



## From the President

G'day one and all, and welcome to our second newsletter for 2022. "So much to do, so little time" I think is a quote from *Songs for Swinging Sellers*, or one of Peter Sellers' comedy albums, although, all things being considered there's not much comedy in the environmental climate, e.g. Bogong Moths were declared endangered on 9th December 2021.

If I had my druthers (a word found in my 1983 *Macquarie Dictionary* but not in my *Collins Graphic Dictionary* that was given to Harold McIntosh Ogg by John Edward Robinson on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1907) I would see a massive contractor team sweep across Devilbend NFR cleaning all pests before it. Imagine the reserve free of Spanish heath, blackberries, our woody weed friends, pines, Disa, foxes and rabbits as a start. I'd like to see a nice gentle cool burn to clean out some of the congested forest floor and pasture grasslands, which would promote some indigenous regrowth. It would also promote weed growth, but the hypothetical contractors would deal with these too when they appeared. One can but dream!

Vandalism of the road verges is an ongoing problem around Devilbend and Bittern reservoirs, mainly on Derril and Hodgins Roads. The Hodgins Road surface had been wrecked before the August Waterwatch day, and Graham had to crawl through it in his vehicle. Graydens Road and Tuerong Road are constantly mangled by large, heavy trucks taking a short cut to the freeway, probably from Hastings. Much of the time one's vehicle should be a tractor, not an unfortunate car. And I feel the road speeds should be lowered to 60km, which would give local wildlife a better chance of crossing safely.

I hope to lure the Friends of Daangean (FOD) into a Disa foraging exercise from October, and possibly seed collection when the time is right. Disa foraging could incorporate a wildflower walk; nothing too strenuous here!

I've heard a magpie warbling during the dark hours, which reminds me of an old Scandinavian saying, "Faith is a bird that feels dawn breaking and sings while it is still dark". The only reason I know this is because I bought a card with it written on it and framed it. Rather nice I think! The local magpie is making short work of my door mat as each year it becomes smaller with ever expanding ragged corners. And the resident ringtail drops poached drey material everywhere: eucalypt, agonis and grevillea leaves and twigs.

Marnie Fitzsimons  
President

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**2021-2022 DFI Council:**

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

The following 2021-2022 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](mailto:devilbendfoundation@gmail.com)

**EDITORS NOTE**

I've been having a lovely time participating in the 2022 September MP Shire bioblitz. I think I'll have to invest in a new phone that takes good photos. Uploading to iNaturalist is simpler from the phone than from a camera via the computer. Being a Citizen Scientist sounds rather grand without having to attend university for a degree.

## FOUNDATION NEWS

### FRIENDS of DAANGEAN (FOD)

Nine stalwart weeding warriors put in great effort on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June. We were down one, but up two who had recently returned from northward journeying. It was lovely to see them return to the fold. Eileen from PV, joined us on this day with great intentions. However, her chainsaw packed it in after one measly sallow wattle! I, adorned with earmuffs, worked with Eileen while the rest of the team, who toiled elsewhere in what was supposed to be a quieter



Olive-backed Oriole - MF



Bejewelled Web - MF

area, were heartened when they arrived at the edge of the previous contractor work.

Saturday July 30<sup>th</sup> is usually the annual planting day but not so this year, as there hadn't been much happening in the propagating sphere due to the previous two years of on and off plague restrictions. Six woody weed warriors descended on the pesky pittos and gave them a considerable fright. Red and yellow coral fungi stood out amid the leaf litter.

Jamie and Julie had commitments elsewhere this day, but not to be daunted, passing by on their way to Melbourne. Julie handed me cake through the car window and away they went to do further good works.

Before and after each weeding day I need to go to



the Melbourne Water depot where we store our equipment. On this day I heard an unfamiliar birdcall and was able to photograph it. Studying my bird book at home I was able to identify it as an Olive-backed Oriole, a first for me.



**Beehive on the fence - MF**

The annual “Community Weeding Day” on Daangean Point on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> August, didn’t see much community participation. It was a shame really, as the program began with great gusto with the Mornington Flyfishers coming along. Their enthusiasm seems to have waned, along with other groups who used to participate. Maybe it’s because PV has a cashless coffer nowadays and can’t afford to put on some nosh afterwards. There’s nothing like a bit of a barbie as an enticement!

However, FOD fronted up in strength. They are just so good. Two newbies came along: one a young lad from Caulfield Grammar, and the other was an expectant grandmother and enthusiastic local. All together there were 13 of us plus Gemma from PV. The track down was pretty sloppy so vehicles only went part of the way, but I (and Iona) had to proceed the entire distance as I had the gear on board.

