

Friends of Organ Pipes National Park



Meet our new “Best Friend”

The Victorian Environmental Friends Network’s 2010 “Best Friend” Award went to FOOP’s own Kevin Jones.

Kevin joined FOOPs back in 1978 and he remains one of our most committed and active members. Kevin was presented with his Award by Secretary of the Friends Network, Maelor Himbury (also a past winner) at the FOOPs Annual General Meeting on 19 November. In his acceptance speech, Kevin spoke about the enjoyment he had gained from the many friendships he has made through his participation in working bees. He was especially pleased that Geoff Durham, with whom he had enjoyed many walks over the years, was able to attend the presentation.

Kevin joins a notable list of FOOPs who are prior recipients of the award commencing with the inaugural winner, FOOPs’ founding member Don Marsh in 1991. Others are Barry Kemp (1993), Carl Rayner (1997), Robert Bender (2003), Maelor Himbury (2008) and Robert Irvine (2009).



Kevin Jones receiving his award at the FOOPs Annual General Meeting in November. [Many thanks to Geoff Durham for the photo]

Friends of Organ Pipes NP Committee

Convenor: Terry Lane
Secretary/Grants Manager: Neil Duncan
Treasurer: Robert Irvine
Website: Maelor Himbury
Newsletter: Karen Reid

Jackson's Creek in flood at Organ Pipes NP, November 2010

Most of us probably have recent memories of Jackson's Creek occasionally running dry and appearing more like a chain of ponds – no doubt a perfectly natural state. I recall not too long ago walking across the ford when it was bone dry, and crossing the creek under the Pipes without getting my feet wet. But the cycle continues and in November 2010 we had the rare opportunity to see the creek in flood.

These photos were taken mid-afternoon on Sunday 28th November 2010.



Clockwise from above:

Organ Pipes taken from the viewing platform; the walking path immediately upstream of the Organ Pipes viewing platform; the path to the Tessellated Pavement, approximately 20m past Rosette Rock.



***(Top and right):
Water rushes down the creek
between Rosette Rock and the
Organ Pipes.***

***(Below):
Try walking across the ford now!***



Fungi-mapping at Organ Pipes NP

Robert Bender

The Fungimap project started in 1996, so is now 14 years old. I decided early I would join in and use the opportunity to learn about another kingdom of living organisms of which I knew nothing at all. The mycologists at the state Herbarium produced a CD, then a book *Fungi Down Under*, to use in identifying specimens. They selected 100 species for volunteers to learn to spot, now extended to 110.

Fairly quickly I started finding this species at Organ Pipes, Rooting Shank, *Oudemansiella radicata*. It tends to grow about 6 to 10 cm tall, has a slender whitish stem and a slightly slimy dark brown cap with whitish gills densely crowded under it. It has been found from May to September on Main Flat, usually while I am checking bat boxes.



It occurs mainly along the south coast of Australia. It appears every year at the park when the rainy season starts. The past decade, with the long drought, it has been a bit scarce.

Another species found while checking bat boxes is the Ghost Fungus, *Omphalotus nidiformis*, that has a phosphorescent glow in the dark. The one occasion I found a specimen I had forgotten my camera, so Mick Johnson took some photos and emailed them to me. It is normally a whitish mauve on the cap with deep purple stains close to the centre of its deeply divided structure



Omphalotus on Main Flat, July 2003



Another specimen was found on a willow in Costa's block in February 2005



Spectacular Rustgill, *Gymnopilus junonius*, has been found only once, in May 2006, along the creek past the Pavement. It usually grows in dense clusters of overlapping caps, always a honey colour.



The last Fungimap species was found on a log in Aug this year, again while checking bat boxes. It is a jelly fungus, *Tremella mesenterica*, usually quite small, this one is only about 1.5 cm across, and they look like blobs of jelly.

