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NEWS



LETTER

ISSUE 19 for JUNE 2003.

Contact Bill with items for inclusion at gempark@netspace.net.au or send to PO Box 91 Emerald before 24th of each month. View them on [our web site!](#)

EDITORIAL.

On the first of the month I was invited to join the Friends of Wright Forest with Graeme Beale on their bird spotting - banding project. The project aims to determine the response of the bird population to fire control measures. In the five years Nov 1997 to Nov 2002 a total of 1441 birds of 47 species were banded. Some unusual ones being, the Painted Button Quail, Red-Browed Treecreeper, Large-billed Scrubwren and an Olive Whistler. Determination of such aspects as population species and age, movements of species after burn offs and seasonal changes in population for different parts of the forest.

The tour was most interesting, Graeme's helpers had caught two Brown Thornbills in the mist nets along the Wattle - Cockatoo creek when we arrived. These were banded and released after we all had a sticky beak. Brown Thornbills are a fairly common species but cute little guys, all brown with a fan tail having a black band across its broader width. Expertly handled these little birds seemed fearless but quickly took flight when released. Later I left the group on the trail seeking to spot a Powerful Owl known to inhabit Wright forest, so I'm not sure of their success.

POWERFUL OWL SPOTTED

Some months ago Lisa (with Oscar) reported that she heard a powerful owl in the western arboretum part of Emerald Lake Park. A resident of this species was confirmed by others this month when it was spotted in the same area. Parks officer Jamie Simpson promptly reported this to NRE and an Officer, Edward G. McNabb Dept of Sustainability (DSE) came and managed to photograph the bird. He kindly allowed us to include it below.



Photo by Edward G McNabb of DSE.

The Powerful Owl *Ninox strenua* (Gould), belongs to the family Strigidae (or Hawk owls) which are characterised by bright-yellow, large, forward-directed eyes. It is the largest owl found in

Australia, with an overall head-tail length of 60-65cm. The male is larger than the female. Adults are mottled dark grey-brown above and white below with bold grey-brown chevrons (chest barrings); legs are feathered to the tarsus (shins), with dull yellow feet. Immature birds (owlets) are whiter, having paler back and wings, a whiter face with dark eye-patches and sparse fine dark streaks and faint barring on the flanks. The Powerful Owl has a characteristic double-note 'whooooo-hooooo', occasionally only a single 'whoooo', which is used to signal territory, identify its position and to maintain contact with its mate. For a full description refer to Schodde & Mason (1980) and Hollands (1991).

ENTRY PATH REVISITED

No doubt one of the most successful yet overlooked infrastructure addition to the park in recent times is the friends "Murals entry path". This all weather path was conceived, designed and built by the friends with the help of a grant from Cardinia Shires's Capital works budget and sponsors. The project was strongly supported by the old Ranges ward Councillors Graeme Legge and David Nickel. Works began and were completed on schedule in spite of a bad weather and a budget overrun absorbed by the Shire.

The path is in constant use year round by walkers, mums with pushers students on their way to and from school and visiting groups using public transport on the Belgrave Gembrook route. Access via Royal Parade is easy for Avonsleigh residents and the nearby Emerald high school, the bus stops at Royal Parade about 200 meters from the path entrance. The sealed path is always dry, the slightly crowned surface sheds and eliminates water accumulation, runoff and erosion. Free entry of park visitors on foot is facilitated and encouraged, all indirectly contributing to the economical use and upkeep of the park. Visitors are also encouraged to join the friends to help in planning similar projects and other activities aimed at preserving and enhancing our park.



WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE PARK

The Girls are back

Danielle and Naomie are back for a short stint while Richard

takes a break from park duties. There's always plenty to do and someone is always on duty in our park. You will find either Danielle or Naomie up and about for a little while on the corresponding roster days.

More New Signs.

