

BUSHWALKS 2009

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 5475 1089.

15 March Geology and Building Stones of Castlemaine

A walk around the town viewing the best geological outcrops and the evidence for the deep marine origin of local rocks. Also a look at the most common building and paving stones and their origin. For more information ring Clive Willman 5472 2878.

19 April Mount Tarrangower and Lisles Reef

Beginning in Maldon, a 2 km steady climb to top of Mt Tarrangower, along Fountain Track. Views from poppet head. Then follow Lisles Reef walk which is generally easy, flat or downhill. Of interest: views, mining relics, deep shafts, whim sites, ruins of stone blacksmiths shops, mullock heaps, mine adit, battery and kiln remains. Return via edge of township. 6.5 km. For more information ring Jels Veenstra 5472 4587.

17 May Tarilta Gorge

Walk along the south end of Tarilta Creek near Mt Franklin through a very remote area that has a wilderness feel about it. We will walk along parts of Hunts water race, an amazing piece of engineering that delivered water to the dry diggings and Browns Gully area. Finish on Porcupine Ridge with great views from Mount Misery. 10–12 km. For more information ring Doug Ralph 5470 5407.

21 June Hunters Track–Columbine Creek–Sanger's Hut

Beginning near Hunters Track in the Fryers Range State Forest we will follow parts of Salters and Columbine Creeks to the stone chimney that is all that remains of one of one of Sanger's bush homes. c. 6–8 km, some off track walking. For more information ring Deirdre Slattery 5470 5161.

19 July Wewak Track, Brown's Gully, Loop Track (CDNHP)

We'll do a circuit in the south end of the Diggings Park, taking in one of Charlie Sanger's hut ruins and some top wildflower sites. Some off track walking. c. 8 km. For more information ring Bernard Slattery 5470 5161.

16 August Walmer

A walk through the diverse and rapidly-evolving landscapes of Walmer taking in revegetation sites, remnant bush and farmland in transition, farm forestry projects, heritage places, high-value roadsides and a nature reserve. c. 10 km. For more information ring Paul Hampton 5474 2189.

20 September Fryers Ridge Nature Conservation Reserve

Range of native plants, creekline vegetation, interesting rocks in the bushland behind Taradale. c. 8 km. For more information ring Barbara Johnson 5423 2773.

18 October Forest Creek Track

This walk will start in Chewton and follow Forest Creek through to Expedition Pass Reservoir using the Forest Creek Track and boardwalks allowing all year access. It will highlight the cultural and environmental history as well as the recent partnerships that have attempted to restore the balance between humans and nature. c. 9km. For more information ring Marie Jones 5472 2892.



Like all Australians, FoBIF members have viewed with horror the destruction of life and nature in the fires ravaging Victoria. We offer our deepest sympathy to those most directly affected, and we welcome the Premier's decision to set up a Royal Commission to consider the ramifications of such a terrible event. Now is not the time for recriminations from one side or the other of political or environmental debates: it is a time for clear, calm deliberation, which should lead to action to prevent the recurrence of such a disaster.

The FoBIF committee deeply regrets the deaths in the Kinglake fires of VNPA worker Jenny Barnett and her husband John. Jenny was a passionate and inspirational advocate for nature for many years, and her loss is a heavy blow to the conservation movement.

Among the many opportunities to support people directly affected by the fires, we thought this local initiative should be supported:

Please Donate Tools for Bushfire Families

Many people who have been affected in the recent devastating fires are desperate to get back to their homes. Their properties have been decimated and will require immense work to rebuild. Many also need to secure their surviving livestock and family pets. But they have no tools.

You can help. Dig deep into your collective nail bags, sheds and workshops. All donated tools will be collated and transported to fire relief centres, to be distributed as soon as possible. Are you a tradesperson or farmer with tools that you no longer require? If your husband, father or grandfather has left behind a shed of tools that you don't know what to do with, please consider those who now have nothing.

Please donate any of the following tools (in working condition):

Crow bars, jemmy or demolition bars, pitch forks, mattocks, picks, shovels, spades, brooms, rakes, hammers, chisels, hand saws, hacksaws, sledge hammers, cordless drills, fencing pliers, normal pliers, sidecutters, spanners, sockets, shifters, screw drivers, brace and bit drills, drill bits, bow saws, chain saws

(working), axes, tomahawks, machetes, nail bags, gloves, buckets, tape measures, carpenters rules, levels, squares, fence strainers, nails, screws, bolts, fence gate hinges, fencing wire, wheel barrows, bag trolleys, jerry cans, ladders, etc.

Drop off points:

(until 28 February 2009)

Castlemaine: Statewide Irrigation, 105 Barker St.

Newstead: Shadehouse behind IGA Supermarket, Panmure St.

If you can't drop off, collection may be possible.

Contact Dean McLaren

Phone: 0409 544 063

Email: tools4tragedy@gmail.com

Is it time to get more involved? Urgent Requests:

FoBIF needs bodies — and minds too!

Owing to the upcoming retirement of long standing committee members, we urgently need members to volunteer for positions on the committee. Positions will be filled at the AGM in May. We need your contribution to our ongoing work. Please give it some thought and contact the secretary if you want to discuss it.

FoBIF website: www.fobif.org.au

The website is now up and running. Check it out for news, photos, newsletters, links etc. We need someone with some web expertise to help in its periodic updating. Are you that person?

