

Newsletter 325 March 2023

Description

FRIENDS OF CHILTERN MT-PILOT NATIONAL PARK, Inc.

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March field day at the Grasslands Block

The attendees divided into groups that focussed on different parts of the block. One group visited the revegetation area in the North-eastern corner and weeded parts of the section near the two dams and removed tree guards that were no longer protecting plants. A second group explored the southern area of the block looking for Bathurst Burr (*Xanthium spinosum*) and Sweet Briar (*Rosa rubiginosa*). Fortunately there were very few Bathurst Burr but many Sweet Briar were removed. A small group monitored the mammal nest boxes that are located on the block.



A Sweet Briar (*Rosa rubiginosa*) being removed Photo: Neville Bartlett



The Southern section of the Grasslands Block is becoming wonderful example of successful re-vegetation. Some of the Acacias have perished due to the recent wet conditions but other sections are flourishing.



Flourishing re-vegetation. Photos: Neville Bartlett



[View a video taken in August 2018 of the Grasslands planting event](#)

Fungi workshops organised by Wooragee Landcare â?? May 20th and 21st 2023

The Friends group is providing financial support for a series of fungi workshops organised by Wooragee Landcare. These workshops are being conducted by Alison Pouliot, a renowned fungi expert on Saturday 20th May (fungus ID and survey around Wooragee/Chiltern area) and Sunday 21st May 2023 (slow mushrooming and identifying edible fungi).

Alisonâ??s latest book **â??Underground Loversâ?•** will be launched at Wooragee on Friday 19th May 2023 (see link below).

When registering for the workshops on the Saturday or Sunday, Friends members should click yes to Landcare Membership (\$20) as this price is not just for Wooragee Landcare members.

Saturday 20th May 2023: Fungus ID and survey around Wooragee/Chiltern area

<https://events.humanitix.com/slow-mushrooming-identifying-fungi-and-survey-techniques>

Sunday 21st May 2023: Slow mushrooming and identifying edible fungi

<https://events.humanitix.com/slow-mushrooming-identifying-edible-mushrooms-maiahskx>

Friday 19th May 2023: the launch of Alison's latest book - free event

<https://events.humanitix.com/book-launch-alison-pouliots-latest-book>

Cunningham's Skink (Egernia cunninghami) - March image in the 2023 calendar

Source: <https://australian.museum/learn/animals/reptiles/cunninghams-skink/> Introduction

The Cunningham's Skink (Egernia cunninghami) is a sun-loving variety of spiny-tailed skink. The species is named in honour of Alan Cunningham; explorer and botanist, who collected the first specimen in the Blue Mountains.

Identification

This large skink has a long tail with keeled scales along its dorsal surface from the back of the neck down to the tip of the pointed tail. The legs are quite short, requiring the lizard to slide on its belly when it moves around. Its colour can vary from dark brown and reddish to a jet black with distinctive with scattered patches of paler scales.

Habitat

Forests and woodlands with rock outcrops. The species occurs within forests and open woodland which feature rock outcrops. Groups of Cunningham's Skinks bask on top of rocks and will scurry in between rock ledges to shelter.

Feeding and diet

These omnivorous lizards feed on a variety of invertebrates such as insects, snails and slugs as well as vegetation such as fruit and leaves.

Other behaviours and adaptations

Like other spiny species of the Egernia genus, Cunningham's Skinks live in large social groups makes it easier to spot danger. When threatened this lizard will take cover in a hollow log, under bark or between rocks. If harassed further it will inhale air, making its body swell up - this increased size, combined with the spiky keeled scales, makes it difficult for a predator to dislodge the lizard from its hiding place.

Life history cycle

This species is viviparous with females producing litters of live young.

Breeding behaviours

This species is highly monogamous with most males fathering only one litter. Despite remaining within the same range and not often dispersing, genetic studies have shown that Cunningham Skinks can identify close relatives and always choose unrelated partners. Litter size ranges from 1-11 young.



Cunningham's Skink (Egernia cunninghami) family Photo: Jan Palmer

Ranger's Report - Brian Pritchard

As is usual in March visitor numbers have dropped off a bit but prospecting numbers in Reedy Creek continue to increase. Rangers have been working to ensure compliance with regulations in this area.

We are still awaiting funding to manage flood damaged roads in the park so access is still restricted in some areas. Pig trapping is ongoing and we are noticing a decline in numbers being recorded.

Planned burning has been impacted by weather and at this stage we are unsure when burns may be programmed.

With the onset of winter, illegal firewood removal is an issue statewide and threatens wildlife habitat and biodiversity. Parks Victoria are working with other government agencies to educate as well as enforce regulations. Penalties may include on the spot fines of \$740 and up to maximum penalties over \$9000 or one year's jail. Vehicles and equipment used for firewood theft can also be seized. Illegal activities can be reported by ringing 13 19 63 or email info@parks.vic.gov.au.