On entry to the park a new sign announces and directs visitors to the two car parks. This robust sign is large and clear and uncluttered, just what the doctor ordered. (some time back)

Front Gate Repaired

Vandals finally took advantage of the weakened front gate hinge and flattened it to the ground. This has now been repaired and is quite solid again.

Lake Restocked with Trout

Five hundred 250gram Rainbow Trout were put in the lake about mid month. These plate sized fish soon attracted the fishermen and schoolies who have been catching them by the bucket full. The limit is five each per day lads so toss back any extras please. We welcome family fishing groups to try their luck at this popular sport. Next months news will contain a surprise announcement that will benefit our fishermen soon.

Tree Planting and Trimming.

Lots of tree trimming and planting has been going on in June. Our parks officers have been busy, some new trees obtained through our parks officers own contacts in the industry, include several Cherrys along the north lake bank to replace one lost and complement the existing old cherry stock. Others of various species have been planted around the park. Trimming continues with some rather difficult shaping required on the odd sprawling ornamental. Thanks to Brian his crew and park Officers for all the above and other improvements!

Spanish Heath removal

The friends helped out too, with removal of much Spanish Heath that threatens some areas. Work along the creek has been suspended for the time being due to the difficulty of removing debris across the wet and slippery slopes.

WINTERFEST 2003

We look forward to Winterfest 2003 with great anticipation as the Friends display will be protected by a Marquee to be shared by several others. The Park is also to be featured on the Cardinia Shire display located in the Marquee as well.



The Friends at Last years Winterfest, just before the rain.

TALK ABOUT DIGGING

An old Arab man lived alone in Idaho. He wanted to spade his potato garden, but it was very hard work. His only son, Abdul, who used to help him, was being held by the FBI for aiding and abetting terrorists. So the old man wrote a letter to his son.

Dear Abdul,

I am feeling pretty bad because it looks like I won't be able to plant my potato garden this year. I'm just getting too old to be digging. If you were here, I know you would dig the plot for me.

Your Dad,
Mohammad.

A few days later he received a letter from his son.

Dear Dad,

For heaven's sake, don't dig up that garden, that's where I buried the biological weapons.

Love,
Abdul.

At 4a.m. the next morning, F.B.I. agents and local police showed up and dug up the entire area without finding any weapons. They apologized to the old man and left. That same day the old man received another letter from his son.

Dear Dad,

Go ahead and plant the potatoes now. That's the best I could do under the circumstances.

Love,
Abdul.

PARK PLANTING DAY

A brilliant suggestion by PO Jamie was for the Friends to organise a fun day where we invite members of the public to join us for a day of planting at the park. This would get plenty of work done as well as help us recruit new members and create interest in the park. Look out for this in early Spring.

WORKING BEES 2003.

For June, again a good result for the working bees. Thanks to, Peggy Stonehouse, Carl Nagel, Leo Stauber and Liam, Kevin Teasdale, Sheila Hampson, and Heather and Bill Whitbourn for a total of 34.75 working hours, another great effort. This brings us to a grand total of 326.5 hours for the year ending in June.



Currently we are continuing with the Spanish Heath removal. Also some planting assistance to the parks winter works program is planned. Tools required are saws, secateurs, Gloves Spades, buckets and rakes.

WORKING BEE DATES - 2hours only.

<p>July. Saturday 5th. 9.00am Sunday 13th. 9.00am Thursday 17th. 1.30pm</p>	<p>October. Saturday 4th. 9.00am Sunday 12th. 9.00am Thursday 16th. 1.30pm</p>
<p>August. Saturday 2nd. 9.00am Sunday 10th. 9.00am Thursday 21st. 1.30pm</p>	<p>November. Saturday 1st. 9.00am Sunday 9th. 9.00am Thursday 20th. 1.30pm</p>
<p>September. 2003 Saturday 6th. 9.00am Sunday 14th. 9.00am Thursday 18th. 1.30pm</p>	

THE NEXT FELP MEETING.

The next FELP meeting, will be held on Sunday 13th July at 11.15am in the Environment Center after the Working Bee.