

Newsletter 284 June 2019

Description

Friends of Chiltern Mt Pilot NP Newsletter 284 June 2019

Dear Friends,

The highlight of the last month has been the announcement, on the Queen's Birthday holiday, that Eileen Collins has been awarded an Order of Australia Medal. The following forms part of the nomination and is a reminder of the breadth and depth of her contribution to conservation and the environment.

Eileen has made an outstanding contribution to the environment through the many projects that have been carried out under the auspices of the Friends' group.

Major Achievements

♣ Regent Honeyeater (*Anthochaera phrygia*) recovery projects

Regent Honeyeater numbers have declined in Australia for quite some time and various national projects have been implemented in efforts to arrest this decline. Eileen has spent countless hours locating these birds in the park and become an authority on where one may find these birds and their nests. Her ability to recognise these birds in flight and their various calls is most impressive. In more recent times, Eileen has been closely involved with the captive-bred releases of Regent Honeyeaters and the monitoring of these birds after their release into the wild.

Everyone associated with these projects has grown to appreciate and respect Eileen's knowledge of this species, and the park in general, along with her willingness to put in the work necessary to gain more useful information.

♣ Flora surveys, threatened species and flora database

A series of flora surveys resulted in a published list of the flora of the park and that work lead to the current project to build a comprehensive catalogue of photographs of each plant that is available to everyone via the Friends' web-site (<http://friendsofchiltern.org.au>). This includes photographs of the plant, flowers and seeds. At the moment, over 90% of the flora species have been located, photographed by Neil Blair and loaded onto the web-site by Eileen. This very valuable resource is being widely appreciated for its thoroughness and accuracy. Eileen's knowledge developed over many years working on threatened flora species has been crucial for this work. Her depth of experience, combined with the long-term relationships established with scientific experts, means that this project

meets very high standards.

Eileen has participated in attempts to conserve endangered plant species including locating existing plants, assistance with pollination and collection of viable seed to be sent to the Herbarium in Melbourne for propagation.

â?¢ Maintenance and development of the national park

New areas have been progressively added to the park as suitable land has become available and Eileen has been a passionate supporter and facilitator of each proposal to add to the park. The Friendsâ?? group spends a good proportion of its time removing a range of weeds that have been introduced over a long time or continue to invade the park. In conjunction with Parks Victoria rangers and others with expertise or enthusiasm, visitor facilities such as informative plaques, seats and tables and designated walks with information leaflets have been developed and put in place. Eileen has been tireless in pursuit of park improvement.

â?¢ Ambassador for the national park

As convenor/president of the Friendsâ?? group since its inception in 1983, Eileen has produced the monthly newsletter that always features a piece about a particular species of bird, plant, insect or fungus. No opportunity is missed to extend our knowledge of the park and its environment. The Friendsâ?? group have produced two attractive fold-out brochures featuring birds and plants that visitors may encounter in the park and these brochures have received acclaim from a wide range of visitors who have expressed delight that they are available. Eileen has been the driving force behind the production of these brochures from funding applications to ensuring that the details are accurate. Steps are now being taken to produce a similar brochure on the animals to be found in the park.

Many visitors from interstate and overseas have been treated to a tour around the park from a knowledgeable and friendly guide dedicated to showing whatever species are of interest to the visitor. The network of people who have been assisted by Eileen is vast and contact continues to be maintained with many of these visitors.

A strong and constructive relationship with the Parks Victoria rangers is maintained so that all Friendsâ?? activities meet with their approval and the level of co-operation between them is exceptional.

Eileen will be presented with her medal by the Governor of Victoria, the Hon. Linda Dessau AC in September along with the other Victorian recipients of an Order of Australia award.

May Field Day

Our May field day took place at Chiltern Valley #2 Dam near the bird hide. About 125 trees and shrubs were planted in powdery white soil, fitted with tree guards and given a drink of water. The 18 attendees, of a wide range of ages, thoroughly enjoyed this task and the usual bun from the Chiltern Bakery was consumed with great relish.

Alice at work (note the white soil) and the gathering enjoying the lovely sunny day â?? photos: Neville Bartlett





Vale Peter Stokie â?? OAM

Sad news that our member and executive member Peter Stokie OAM passed away unexpectedly on the 25th May at home in Bright. Peter attended almost all of our Field Days over the last 2-3 years and contributed enthusiastically â?? he was a great worker. He received an OAM for his work for the Victorian Malleefowl Recovery Program â?? he was one of the original members and his knowledge of Malleefowl was encyclopaedic and freely shared with all â?? he got Mick Webster and Tony Murnane hooked on the amazing monitoring program he largely created and inspired. He was also a leading light in Bright Landcare groups. Sadly missedâ?!. [from Mick Webster].

Several members attended a farewell ceremony for Peter and we were all impressed with what he has achieved during his life and the legacy that he left. Attendees were encouraged to take home a shrub or tree to plant in commemoration of Peterâ??s life. In lieu of sending flowers, Friends have made a donation to Environmental Justice Australia, the organisation recommended by Peterâ??s family. [Neville Bartlett]

Presidentâ??s Report

On Sunday 16th June, some of our members participated in the Trust For Nature / North East CMAâ??s â??Bush for Birdsâ?? tree planting at the old Barnawartha Sewerage Treatment facility off Ryanâ??s Road. This site is adjacent to the Park and a major planting took place there in August 2018.

This planting added another 500 trees and shrubs. The “Regent Honeyeater” cake was quite a treat.