Rangers are also continuing to work with our volunteer groups to ensure that Parks Victoria's obligations and expectations are being met.

Working With Children Check and ParkConnect Update - Neville Bartlett

The new arrangements have been in place for some time now and it worthwhile to provide an update on what it means for Friends' activities.

It is a Parks Victoria (PV) requirement that all volunteers carrying out management activities on PV managed parks and reserves must satisfy the following:

1. Apply for and receive a successful Victorian Working With Children Check.

Go to: <https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/> This is best carried out by taking photo ID to a local Post Office [The people at Chiltern Post Office are very proficient at setting up an application]. You will receive an email soon after lodging an application and your card will arrive in about three weeks.

2. Register with ParkConnect

Go to: <https://www.parkconnect.vic.gov.au/Account/Login/Register> You will need a different email address for each person.

3. Once you have carried out steps 1 and 2 and have received your WWCC card, then you should upload an image/photo of your card into ParkConnect.

If you are an existing WWCC but have NOT nominated Parks Victoria as an organisation that you volunteer with, this needs to be updated on your current WWCC.

If you have any difficulties with any of this, you will need to contact us or seek assistance from Parks Victoria.

It is also useful to [link](#) your ParkConnect account to the Friends of Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park via a search in ParkConnect (a search for [chiltern](#) should be sufficient to find us) and clicking on [Join](#). This step facilitates reporting of our activities (see later).

None of the steps above have any financial cost associated with them.

What does this mean for Friends?

A. Any activity that involves weeding, revegetation, mammal nest box maintenance/monitoring, soil or vegetation disturbance within a PV managed park or reserve must have a specific activity setup in ParkConnect and approved well beforehand. A way to manage ad hoc work during any month is being developed. Activities such as flora walks, bird walks and gatherings (e.g. Christmas gathering) do not require setting up an activity on ParkConnect as these activities are consistent with members of the general public enjoying the use of the park without disturbing the environment. Activities on February 5, 16 and March 4 this year have met this requirement.

B. Each year Friends and Parks Victoria set up an annual activity plan that lays out what sorts of activities are planned for the year. Approval of this plan does not entitle members of Friends to go into the park and carry out these activities without completing step A above. While such activity seems to be practical it is technically illegal. Anyone publicly reporting or advocating such illegal activities (on social media for example) run the risk of PV de-registering them from ParkConnect. That would leave them eligible to only attend flora walks, bird walks and end-of-year gatherings.

C. Policing of these requirements is a PV responsibility and not a Friends' responsibility. We record the names of all who attend our field days and activities and this information is entered into ParkConnect for the associated activity.

D. Anyone who is clearly new to Friends, or attends for the first time, needs to fill out a one page form of very basic information. The form is available from the Friends' secretary (currently, Tony Murnane).

E. In reporting attendance at approved events, Friends check off individuals who have setup the link (or joined) our group on ParkConnect. Anyone who is not visible in our group within ParkConnect gets listed individually in an [Other attendee](#) category. This category is managed by PV.

F. People attending our activities are welcome and do not need to be financial members of the group. Members who do not attend our field days and related activities are not required to meet the WWCC requirements above.

An overall summary of responsibilities is given in the FAQ section regarding volunteering on the Parks Victoria website.

[A volunteer group leader's](#) responsibility is to communicate the requirements, with the onus for compliance coming back to each volunteer. There is also a requirement for Parks Victoria to have sufficient processes in place to ensure that we are aligning to all relevant legislation and standards.

Recently, Friends have sent a letter to the new Victorian Minister for Environment expressing our concerns about insurance arrangements but we believe that a reply is quite some time off yet.

Rainfall February 2023:

7 mm â?? the driest February since 2009. Total for the year 2023: 134 mm. The corresponding total until the end of February 2022 was 279 mm. The average annual rainfall for Chiltern is 689 mm. Data supplied by Mick Webster.

NEXT MEETING â?? SUNDAY 2nd APRIL 2023

Activities will include conducting an audit of the interpretive signage along the White Box Walk. The Friends group assisted with the installation of the existing signage but the signs are becoming faded and may now be out of date. We are planning to update and improve the signage on this walk.

Meet at the Chiltern Post Office at 9:00am.

Dates for 2023

Sunday 2nd April, Saturday 6th May, Sunday 4th June, Saturday 1st July, Sunday 6th August, Saturday 2nd September, Sunday 1st October, Saturday 4th November and Sunday 3rd December 2023.

Rule of Thumb: For even months, the field day is held on the first Sunday of the month and for odd months, it is held on the first Saturday of the month.

Category

1. Newsletters

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