



Newsletter 017 January/February 1985

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FRIENDS OF CHILTERN PARK
Convener: E.Collins 057 261 484
Newsletter No. 17 Jan/Feb 1995
Dear Friends,

Welcome to 1995. Let's hope it will be a rewarding year for our group, The front page for this issue was drawn by Crystal, one of our enthusiastic younger members. our start to the year was fantastic. The camp-out at Cyanide got us off to a great start. We were called on to bat and bat we did! Thanks to the expertise of bat-person Natasha Schedvin a great deal was learned about bats and batting. The value of bats in the environment became apparent to everyone. If you've got bats on your pad you may be assured of a natural reduction of insect life. On Saturday afternoon we were shown how to choose a bat flight path and erect a harp trap. This cunning piece of equipment consists of a two metre square frame with banks of fine nylon line strung vertically across the frame. A canvas catching bag is suspended below. Into this the bats tumble after they have collided with the lines. There they remain in safety until they are collected. Nothing matches hands on experience in the learning process so we were soon able to go it alone and erect a trap.



Five traps were set and, pleased with our efforts, we returned to camp for tea. Now came the fun! The water in Cyanide dam was very low providing an ideal level for the setting of the trip lines. Since nylon line had to be criss-crossed over the water surface and pegged down at each edge volunteers were needed to wade back and forth across the dam. Not a problem! Sarina and Crystal were into the dam in a flash (and in their element I suspected) to ferry the reel to the "peggers" at each side. This process took about an hour and was completed just on dusk. As the last peg went into the mud the first bat swooped low over the water "tripped" on the line and fell in, Everyone was amazed at the swimming prowess of bats doing butterfly stroke! Natasha directed the bat to the edge with a spotlight and catcher John scooped the tiny creature from the water only to be rewarded by a bite. Three bats were caught using this method. They were placed into small bags and later they would have their vital statistics recorded and be released.

Back to the water for Sarina and Crystal, but this time in darkness, for all the line had to be reeled in and pegs removed before we could inspect the harp traps. The girls did a great job and we were soon on our way. The other traps yielded three bats at night and nine in the morning. .

Sometime after midnight we settled down for a peaceful night. A koala had other ideas. He snorted and grunted his way throughout the night above our tents. There has been a Koala around Cyanide for several months which is great for they are not common in the park.

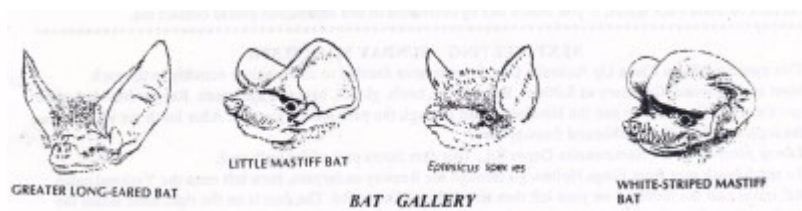
After breakfast the bat study began in earnest. Natasha explained the "bat parts" stressing the delicate nature of the animal, As she held the bat's outstretched wing to the light Natasha explained that this bat was a juvenile and pointed out the transparent nature of the growing bones, Tiny scales were used to weigh each bat and a fine measuring tool took their vital statistics, All these details were recorded.



The bats were released where they were caught and then it was time to dismantle the traps. This required special attention to detail for poorly dismantled traps cause lots of problems to the next user. The operation is performed in a sequence and everyone had the chance to contribute and learn. Who knows, we may produce a bat person from our group. .

Our thanks go to Natsaha for giving her time to us and for making our camp-out a huge success both socially and educationally.

lease note: Bats may only be caught by people with a permit. Without a permit it is illegal.



February Meeting: Chiltern Valley NÃ². 2 Dam provided a pleasant setting for our tea meeting. Fifteen of us and guests Gemma Prior and John Panlook set about cutting down the Sweet Briar which appeared to have resisted the grazing animals, After an hour of that, which included scrambling up and down the extensive mine heaps we were all ready to recharge. People using the track in to the water will now have thorn free passage.

The picnic area at V.2 consists of large logs set in a rough triangle around a disused camp fire encircled by a ring of white stones. In the evening it is protected from the sun by the huge mine dumps and is an ideal meeting spot. After tea a short meeting we shared garden produce and prepared to go â??froggingâ??. The younger members proved to be the best frog finders. Most frogs were found in the mud cracks and although they were plentiful in number we only had two species, Sloaneâ??s Froglet {Ranidella Åloanei} and Peronâ??s Tree Frog {Litoria peroni}. Although we were looking for frogs other nightlife did not escape us. We watched bats skimming insects off the su arrival of the White-throated Nightjar making repeated sweeps over the v bonus for the birdos amongst us. By the end of the month these summer



young, will be ready to return to warmer northern regions for the winter. .

Water spiders and Wolf spiders, with eyes like bright pins, were out hunting too but they did not appeal to everyone. As we walked round the dam Masked Lapwings and Black-fronted Plovers gave their alarm calls as we approached. At 10pm a, tired, muddy and happy group made their way home.