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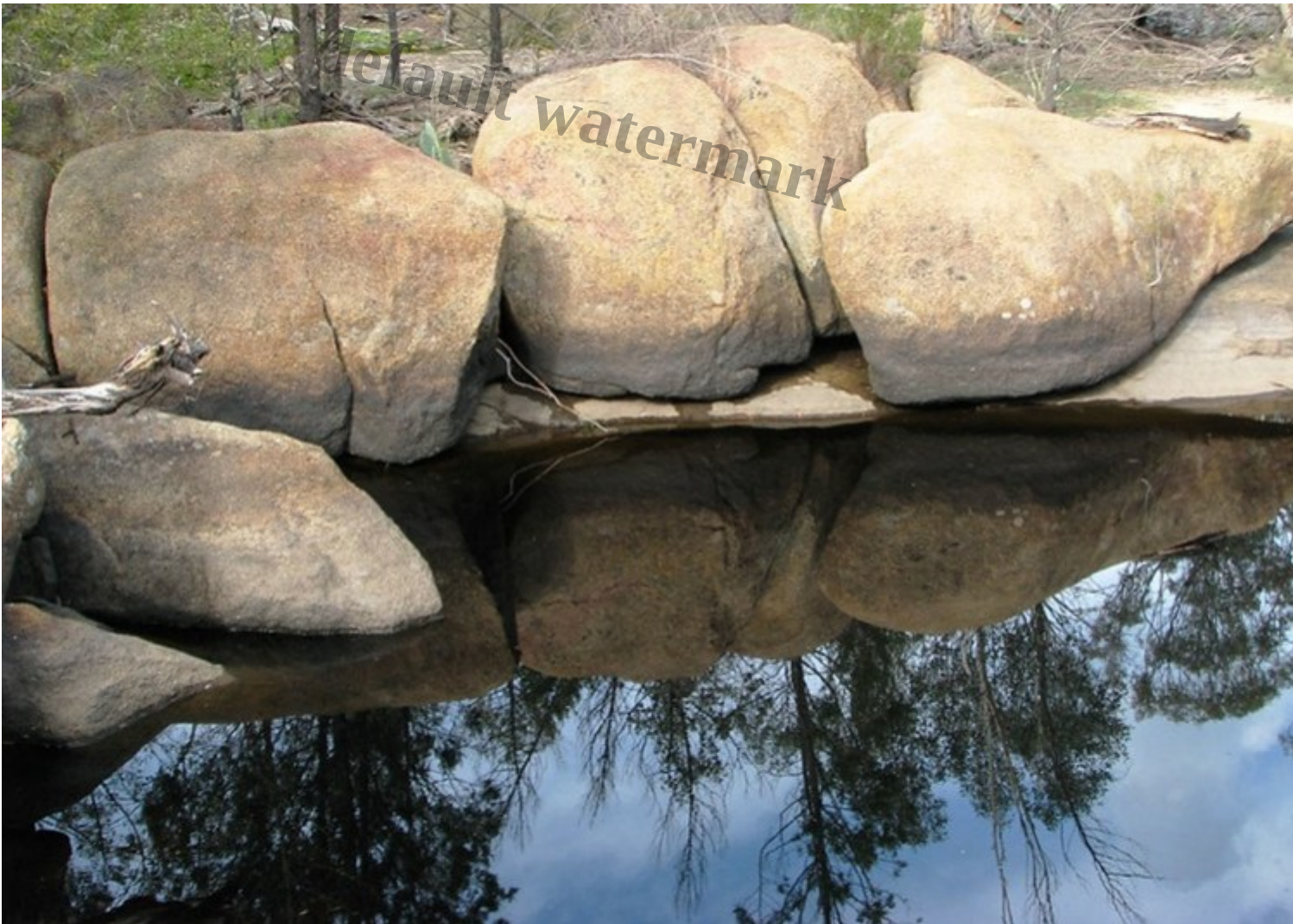
All is ready and the Regent Honeyeater cake photos: Neville Bartlett

This is another example of the co-operation between several groups with an interest in revegetation, conservation and sustainability.

Around the Park

Sightings of Regent Honeyeaters continue but confirmation is difficult because of the scattered nature of the eucalypt flowering. The last week or so has seen more eucalypts come into flower at the low-moderate level compared with earlier years. Sightings of lots of Red Wattlebirds, Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters and small honeyeaters along with Little Lorikeets confirm that flowering is in progress. Gang-gang Cockatoos have been regularly sighted this season.

Mick Webster conducted a bushwalking club walk in the Clear Falls area and recorded these shots.





Clear Creek Falls â?? photos: Mick Webster



Yellow-footed Antechinus (*Antechinus flavipes*) have been frequently observed rummaging around on the ground in the Ballarat Road, White Box Walk, Pooley's Track area. These endearing little animals delight all of those who get a chance to observe them.



The Ghost Fungus (*Omphalotus nidiformis*) is making an appearance again with lots of visitors braving the cold nights in an effort get photos of this amazing fungus. On one night there were visitors from Albury/Wodonga, Wangaratta and Bendigo present.

Ranger's Report

Our grading and culvert cleaning programs in the park have been completed. We have employed a couple of project fire fighters for another month to help with park maintenance projects including roading and signage installation.

Around the park there is a little bit of ironbark flowering but unfortunately bird numbers are very low but there are still lots of people visiting and enjoying the park.

We are still encouraging Friends to register on Park Connect to assist in planning and recording of group activities.

Rainfall For May: 105mm. Year to date: 192mm.

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