Annual General Meeting 2009

The FoBIF AGM will be held on **Monday 11 May**. Members will remember that at a Special General Meeting last year we passed a new set of aims for the group. It will be necessary to pass these again at the AGM, in order to get them registered with Consumer Affairs Victoria. To jog your memory, here is the proposed Statement of Aims:

1. To work towards a common community approach to a healthy, sustainable and productive landscape through conservation of natural vegetation on public and private land in the Mount Alexander Region and in particular to:
 - 1.1. Promote understanding of the natural values of the Box Ironbark forests and woodlands, their ecosystems and the threats to their preservation.
 - 1.2. Assist with the recovery of threatened species and the natural regeneration of bushland, with research, knowledge and resources.
 - 1.3. Support retention of roadside and remnant vegetation and rehabilitation of streamsides to provide wildlife corridors linking landscapes with high natural values.
 - 1.4. Work for strategic statutory planning decisions to provide improved outcomes for the natural environment.
 - 1.5. Encourage landowners to enter into programs such as 'Land for Wildlife' agreements and conservation covenants.
2. To campaign for wise and effective management of the Parks, Reserves and State Forests of the region and to support the inclusion of more crown land in conservation reserves, and in particular to:
 - 2.1. Provide critical support for the management of the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park, encouraging a balanced approach to cultural and natural values.
 - 2.2. Support action to eradicate weeds and pest animals and discourage their introduction in bushlands.
3. To promote respect for Indigenous culture and understanding of Indigenous land management practices.

State of the Environment Report

The Victorian Commissioner for Environment and Sustainability released his State of the Environment report in December. It makes sobering reading.

On **inland waterways**, the report says:

The last assessment of river health in 2004 found that only one fifth of major rivers and tributaries in Victoria were in good or excellent condition. By 1994, more than a third of naturally occurring wetland area had been lost. Twenty-one fish species, 11 frog species and 29 species of water birds are currently considered threatened.

Under climate change, streamflow is projected to decrease by up to 50% across much of Victoria by 2070. The present degraded state of many inland waters increases the challenge of mitigating the environmental impacts associated with climate change.

Lack of flooding threatens the existence of tens of thousands of hectares of River Red Gum Forests.

The report can be found at:

www.ces.vic.gov.au

Connecting Country

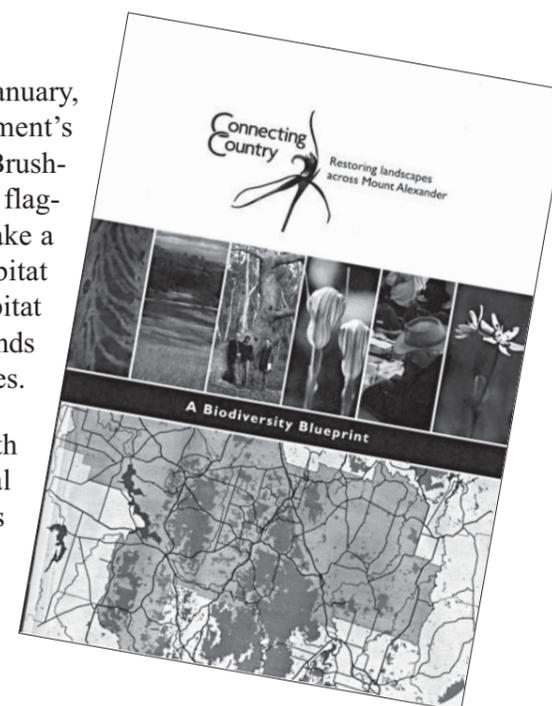
At the extraordinary Reference Group meeting in January, an application for funding to the Federal Government's *Caring for our Country* program was discussed. The Brush-tailed Phascogale (or Tuan) was considered to be a flagship fauna species in our area and we decided to make a submission based on securing its future here. Habitat restoration to improve the quality and to connect habitat corridors across the Box-Ironbark Forests and Woodlands would also benefit a suite of other well known species.

This application is being prepared through the North Central CMA and it may become part of its regional plan or it can be submitted independently – the pros and cons are still being weighed up. A precis of the application will be on the website shortly. We are hoping to contact Dr. Todd Soderquist seeking his support for this project as his interest in and knowledge of the Tuan is exceptional.

Another application is being made to the Norman Wettenhall Foundation to continue with the *Connecting Country* project. Beth Mellick is requesting funding for a Project Officer to manage and promote the Biodiversity Blueprint and the website.

More information will be available on the website soon:

www.connectingcountry.org.au



The *Connecting Country Biodiversity Blueprint* was launched in November 2008.

If you haven't seen it, there are extracts on the *Connecting Country* website and you can also ask for a printed copy.

It's an important document for anyone interested in biodiversity and land use in Mount Alexander Shire. The website also gives access to a mapping portal where up to date information about flora and fauna can be contributed.

VEAC River Red Gum Report and National Parks

At the end of December the State Government proclaimed new river red gum national parks as recommended by the Victorian Environment Assessment Council. While this is a positive step, it needs to be noted that VEAC's final report states clearly that 'changes to land use categories alone are not sufficient to protect natural and cultural values on public land', and that 'environmental flooding is the most critical requirement for biodiversity conservation in the investigation area.'

The survival of the red gum forests is dependent on an appropriate flooding regime, and VEAC mounts a persuasive and detailed argument about how this could be done without serious disbenefit

to local communities. The Government has proclaimed the parks: the more important challenge remains to be faced.

The VEAC red gum investigation took nearly four years. The final report can be found at:

www.veac.vic.gov.au/riverredgum.htm