As well as the species that are included in the national mapping project, there are several others I find quite often around the park, usually in Main Flat. One is the common Earthstar, *Scleroderma*, that looks a bit like an old potato, until it splits and opens into a ragged star.



This *Ganoderma* was found on a stump on Main Flat in January 2005.

Some species recur frequently, or the same season each year, others are rare finds, found by luck of being in the right place at the right time. It never ceases to fascinate.



The orange *Piptoporus* is also very common on dead wood.



The *Amauroderma* was on a log in July 2005.

FOOPs put on display at Family Nature Day

Terry Lane

Family Nature Day 20 November 2010

A fine day and quite warm for the Victoria Naturally Alliance organized Family Nature Day at the Isabella Williams Reserve in Deer Park.

The main objective for the event was to introduce the Grassland ecosystem to residents living in the area to show and introduce them to the environment on their doorsteps. A number of groups were invited to take part; they included Brimbank Council, Friends Groups and Indigenous groups.

There were plenty of activities for the children these included water bugs discoveries, face painting and the highlight of the day The Zoo That Comes to You. The children just loved seeing the native fauna, crocodiles, snakes, turtles and birds.



FOOPs were there with their Mobile Display Stand



Children enjoying the animals including the cute Squirrel Glider (below left) and the Major Mitchell Cockatoo (bottom right).



There were plants for sale from Cassy Twomey's Friends of Taylors Creek Stand (pictured left).

All in all a good day with a barbecue and cold drinks with about 120 people attending.



A fine collection of various didgeridoos



Working Bee Reports

25th September 2010

Terry Lane & Robert Bender

A lovely clear day to do some weeding and wire frame repair down on the main flat, at least that was the plan, but after the wonderful rainy weather we have had recently, it was decided to go back to Costas Block to put in the plants left over from last months working bee.

A good turnout of FOOPs, George, Robert Irvine, Claude, Neil, Maelor, Andrew, Sonia and her husband Ron and their two boys Jasper and Rory. Martha Ragg the Conservation Community Liaison Officer at Brimbank Council joined us and after a quick cuppa and a chat loaded up my Ute with tools and plants and with Martha's 4wd drove down to Costas.



*Martha Ragg (left) and the Van
Dorssen family (above)*

With half a dozen Common Froglets calling in the turbid creek, we checked last month's plantings in our small plot and Gerry's large ones for Kangaroo entry but they appeared OK. The dry weather will be the test when the feed gets scarce.

With clouds coming over we got down to work putting in the plants and collecting old guards scattered around the place.



Robert had been busy, his report follows:

As usual I arrived late, couldn't find the team, and worked alone hacking out Bridal Veil Creeper on Main Flat, where it scrambles up Tree Violet and eucalypts, and mixes with Clematis and Saltbushes.



After lunch we packed up and headed back to the office where we found Robert Bender talking with Rangers John Secombe and Joe Tognolini.



Robert Bender

Early spring brings on its flowering, one flower To each leaf, six white petals. Good time to get it out before seed sets. A weed of National Significance, but still allowed to be imported.



The thin wiry twisting stem emerges from a cluster of very dense tubers, to 10 cm deep, on rhizomes.



If the tubers are left in the ground, they will quickly send up a new stem. I found they twist either left or right to twine around chicken wire or shrub branches. I had a 60-litre bin with me and filled it to the brim twice, took it up to the dumpster by the works centre. Decided to just rip a few stems out of the ground, to avoid damaging colonies of saltbush or Clematis, but nearly all were dug out, with their tubers.



Some of the *Einadia* leaves had turned red, very pretty.

Chatting with Joe, and John Secombe in the office about 1 p.m., when John spotted a Bluetongue stroll-ing along the path to the office door, so we went out to photograph it and Joe examined it for ticks, of which it was entirely free. It was released back into the garden bed.



The *Einadia* saltbush colonies are looking very healthy after all this year's rain.



