitoring, if any. There has been an outbreak of thistles, a lot of which we've pulled out and taken away, and dandelions.
2. Because of the severity of the burn, there are plenty of dead trees, some of them quite big. The evident intention of DSE workers seems to have been to burn the bark from the many stringybarks in the area, but we can't believe it was DSE's intention to create thousands of eucalypt seedlings (see photos in our website gallery archive). It seems that in a very short while there'll be a more dangerous fuel load down

The Swift Parrots of Muckleford — dvd launch

The Castlemaine Field Naturalists, the Norman Wettenhall Foundation and the Melliodora Fund launched *The Swift Parrots of Muckleford* dvd on 24 February. The dvd has great video of these beautiful and threatened birds filmed by Debbie Worland. For a sample and ordering, see:

www.swiftparrotsofmuckleforddvd.com

there than there was before the burn, and the tree cover much denser than is desirable, ecologically speaking.

3. There's been some erosion, and there's still a fair bit of bare ground.

We are currently negotiating with Parks Victoria to have a joint visit to the area to get their opinion of what has been achieved in this operation. This is of particular importance to us given that burns on the adjacent Limestone track and around Smutta's track (on the other side of the Loddon River) are in DSE's program. (See 'Burning concerns' and 'A gap in the records' in our website News Archive.)

Friends of the Box-Ironbark Forests

BUSHWALKS 2011

Our walks are on Sundays. We meet at 9.30 a.m. outside 30 Templeton Street, Castlemaine (Continuing Ed.) and carpool to the start of the walk. Bring water, morning tea and lunch for all walks. Walks normally finish mid-afternoon. Non-members welcome. No cost. Walks are cancelled on Total Fire Ban days in the area. For more information ring Bronwyn Silver on 5475 1089.

20 March Cairn Curran Reservoir

Cairn Curran Reservoir filled to capacity during 2010. It will be fascinating to see what happens in 2011. This walk will commence at Newstead and follow the eastern side of the Loddon River to where it empties into Cairn Curran Reservoir. We will then follow the shoreline to the Welshmans Reef Caravan Park. 6 km. For more information ring Geoff Park, 0418 138 632.

17 April Geology of Kalimna Park

Kalimna Park is not only renowned for its spring wild flowers but also preserves interesting geological features exposed by past gold mining activities. This walk presents sites exposing the history of shallow seas over 450 million years ago and the effects of later (360 million years) mountain building and nearby (Mount Alexander) granite intrusion that also mobilized hot water, silica and gold to form the reef system. c. 6 km. For more information ring Julian Hollis, 5470 5002.

15 May Muckleford Gorge

Don't miss a rare opportunity to visit this secluded gorge on private land, with old gums, cliffs, grasses and birds. We will talk with the owner about his management of this unique place. c. 6 km. For more information ring Deirdre Slattery, 5470 5161.

19 June Castlemaine Diggings NHP: South End

This walk will be centred on a relatively untracked section of the Diggings Park, east of the Goldfields Track between Helge Track and Sebastopol Creek. It has an isolated feel, with obscure gullies and interesting ridges. If we have time we'll drop down as far as Middleton Creek. c. 8 km. For more information ring Bernard Slattery, 5470 5161.

17 July Nuggety Hill

A scenic circuit walk at Nuggety Hill. Terrific views of surrounding countryside and interesting rock formations at the magical summit, Rock of Ages. Bring camera. c. 7 km For more information ring Mitchell Parker, 0432 973 451.

21 August Muckleford

We will start at Hunters Track and head west where we will learn about the early pastoral history of this area and view mining remains. In the second part of the walk we will circuit the Muckleford Nature Conservation Reserve. c. 10km. For more information ring Paul Hampton, 5474 2189.

18 September Golden Point

We will see Dunstan's Flat, masonry drops and old tracks scattered though the bush which tell the story of a changing landscape. At this time of year the Golden Point area will be full of wildflowers. Bring your *Indigenous Plants of Castlemaine and Surrounds* guide. c. 8 km. For more information ring Marie Jones, 5472 2892.

16 October Chewton

We will walk to Sailors Gully at Chewton and then follow the water race that supplied the Garfield Water Wheel. The race contours around the gully to Quartz Hill and the remains of the Batchelor's Retreat, a garden created by two men in the 1940s. c. 10 km. For more information ring Doug Ralph, 5470 5407.