



From the President

A serious thought came to mind, as it probably has to others also, that the volunteer age demographic is heading north at an alarming rate. I met a lady the other day who said she was dragging 70, not pushing it, which I thought was an amusing way to put it.

A rough total age estimate of the FOD weeding team is in the vicinity of 500 years, and if we each manage to get in another 10 years scrub-bashing we'll be doing well. What bothers me is that without receiving grant money and some younger blood all our years' toil will be for naught with the passage of time because the bush will succumb to weed infestation again.

It's all very well for DELWP to propose and announce new national parks and reserves but I don't see any of them actually doing any meaningful hard labour in the field. Perhaps if some of them ventured forth from their offices and saw what lay before a struggling Parks Vic and their volunteer teams help might be forthcoming, though I wouldn't hold my breath. Parks/reserves of all persuasions don't maintain themselves.

If all volunteers, in all walks, not just environmental, were to walk off the job the country would come to its knees. I suppose volunteers can be compared with Atlas the Greek Titan who carried the world on his back, not that he voluntarily did so.

I did a bit of fossicking through the FOD sign-in sheets 2018-2021 to determine the hours worked: 2018 – 64.5hrs; 2019 – 47hrs; 2020 – 22hrs (lockdown related); 2021 – 62hrs. The team has done well this year and may well put in some more time before the year's end. I don't know what happened in 2019 with only 47 hours recorded. Imagine how many accumulated hours there are over the past 10 or more years, and who could work out the dollar value. And that's just our mob!

Thirty-three cheers for volunteers everywhere, you are wonderful!

A proposed 15th year celebratory bash, which was to include the AGM, was considered for October. However, with the uncertainty of the times the AGM will be held by Zoom. Unless a miracle occurs, the celebratory gathering will be held over, and it is hoped we will be able to muster the original participants in the formation of the Devilbend Foundation Inc. and chat about the saving of this unique place. I remember the land sale proposed for Devilbend Reservoir and was a trifle shocked to say the least. I was a tad more limber in those days and on one occasion I climbed under the fence with my camera for a photo shoot before all was lost. And I was totally unaware of the conservation movement to save it all. Good works done all round I'd say: no housing estate with water-front views!

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2020-2021 DFI Council:

Marnie Fitzsimons (President & FOD Co-ordinator), Jill McIver (Secretary), Sue Milton (Treasurer), Jamie Edgerton, Liz Sarrailhe Michael Mann, Annabel Richards.

The following 2020-2021 member groups are represented on Committee:

Birdlife Australia; Friends of Kangerong Flora Reserve; Mornington Environment Assn.; Peninsula Field Naturalists Club; MP Ratepayers & Residents Assn; Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora & Fauna Assn; Westernport & Peninsula Protection Council, BERG

To join the Friends of Daangean (FOD), contact Marnie Fitzsimons at devilbendfoundation@gmail.com

EDITORS NOTE

I've been spending a lot of time playing around with iNaturalist and the MP Shire's September Bioblitz. At this stage, and working on it, I've submitted 224 images, some of which have reached Research Grade, although none of them is rare. There's an observations ladder on which I've been successively 163rd, 7th and 24th and steady (unless I don my skates before the end of the month). Many

During and post lockdowns, a massive number of people have discovered our precious place. At times the car parks are full and vehicles overflow along both sides of Graydens Rd.

Marnie Fitzsimons
President

images submitted are first class; however, mine don't fall into this category.

Marnie Fitzsimons

FOUNDATION NEWS

FRIENDS of DAANGEAN (FOD)

June 26th a team of 11 ventured forth, with three being youthful - but there's strength in numbers as the saying goes. And we did get a good lot done, mostly due to Jack and his vigorous pitto assault. Good man! Jamie's back was crook and as Julie had a cold she and he stuck together away from everyone. She assured us she didn't have the plague as she'd been tested with a negative result. Jamie was off the hook as boss for May as another lockdown fell upon all.



July weeding team - MF

July 31st saw our team numbers greatly reduced - to four. Jack had said he'd be away, and he was greatly missed, though we did a good job in his absence. Julie's chocolate brownies were a welcome treat when we finished.