Main Flat is green and looks healthy, but quite a few of the chicken-wire frames protecting the Black Wattles have fallen over or been pushed in by the kangaroos, and are in need of some maintenance. I replaced stakes on a few, but mainly concentrated on the Bridal Creeper.



23rd October 2010

Neil Duncan

It was a drizzly morning as I arrived to see Maelor and Nancy sitting in their cars as the office was still locked as Hayden had to rush across to open up Woodlands. It seemed we were going to be a small crew but then Claude came to be soon followed by the Sunbury mob (Kevin, George and Robert Irvine).

There was a box of plants waiting for us to plant (probably left for us by Terry) so we decided it would be a good idea to plant them as the soil was wet. Tools and plants were loaded into my car and Maelor and Nancy took a lift as the others walked down.

The track to the planting sites has almost disappeared under the mustard weed which has sprung up in giant proportions all over the park.

The planting sites were almost unrecognisable as the weeds had grown over a metre in the month. Luckily the plants had also settled in and looked good.

I took a trip across to look at our own fence site and was dismayed to find most of the plants had been eaten away despite the fence looking in good condition.

On returning to the work at hand we set about clearing the mass of weeds and planting the new plants. Having seen the destruction in our plot but the surviving plants in the existing plots I thought perhaps the weeds were hiding the plants from the kangaroos so I was a bit reluctant to see the weeds being removed.



Mustard Weed hides the track



Busy weeding

Robert in the meantime headed across to our plot to put some frames around the existing plants and Nancy followed with some new plants to replace the missing ones. George, Kevin, Claude, Maelor and I continued to either remove weeds or plant as the occasional short shower passed overhead.

Nancy came back as she had to go and informed us that it wasn't kangaroos eating the plants in our plot but rabbits had got in one corner and had a nice feast. The hole was plugged and hopefully made rabbit proof and perhaps the plants have a better chance of survival.

Claude and Maelor also had to go so Kevin, George and I removed some of the orange tape and strung it across the plot to make several smaller plots within the large plot which seems to have worked well with the other plots at this stage. Watering was a tricky task as the grass was so tall you couldn't tell if you were on solid ground or not but eventually all were planted and mulched and watered.

Robert Irvine returned from the other plot and we sat down to enjoy lunch beside the plot as Kevin showed some interesting articles he had picked up from his trip to NSW.

After lunch we headed back to the office area and set about making wire frames to put over *Acacia implexa* seedlings that had sprung up through the *Allocasuarina* forest but were being eaten by the wildlife. It was quite a task rolling out folded up wire, finding seedlings and stakes to hold the wire in place. The more frames you put in the more seedlings you found but at 3pm we called it a day.



Robert and Kevin making frames

I decided it would be good to have a look at the rail reserves and I was very glad I did. I went to the reserve near Calder and then onto Watsons Road but didn't go to Sunbury. Both were looking terrific and it is amazing how different the plants are although there is not a lot of distance apart as the crow flies (or train goes). The main colour at the first reserve was provided by masses of *Goodenia*.



Goodenias en masse

However there were *Pimeleas*, *Ptilotus* (pussy tails), *Dianellas*, and *Chrysocephalum* in abundance.



Ptilotis in flower

Watsons Road was a mass of chocolate lilies, milkmaids, *Stackhousias* and *Chrysocephalum* with taller *Dillwynias* and *Pimeleas* scattered throughout.



I would strongly recommend that if you want to see what the Keilor plains grasslands would have looked like before European settlement have a look at these two reserves in the next month.

Watsons Road Reserve (at left)

27th November 2010

Neil Duncan

It was a wet morning as the small group of Nancy, Karen, Maelor, Kevin, Robert Irvine and myself met in the ranger's office.

Although we were scheduled to plant at the visitors centre Hayden wasn't there (rangers Joe and Paul were on duty) so we headed down to Costas armed with a mattock, several mini mattocks and a spade to remove the weeds from Gerry's planted up plots. As we walked down the track we were serenaded by the frogs inhabiting the dam, but the heavy rain is causing some erosion problems on the track.

