



Newsletter 019 April 1995

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FRIENDS OF CHILTERN PARK inc

Convener:E.Coffins 057 261 484

Newsletter No. 19 April 1995

Dear Friends,

Rain at last! Almost 25mm at the time of writing. The Regent Honeyeaters are back and the winter migrants are beginning to arrive. The trees in the park look very healthy despite the long dry spell but the understorey plants are very stressed. The Grey Box is in flower attracting many insects. The park is alive with squabbling Noisy Friar- birds both adult and juvenile. White-browed Woodswallows are gathering in hundreds feeding on the insects and preparing for their journey north to warmer regions. Our working bee for April was at Valley No.2 Dam. The large peppercorn trees had their lower limbs removed to provide shade for campers. Bendigo Field Naturalists will be camping here during Easter and will be the first to benefit from the improved area. Further work was carried out on the Sweet Briar patch and other small exotics. A number of larger Peppercorns will be removed at a later date. Members tagged the rabbit burrows in preparation for CNR staff to undertake eradication, It will be pleasing to see this block fully fenced so excluding stock from neighboring properties. The whole block is extremely degraded with the regrowth being both trampled and grazed.

Lunch was enjoyed at Valley No.2 and after the tasks were completed we moved to Magenta Mine picnic spot. The barbecue was soon ablaze, tea was cooked and enjoyed by the warmth of the fire.. The cold wind had died down by 6pm and the evening was perfect for a spotlight walk and frog hunt.



The children, as usual, were eager to begin. We decided to walk from Magenta to Greenhill Rd. Dam and the walk was well worth the effort. Scott did a great job with the spotlight turning up two Brushtail Possums, a Squirrel Glider and a Feathertail Glider. These we knew were possibilities but we were not prepared for the highlight of the evening. A Little Red Flying Fox flew up the track towards us, over our heads and along the track and out of sight. Scott was able to follow it with the light so enabling everyone to get a good view. The large wingspan and the rich colour attracted everyone's attention. As far as I am aware this is this first record for the park.

By now the children were anxious to get to the frogging part of the evening. There was not a frog call to be heard at Greenhill Dam. Undeterred, the hunt went on and soon we had a good collection of frogs to identify and examine. Among the captives were two tree frogs, Peron's Tree Frog {Litoria peroni} and the Plains Brown Tree Frog {Litoria paraewingi}. There were many Sloane's Froglets and Common Froglets.

A small yabbie, water spiders and backswimmers were also seen. All the animals were returned to their environment after identification. Members have found these activities very rewarding. There is no better way to discover what's in your area, learn about it and respect its right to life than to have first hand experience when possible.

The picnic table at Magenta was littered with the sugary lerp covering. Ironbarks overhang the table and they are hosting the lerps. Tasting the sweet white flakes was an experience for some friends.

From the meeting:

1. Welcome to Bruce Quin who came from Melbourne to be with us. Bruce extends his thanks to all members who assisted with the nest log survey work.
2. Welcome to visitors, Carol, Damien, Trent and Rebecca.
3. Sympathy was extended to members Judith, Robyn, Lesley, Christine and their families on the death of their Grandmother Mrs Maude Hay aged 91.
4. It was noted that CRA have applied to continue geology and drilling work in 1995.
5. The bank a/c has been registered as incorporated. The balance is \$1041.74. Sounds a lot but it has to last until June 1996!
6. Thanks to all who brought cans for the collection. It helps to boost finances.



FRIENDS VISIT TO THE INSECTARIUM OF VICTORIA AT HEATHCOTE

A keen group of Friends left Chiltern at 6am on Sunday 19 March for an excursion extraordinaire. Bert Canduslo the curator, and his wife Amanda gave us a day to remember. We arrived before opening time, visited the local bakery for coffee scrolls and other delights and settled down on the lawn in front of the Insectarium for morning tea. Bert and Amanda arrived to find us enjoying the morning sun and gave us a cheery greeting. The tone for the day was set!

It would take pages to do Justice to Bert's teachings and patience, the latter being evident in the meticulous presentation of the hundreds of preserved and beautifully labeled specimens of insect life. But it was the living exhibits which fascinated us. They are housed in atmospherically controlled enclosures and their environment and habitat closely matches that of the wild. Bert introduced us to an aged and colourful Yabbie, minus a claw, which seemed almost eager to be lifted from his tank and used as a teaching tool. As he was returned to his tank he received a titbit.

Scorpions were held by the tail for us to inspect. They cannot sting if they are held this way. One was about 8 centimetres long and a pregnant female. Bert pointed out the developing young in the abdomen. Since it was the first time they had bred he was unsure how many Young would emerge. They are fed live food selected from beetles, meal worms, slaters and crickets. Much of the food is bred at the Insectarium.