The coral fungi present in June were absent in July. The nodding



Pitto wall - MF

Jamie re-found the turtle shell discovered in April, though in a different place this time with a lot more of the original resident eaten. Throughout the bush there were a lot of fallen limbs due to previous days of heavy wind. Jack went ahead to clear the vehicle track of debris, but we would've been stymied had a sizeable tree had been across the track. On the forest floor yellow and red coral fungi were about in abundance: the red ones looking like small flames. Olearia seedlings were pushing their way forth, as were myriad pitto seedlings. Love Creeper twined its way up gahnia, pittos and anything else to support its climb. In some of the cleared spaces sweet sundews emerged.

The weather was fine and sunny, although at first the vegetation was wet from earlier rain.



Tools of the trade - MF

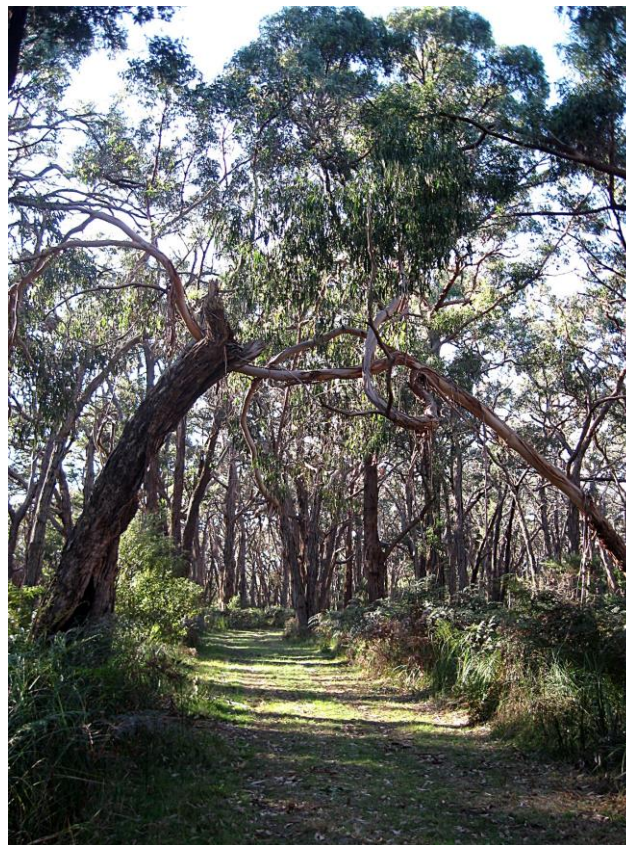
greenhoods were nearly finished, and the tall tongue orchid leaves were poking through. It will be interesting to see if the latter flower this year, that's if we get back to look for them.

The last Saturday in July is usually a combined planting day, but for a second year didn't happen due to plague lockdown. Likewise, August was to be the community weeding day on Daangean Point where boneseed is the targeted species, with willow wattle included. And so another year passes by for the woody weeds to expand throughout the bush.

The DELWP grant we applied for to finish off the Woodland Break block, where we've laboured for years, was unsuccessful. I don't think they even gave us a token amount for our efforts. Sam from PV, Jill and I toiled over the thing for weeks. Later, Andrew came on board and as we couldn't meet inside we sat, suitably distanced, outside the front door of the PV office. Sam, Jill and I took ourselves to a local eatery for coffee whilst we did our office work.

I was in NSW with a friend when Lockdown 5 happened, but as we were heading to Broken Hill, Menindee and Mungo I just hoped that after the seven days all would be well. The Menindee Lakes were filling after being dry for five years, and they were interesting to see. They attracted visitors from across the country: human, avian and piscine. Our Mungo visit didn't happen as there were thunderstorms and all the unsealed roads were closed (heavy fines apply). On day eight regional Victoria's restrictions eased so we crossed the Abbotsford Bridge over the river near Wentworth and high tailed it for home.

Marnie Fitzsimons



Archway over the track - MF

VOLUNTEER WATER-QUALITY SURVEYING

Waterwatch Report

The waterwatch team managed to carry out their monitoring and testing duties at Devilbend and Bittern reservoirs in June between Covid lockdowns. The water was very clear, and after the testing it fell into the 'very good' range as per the Melbourne Water guidelines. A large population of water bugs was visible moving around near the water's edge. The water level was at the same depth this year as it was last year, despite having lower rainfall. Last year at this time there was a total rainfall of 571.4 mm, compared to 402.2mm this year (data from the weather station at HMAS Cerberus). This was a huge difference, but the summer was very mild with only a few mid to high 30 C days: and



Full catch drain at Bittern - GW



Catch drain at Devilbend - GW

therefore evaporation was lower. As water levels hadn't fallen to previous lows, less rain was required to maintain them.