The sight at the plots was almost unbelievable as the plots have almost disappeared under the massive weed growth. Once we entered the plots we set to work but very soon Robert was suffering from hay fever as the plots are surrounded by chest high Phalaris grass.

Although the soil was saturated and some of the weeds were easy to pull out, others had massive root systems which took a lot of energy to remove and throw over the fence. The plot we were in had been divided into four subplots by our creative use of the orange tape a couple of months ago, but it took about an hour to clear just one of the subplots. By that time we were all feeling the effects of the effort.

Robert meantime had been checking out the flooded creek and our own plot which he reported had good plant growth. Soon he and Karen headed back up as they were suffering the effects of the hay fever while the rest of us tried to clear at least the next subplot.

It was good to discover little wattles, gums and other plants as we dragged away the weeds that had obscured the light from the plants. Hopefully with less competition, at least for a while, they will have a chance to put on good growth with the moisture in the soil.

Eventually we had cleared the second subplot which only leaves 3 other plots and the half of this plot to be weeded!!



[Left] Karen, Nancy, Maelor and Kevin clear the head high weeds

The difference was staggering – the only positive being that the milk thistles are dying so will eventually allow light into the plants below.

Although we had weeded all morning without rain, as we packed up our tools the rain started and by the time we had reached the top we were wet on the outside from the rain and inside from our exertions.

We met Robert and Karen at the top and after packing away our tools Karen, Maelor and Nancy headed off.



Weeds piled as high as the fence and guards which were totally hidden in the weeds

Robert, Kevin and I had lunch in the office chatting to Joe as the rain poured down outside. After lunch Robert and Kevin headed off and as the rain had slowed to a drizzle I walked down to the creek. The 60mm of rain in the catchment area of the creek had created a massive flow of water as the following photos will show.



***Silly place to put a seat!
Tessellated Pavement***



Tessellated Pavement



Creek about 100m wide at the ford



Water surging near the ford



A meadow of kangaroo grass on the slope back up the track with flooded creek in background

Bat boxes at Organ Pipes 15 Aug 2010

Robert Bender

Who was there?

Natasha, Debbie, Catherine, Steve, Adam and Ben (Monash), Cassie, Taras and Mijail (Deakin), Kelly, and me

We had a good-sized team as several students from Monash, Deakin and Swinburne came to join us, as well as Kelly Dalton, zoologist.



Catherine Payne inspects a box, Steve on ladder duty



Kelly Dalton inspects a box, Natasha on ladder duty

I went up a ladder to photograph a bunch of Gould's in C23. We collected 113 bats in August 09, down from a peak of 147 in Aug 07 but only 49 bats this time, which was something of a surprise, but maybe the spike in the August capture rate is just a short-lived phenomenon.



Box C43 had fallen to the ground, but is so strongly made it was intact, though its upper screw had pulled through the timber and enlarged its hole. Box C32 had rotted at the top so Steve pulled it off the tree and I took it home for repairs.

With several new vaccinated recruits, opportunities are opening up, but Natasha was understandably cautious after one Forest Bat escaped into the tube supporting the data projector in June, got jammed in there and died. But Catherine did some of the bat assessing under supervision. Debbie came along and took over from me, and we got through them all quite early, soon after 6 o'clock.



We finished with 49 bats of two species.