Proposed Excursion to Dharnya Centre, Barmah State Park. ,

Date: June 17-18 Total cost: Adults \$34 Children \$22 Bus size: 22 persons

Cost includes bus fare and one nightâ??s bunk house accommodation. BYO sleeping bag, sheets, pillow-slip.

Catering: self catering, all utensils provided. ,

Contact for bookings 057 261 484. by February 16th. Deposit on booking: \$10.

From the meeting:

1. The Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team meeting will be held in Chiltern on Thursday March 16th. commencing at 10.30 am.at the Chiltern Golf Club, North Road, Chiltern.Visitors are welcome. On March 17th there will be BBQ lunch at Cyanide Dam and a tour of the nest sites. Please notifâ?? Natasha Schedvin on 03 4508690 if you wish to attend.
- 2.John Reeve expressed an interest in a kangaroo survey. A format for the survey will be obtained from CNR.
3. Turquoise Parrot log survey will be conducted in March. Logs will be inspected again in winter at times to be decided later.
- 4.Display board for Environment Centre. To advertise Friends activities and newsletters John offered to construct a small hanging clipboard to display the Friends news. .
- 5.Broken Creek Field Naturalists Club wish to visit Chiltern Park in October. An invitation has been extended to them to join our October meeting,
6. Bird Hide: Friends would like to repair the hide at Valley No. 1 dam. Ranger John thinks it is probably beyond repair hut we may attempt the task, .
7. 1995 Programme: It will be necessary to keep flexibility in the months from April to September. We plan to plant trees in the Autumn however the timing of this will be governed by rainfall. As we all know it is unpredictable, Every effort will be made to provide details of changes in the newsletters.
- 8.Park Status. Friends will be preparing a submission to the Land Conservation Council seeking the upgrading of the park to State Park status, If you would like to contribute to this submission please contact me.

NEXT MEETING SUNDAY MARCH 5TH

This meeting falls on Clean Up Australia Day, Friends have decided to confine their activitiy to the park. Meet at the Pioneer Cemetery at 8.00am, Bring lunch, tools, gloves, hats and sunscreen. Ranger John has some spots marked for attention and the Howlong Road through the park will be cleaned. After lunch we will work on the walk trail from the southbound freeway stop.

Lunch place: Dam on Barrawartha Depot Rd.. This dam forms part of the walk trail.

To reach lunch spot from Frogs Hollow go through the freeway underpass, turn left onto the Yackandandah Rd. travel past the farmland on your left then turn left into Depot Rd. The dam is on the right hand side of the track. 1 , 1 kms from the turn. Approximate lunch time: 12â??l 2.30pm.

*****Nocturnal Happenings .

With the hope of actually seeing real live creatures of the night, the New family of Wahgunyah and the Brown family of Corowa ventured into the Chiltern Forest one December evening at mosquito time with Eileen as our guide. Sitting patiently on our fold-up chairs like the only row of an open air theatre, we faced the setting sunwith the study tree silhouetted against the fading light. Equipped with torches, mosquito repellent, binoculars and what we hoped was plenty of patience, we sat back in anticipation of the nightâ??s events.

To give us background, Eileen had explained that the Antechinus family had grown and that it was unlikely that we should see them, however, a Squirrel Glider also inhabited one of the hollows and it was possible that we would see it. An examination of the base of the tree revealed Antechinus seats and we noted a white antsâ?? nest and some Sugar Ant activity. A hare happened by, and we practised our noiseless communication and expressed surprise at the hareâ??s lack of panic in our presence. We had ceased being intruders and had blended into the night like the trees around, The air was humid and the horizon through the tree line held promise of rain the following day. Unseen by us and at the base of the tree, an ant egg hatched and the flying ant rose innocently towards the tree canopy.

A white-browed Woodswallow happened by and pounced on it, Some more ants hatched and rose

towards the canopy, only to be gobbled up by a gathering number of excited Woodswallows. We were then treated to one of nature's spectacles. The air was gradually filled with a cacophany of sound as white-browed Woodswallows came from across the forest and descended on the rising column of flying ants. There was noise and activity all around us. It seemed to rise to a crescendo and then gradually taper off as late arrivals or the hungry and still hopeful descended from the canopy to the food source at the base of the tree, pouncing on emerging ants before they could even take flight.

Then there was silence,

The silence was almost an anticlimax as we realised that we had not seen our bush creatures. Eileen tiptoed to the base of the tree for a post mortem of the ants' nest. Suddenly there was a movement up the tree. A little head with pointed ears and a bushy tail was clearly visible. Retreating to her chair Eileen identified the creature as a Squirrel Glider. We sat there fascinated, as it so nimbly leapt from branch to branch and finally volplaned to a nearby tree and out of our sight.

Our patience had been rewarded, Not only had we seen, our bush creature, but nature had put on an unexpected display of its own for our enchantment,

Graham Brown. December 1994.

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1. Newsletters

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