Some decent rain events over autumn had the catch drains flowing fast and full (as per attached photos), but little of that water makes its way into the reservoirs. Bittern's catch drain water ends up going over the overflow into the lower levels of Devilbend Creek, with a percentage flowing through the diversion pipe and into the bush on the other side, creating a wetland opposite to where the creek comes out of the scrub.

Hopefully we can eventually get free of lockdown and have our third macroinvertebrates monitoring day to see how it compares to the last one.

Stay safe and well.

Graham White

You would think that having so few days at Devilbend this year you remember each one clearly, but not so it seems. I took some notes, very handy as a reference.

Annabel was absent in June due to a sore leg, however the rest of the team was hale and hearty. Large numbers of coots were observed on Devilbend, and although fewer were on Bittern there were still lots of them. At Devilbend rain threatened, so once we collected the samples we did the testing at one of the covered picnic tables. The gate to Site 1, Devilbend, had been damaged again, which made access to the lock difficult. Two white-faced herons at the Bittern picnic ground took off when we went through the gate. A pied cormorant and an egret on the catch drain's bridge railings flew away when we arrived on the scene. Michael collected water from the catch drain in the vicinity of Devilbend Ck, and this time the turbidity was less than usual, more than likely due to the higher water level.



Graham & Michael in deep discussion - MF

A cold wind came up towards the finish of our work, and with a black sky in the distance we departed unaware we wouldn't be returning for some time.

There was surprisingly little rubbish around considering the numbers of visitors, however there was graffiti inside and outside the toilets. Tuerong and Graydens roads were very potholed.

Marnie Fitzsimons

Macroinvertebrate Survey

What began with great enthusiasm, but the macroinvertebrate surveys have come to a grinding halt: it's not necessary to explain why. We live in hope that we might be able to participate before the end of spring. If not, then there's no law, apart from the current obvious, to say we can't venture forth and survey in summer. Fingers crossed!

Marnie Fitzsimons

BIRD MONITORING REPORT



Freckled Duck - MM



Darter - MM

On the Devilbend monthly bird count I was walking around the back of the Wetlands on the East side of Loders Track when I saw a movement in the vegetation.



Latham's Snipe - MM

I must have taken a photo at the time as when I was home enlarging the photos I saw a bird's head that turned out to be a Latham's Snipe.



White-bellied Sea Eagle - MM

Michael Mann

Devilbend Reserve and Bird Monitoring During Covid 19 Restrictions and into the Future

Since March 2020 we have experienced over 200 days of lockdown on the Mornington Peninsula, which is hampering important bird and monitoring field work. Also, for the past 20 years the changing faces of land managers and the aging of volunteers have led to certain difficulties.

Our local knowledge of native species habitat needs depends on ongoing scientific research studies, systematic long-term monitoring,