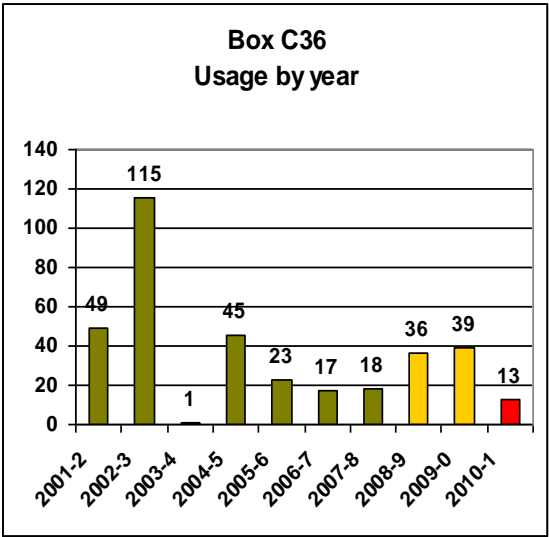
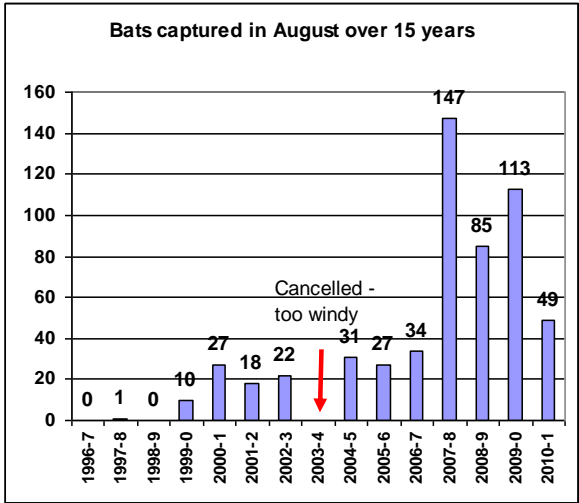
Box	Bats	Species	Adult	
			M	F
C36	13	Gould's	2	11
C36	2		2	
C22	12	Gould's	2	10
C23	12	Gould's	3	9
C19	4			4
C43	3	Gould's		3
C14	1	Gould's	1	
C16	1	Gould's	1	
C30	1	Gould's		1
	49	Total	11	38

Compared with August in earlier years, this year's result is a return to the early 2000s.

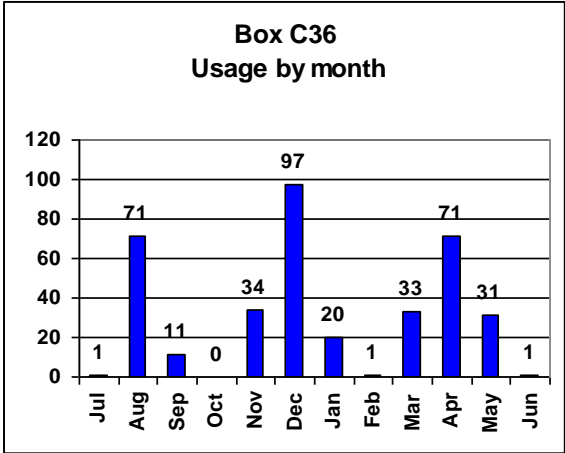
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Bats	27	34	147	85	113	49
Incr		+26%	+332%	-42%	+33%	-57%

The species distribution is always much the same, with big fluctuations in Gould's the main reason for the ups and downs.

	Aug 07	Aug 08	Aug 09	Aug 10
Gould's	147	76	109	43
Freetail		5		
Large		4	4	6
Chocolate				
Total	147	85	113	49



This is almost the last of the 9 thick-walled boxes installed over three years from 98 to 01, in the hope of attracting bats during winter months. It proved quite attractive to bats in its first couple of years, but has declined in usage since then. But as since 2008 we have only checked the boxes 6 times a year instead of 12, the figures since then should be doubled to make them comparable. We have caught 371 bats in it, compared to the most-used thick-walled box, (C30) with 555 and the least-used (C33) with 151. It faces west.



It has three peak usage months, in August, December and April, but the December figure is a bit misleading as most of it was one big group of 56 bats in 2002. Nearly all of the bats have been Gould's with only a couple of Large Forest Bats and a solitary Freetail. Group sizes show it mostly attracts quite small groups. Half the bats were in groups smaller than 20.

Fewer than	10	20	30	40	50	60
Bats	18	11	2	2		1