There were feral and native cockroaches Amanda brought the native one for inspection It was huge and remarkably docile quite the opposite to the frantic movements of the introduced pest. Unlike the introduced variety the native cockroach feeds only on dried eucalyptus leaves, dried banana flowers and rotting wood. They do not have the unpleasant odour associated with the pest insect.

The bird-eating spiders from northern Australia amazed us. Flopsy and Mopsy, two young spiders, are recent additions to the collection and Bert is hopeful that they will breed. he gently probed into Mopsy's hole in the hope that she would emerge. She did. I wouldn't like her too close! The male spider was enclosed in a tube which was removed from the enclosure for us to inspect. Food for these spiders is quite varied ranging from live mice and young rats to locusts and large moths.

Other interesting exhibits included a bee hive with a glassed front. The bee entered from the outside through a tube. A very nice display of stick and leaf insects from Queensland showed the power of camouflage. Stick Insects eat eucalypt leaves of different varieties. .

The next part of our education was to take place at the Pink Cliffs a reserve a short distance from the town. As we prepared to have lunch someone said "Look at this!" This was an infestation of Guista which was spoiling this very pretty area. They definitely need a Friends group.

Bert explained that there are insects at every level of an environment, in the soil, the ground litter, at grass level, shrub level and in trees and different methods are used to catch them. He demonstrated the method for catching insects at shrub height. He then asked to be timed for a minute while he thrashed the shrubs for insects. That done, he spread a large white sheet on the ground and slowly released the catch.

The purpose of timing was to illustrate how many insects actually inhabit a small area. Many insects were too small to be handled. These were sucked up into a small bottle through tiny tubes..

Our next call was the worm and yabbie farm. This worm farm used pig manure and lucerne to feed Worms. Any animal and vegetable waste can be used to feed worms. Tiger Worms and Blue Worms are used in the composting process. These worms are different from the ordinary garden worm. When the worms have chewed their way through the material, breeding as they go, they leave behind rich deposits of casts known as vermicasts. These can be used to enrich soil, or be dissolved in water to make fertilizer.

The contribution of worms to the health of soil is immeasurable. Worm farming may well be the saviour of our depleted soils. Many farms are turning to creating their own worm farms, with assistance from professionals, to save their soils. They are much preferable to, and cheaper than, artificial fertilizers. Our official tour ended here. However Bert suggested that we may like to go to Mt. Ida and search for trilobites and crinoids in the sandstone. That appealed to everyone. Several fossil remains were found and became the treasures of the younger ones. The views of the surrounding countryside from the fire tower were magnificent, a 360 degree panorama.

Bert Candusio and his wife Amanda are a couple dedicated to the preservation of our insect heritage and to the education of the public. They recognised the need for a centre to house their collection and pursue their research and so the Insectarium came into being. If you have a day to spare and want something special to do why don't you try it. Just ring Bert on 054 333 022. They're open 7 days a week from 10am to 4pm. . ,

NEXT MEETING SUNDAY MAY 7

Contact No. 057 261 484

Meet at BARTLEY'S BLOCK at 9.00am

Bring lunch, trowel, gloves, rake and a pruning saw if you have one. You never know what job may turn up! If sufficient rain has fallen we may plant trees at the tip reserve.

The lunch place will depend upon where we work. A notice will be left on the gate at Bartley's giving details. Come along and bring a friend .

Toxic no-go

India rejects our contaminated garbage.

After determined protests by Greenpeace activists, and local organisations India has put off signing an agreement to import hazardous waste from Australia. The move is a victory for Greenpeace, the Indian environment and all developing Asian nations, according to Greenpeace Australia's toxic trade campaigner Phyllis Campbell.

"India is going to review its own hazardous waste management before it makes any continued commitment to receive waste from overseas," Phyllis said. India's decision came after senior

Australian Government officials went on a "toxic tour" of several Asian countries In October last year. Greenpeace saw the tour as a blatant attempt to undermine a majority decision In March 1994 by the Basel Convention on the Trans Australian boundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes. The convention makes it illegal for the world's industrialised nations to export hazardous waste for dumping in developing countries. It also bans export of waste for recycling to those countries after 1997. Although some waste traded is recycled, the residue from recycling is left as the burden. Every year, Australia exports thousands of tonnes of hazardous waste to India, including contaminated scrap metal, plastic waste and lead acid batteries.

When the Australian Government delegation arrived in India, Greenpeace campaigner Ann Leonard, backed by Greenpeace Australia, galvanised local environmental and social-justice groups. They organised a press conference calling on the Indian Government to uphold the Basel Convention. India announced its decision three days later.

Action

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Write to Sen. Gareth Evans c/o Parliament House, Canberra) and strongly urge that Australia abide by its commitment to the Basel Convention to stop the trade of hazardous and toxic waste.
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