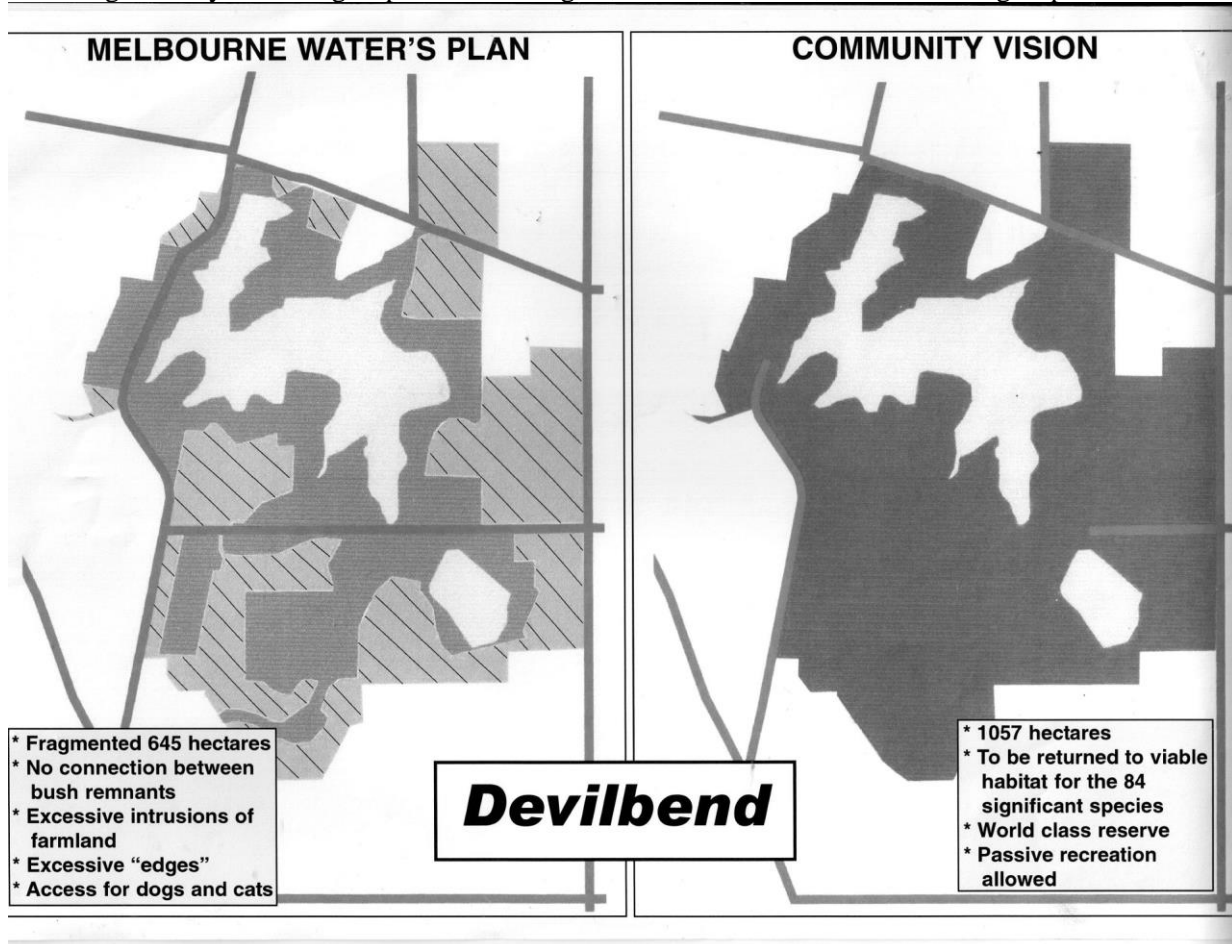


Grey Butcherbird - MM

and adaptive management by sequential land managers and private freehold owners through generations into the future. This is so important as the ambient temperature of the planet rises and the population of the Mornington Peninsula expands.

Short term thinking, involving knee-jerk solutions where grants are given for one-off projects, may have some social feel-good benefits for the participants, but in the space of a few short years, the great work of committed volunteers can be quickly undone. A number of fine reports, robustly applying the principles of scientific method and statistical analysis may be published at time of occurrence. However, historical data and conclusions are frequently forgotten or

ignored by the next group of land managers, freehold owners, and volunteer groups alike.



Since the year 2000, when the conservation issues really came to the fore at Devilbend, there have been significant changes of land management agencies and volunteer group personnel. Reservoir manager, Melbourne Water's *Devilbend Draft Master Plan* of June 2002 is vastly different from new manager, Parks Victoria's *Devilbend Natural Features Reserve Management Plan* of May 2010, partly because of the magnificent input by many Devilbend Foundation members who were able to support their recommendations with field observation records backed up by scientific reports. Also, there was a competent flora and fauna assessment (see Refs 1 and 2)

The systematic monthly bird monitoring of both Devilbend Key Biodiversity Area and Woods Reserve started in May 2004. The annual nesting of the majestic White-bellied Sea-Eagle became the iconic emblem pictured on the front of the Devilbend Reserve Management Plan, and features on the Devilbend Foundation logo. In 2012 a group of TAFE bird monitoring students witnessed at close hand the spectacle of a swooping Sea-Eagle catching a fish.

The presence of large numbers of endangered Blue-billed Duck has also been significant in enabling the classification of Devilbend Reservoir, firstly as an IBA (Important Bird Area) and more recently as a KBA (Key Biodiversity Area). This is important recognition internationally.

Two influential reports (see Refs 3 and 4) by the Arthur Rylah Institute relied on the Devilbend bird monitoring records backed up by photographs to verify and highlight recommendations. The fishing lobby, with money and influence, were determined to have Devilbend as a trout fishing destination by both boat and from the shore. The restriction of canoe-fishing to a particular zone and the prohibition of powered vessels were both due to the fact that consistent monthly monitoring observations had been carried out over a lengthy period.

Adaptive management has also played its part. An example is the fencing of the wetland dam north of Hodgins Road when bird monitors reported cattle encroachment was pugging up sections and trampling reed habitat. This dam is home to occasional nesting Swamp Harriers, Darters and Latham's Snipe. It is an ongoing refuge for Reed Warblers, Purple Swamp Hens, and almost certainly crakes and rails.

The consistent monthly reporting has enabled records of short-term visitors such as Red-kneed Dotterels, Freckled Ducks, Cape Barren Geese, Red-necked Avocets, Green Shanks and Glossy Ibis. Unfortunately, Covid lockdowns have meant that we have unwanted time gaps in the surveys. Not only do we miss birds that are present, but analysis of the records becomes more difficult.

In summary, fauna and habitat monitoring can lead to good long-term conservation outcomes despite changing management and volunteer personnel, changing climatic conditions and spasmodic money availability. High COVID

19 vaccination numbers and sensible people behaviour leading to minimal lockdowns are needed to enable essential ongoing monthly fieldwork.

References

1. Richards, R. (2007) *Devilbend Reservoir and Woods Reserve Birds Species Report Numbers and Movement - May 2004 to September 2007* DFI
2. McCaffrey, N., Walker, G. et al (2008) *Flora and Fauna Assessment and Recommendation Report Devilbend Reserve (Daangean)*, prepared for PV by Practical Ecology
3. Stamation, K. and Loyn, R. (2009) *Impact of recreational access and stocking with fish on waterbirds and shorebirds – Devilbend Reserve*. Unpublished client report, Arthur Rylah Institute
4. Stamation, K., Maloney, P and Menkhorst, P. (2016) *Flight initiation distances of Blue-billed Duck in response to non-motorised watercraft at Devilbend Reservoir*, Tech Report 268 Arthur Rylah Institute

29 August 2021

Roger Richards, for the Devilbend and Woods Reserves Bird Monitors



Galah at its nest hole- MM

PARKS VIC NEWS

Devilbend Update

Like everything at the moment, the work that Parks Victoria does has been greatly impacted by the Covid -19 pandemic.

Local Parks Victoria staff have largely been focusing on the essential maintenance work needed to keep parks and reserves in a safe and clean condition. There have been an unusually large number of visitors using them during the lockdown periods.

Unfortunately, some Friends Group activities have been cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but hopefully these will resume once restrictions have eased.

This is some of the work that has happened in Devilbend Reserve over the past few months:

- SEEDS Bushland Crew commenced woody weed removal in the Woodlands block thanks to a Peri-urban Weed Management Partnerships grant. The goal is to remove as much Sweet Pittosporum and Gorse as possible with the allocated budget. SEEDS will put a big dent in the block that will complement the wonderful work that DFI's Friends of Daangean has been doing.
- The Peri-urban Weed Management Partnerships program is a Victorian Government initiative. It aims to protect areas of conservation value around Melbourne's urban fringe. On the Mornington Peninsula there are similar projects occurring at Arthur's Seat and in Mornington Peninsula National Park.
- The Crew at Daangaen have been undertaking habitat restoration works along the shoreline on the other side of Devilbend. Some weeding and planting days have been undertaken to improve the habitat for the long-necked turtles. The Crew have also commenced another citizen science project to monitor the Southern Toadlet. They have the assistance of Melbourne Water's frog expert, James Frazer. If you are a frog enthusiast, you can find more information here:

<https://www.melbournewater.com.au/water-data-and-education/get-involved/be-citizen-scientist/frog-census>

You may have also noticed the new mural on one of the old water tanks that has been beautifully painted by Maxine.



Maxine at work - Manda (PV)

Andrew Johnson

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BIOLINKS UPDATE

PLANTING BEES CONTINUE ON GREENS BUSH TO ARTHURS SEAT (GB2AS) BIOLINK

Since the last newsletter, two planting events have occurred on private properties in the Main Creek catchment. These plantings have advanced the GB2AS biolink. On both occasions, Main Creek Landcare Group members and friends were fabulous, working very efficiently. We were very fortunate that the sun shone on the activities and, as luck would have it, we were able to dodge Covid 19 lock downs.

At the first planting bee, the hosting landholder welcomed volunteers with a warming cup of chai. After a planting demonstration by Chantal (Landcare Facilitator for the Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network), work was underway. Within just two hours all 200 plants were in the ground.



It was great to see Landcare supporting the fight against Motor Neurone Disease. It was also pleasing to see young Landcarers in action and cooperating to "get that hole dug" in very firm soil. Two boys on a Hamilton planter are always better than one!



And it was fantastic to see the diverse range of plants being used. A wide variety of appropriate indigenous shrubs were planted, as well as upper-storey trees.

For the second planting bee, acting on a suggestion of the Red Hill Lions (we believe Lyn Connor initiated this excellent idea) to celebrate National Tree Day, August 1st, a joint tree-planting event was held. This event took place on a private property just around the corner from the first, and further extended the GB2AS biolink.



On this occasion numbers were limited by Covid restrictions. Nevertheless, this small team (plus dog, who helped speed up the process by eating one plant) planted all the diverse indigenous trees and shrubs with alacrity. The mix included eucalypts, paperbarks, wattles, pea flowers, daisy bushes, dogwoods, currant bushes, austral indigos and wattles.



These plantings will:

- aid sequestration of carbon,
- provide valuable habitat for indigenous fauna,
- help to manage the effects of climate change by moderating local temperatures and the effect of strong winds,
- help to improve the water quality in our creeks, and
- help to retain the beautiful, healthy environment of our Peninsula.

It was lovely to see parents teaching the next generation about the need to protect the environment and, importantly, showing them practical activities to enhance the environment. Many thanks to the landholders who generously allocated their land to these biolinks. Also, thanks to Chantal Morton, Red Hill Lions and to Tom Orr, Greg Holland and Adam Hill, and all the Landcarers and friends who planted in excess of 600 plants. Main Creek Landcare group is extremely appreciative of your support.



All images Adie Smith

Story adapted with permission by author Adie Smith, Main Creek Catchment Landcare Group.

For more information, contact Project Coordinator *Chantal Morton*: chantal.morton@mornpen.vic.gov.au

TURTLES

The Daangean Turtle Project is a broad citizen-science community project that DFI / FOD supports. We encourage others to become involved: it provides a fantastic opportunity to make a real impact on turtle habitat and protection. For more information on how to be involved, contact the Daangean Turtle Project coordinator Hansi Wegner at thecrewatdaangean@gmail.com, or devilbendfoundation@gmail.com and we will be happy to pass on your details.

OPINIONS & OTHER COMMENTS CORNER

Disclaimer: The views expressed in here do not necessarily reflect those of the editor or DFI

A LIVE BIRD SHOOT

During the 1950s an uncle and aunt of mine had a pub at St James in northern Victoria. One Summer I went up there for a holiday. The first Saturday that I was there my uncle took me out to a live bird shoot that was to be held on private property not far from St James. When we arrived there was quite a crowd: shooters from near and far, family groups, and a ladies auxiliary who set up to provide afternoon tea. There was even a bookie on hand ready to take bets on the prowess, or lack of it, of the shooters. I wasn't aware that live bird shooting was a popular so-called sport in the country at that time, especially in northern Victoria.

The shooting ground was marked out with a fence and inside there was a spot designated for the shooter. About the length of a cricket pitch in front of the shooter there were three traps, one directly in front, one angled off to the left and one to the right. These traps held the live birds and when the shooter was ready he would call out "pull" and one of the traps would open and out would fly the bird to face a blast from the shooter's gun.

A truck arrived with the caged birds, Starlings, Pigeons and Galahs, the live targets for the shooters. Galahs were not a protected species at that time. The Starlings were shot first, then the Pigeons and finally the Galahs. The Starlings exited the trap very fast but generally flew in straight line which made them easy targets for the shooters. Pigeons and Galahs were somewhat irregular in their flight, especially if it was a windy day. Points were allocated to individual shooters on the basis of kill or miss, or a kill on the first or second barrel. If a wounded bird fell on the ground there would be a pause and if the judge decided that the bird wouldn't take off again, as sometimes happened, he would call out "kill".

At the end of the day when the last bird had been shot, and the dead birds had been collected, guns were put away and the crack shooters received their prize and everyone agreed it was great day. Everyone except the birds!

Some years later live bird shooting was banned by the Government of the day, along with that other blood sport, greyhound coursing. Greyhound coursing, which had its origins in England, involved putting a live hare in a closed field with a greyhound and recording the amount of time it took the greyhound to "turn the hare", a euphemism for "kill the hare".

Kevin Street



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FRIENDS OF DAANGEAN VOLUNTEERS

I'm interested in being a Devilbend Foundation supporter as a volunteer in the Friends of Daangean. Please keep me in touch & note my name & contact details here.

Please contact Marnie Fitzsimons on 5981 2483 or marniefitz1@gmail.com or post this to PO Box 9 Hastings 3915

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