The morning was foggy, and the trees were adorned with bejewelled cobwebs.

It looked a bit dismal at first until the sun broke through and the morning became beautiful. In various parts of the bush were echidna diggings, swamp rat diggings, and evidence of their little tunnels through low grasses. On the way out a miserable beehive hovel containing a small community was to be seen hanging on the wire fence.

but pittos were not safe and met a grim end along with pine seedlings. Jack rubbed his hands together with joy after he ringbarked a big pine. It will still serve as vertical habitat until it eventually falls and will then become horizontal habitat.

After a good morning’s work we all retired to the picnic ground where we enjoyed a tasty repast in the sun and solved the problems of the world.

Annelie, our enthusiastic new participant, drove us into a follow-up weeding day a week later, and eight of us attended on 3<sup>rd</sup> September. A good swathe of fallen woody weeds gave a feeling of satisfaction. Although wet underfoot, all cars drove to the weeding site on this occasion. Gemma was with us again and provided the necessary equipment - so I didn’t need to collect ours.

Passing walkers didn’t offer to help, and one lady thought we were like garden gnomes with our heads popping up through the vegetation. Good works were achieved before serious nesting began. There was no obvious avian consternation

Boneseed and sallow wattle were the main targets,

**FOD Daangean Point team - GH**





from our weed bashing: the most vocal were yellow-tail black cockies gnawing cones atop a tall pine tree. Morning tea was at 10.30 am then back into it, instead of having our nosh at the end. It can be a bit hard to get going again after an earlier break, however, as there is a bit of volunteer energy fading after an hour or so. A well-earned break delivers renewed enthusiasm.

*Marnie Fitzsimons*

### DEVILBEND TOXICOLOGY STUDY INITIATED

About a decade ago, DFI set out to commission the design and conduct of a Toxicology Study to test for heavy metals and pesticides in Devilbend Reservoir. This was to be the fourth phase of a long-term “Freshwater Research Works” funded by the Reichstein Foundation and partners. This toxicology study was needed as a duty of care to visitors to the reserve, given the possibility of long-term bioaccumulation (at the top of the food chain) of contaminants historically used in orchards in the area prior to the construction of the reservoir.



**Dan digging for sediment - MF**

fish in the reserve on both technical and organisational grounds.

Early in 2002, one of the service providers (AQUEST, a research arm of RMIT University) proposed a work-around strategy that involved the sampling of sediments from the reservoir. A revised Service Agreement with DFI was developed, and (finally) the field work for study was undertaken last month at



**Chester with rinsed filter nets - MF**

Contaminants of interest include insecticides (lead); fungicides (Mercury) and herbicides (organochlorides such as dioxins and glyphosate).

Over the ensuing years, DFI made no fewer than five concerted, but futile, attempts to launch the study. The fifth attempt resulted in the signing, in late 2021, of two ‘Service Agreements’ between DFI and service providers with experience in collaboration in this type of aquatic research. Just prior to the initiation of the planned field work, both contractors were obliged to withdraw from the study by Fisheries Victoria, which objected to the sampling of



**Sediment filter nets - MF**

Devilbend Reserve and at a control site in the Yarra catchment.

The study report is expected within a couple of months. It may or may not lead to more detailed sampling and analysis, and/or ongoing monitoring of toxicants, depending on the report’s recommendations.

*Jamie Edgerton*



## VOLUNTEER WATER-QUALITY SURVEYING

### Waterwatch Report

On Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> August the waterwatch team headed off for our monthly water monitoring day. The weather was overcast and raining off and on, with a bit of hail as well. All went according to plan at the Devilbend site: the water level is high and very clear, quality is good still but very few water birds were seen. All the reeds have died off over winter as usual and are starting to send up green shoots now - so they will look good again in another month or so.



**Gumboot territory - MF**

Cerberus, which is fairly close to the reservoirs, there has been approx. 90 mm more rainfall this year compared to last year: 442mm in 2021 and 525mm so far for 2022.

If the forecasts suggesting higher rainfall, and more often, are correct then minor flooding from the catch drains could be normal in the future. I wonder how much the high flows will affect water critters and plants, as they could be washed down the catch drains. I believe the water from the diversion pipe installed near to where Devilbend Creek enters the catch drain is flowing into the bush land at a far greater rate than expected. With more things going on at the reservoirs, e.g. turtle monitoring, macro invertebrates, revegetation, and Water Watch, perhaps Parks Vic and Melbourne Water need to reassess programs for future proposals, such as the renewed interest in dwarf Galaxia.

After each outing, the equipment must be cleaned thoroughly and washed to remove residue that could contaminate the readings next time it is used. The pH. and conductivity meters need to be calibrated prior to each outing to make sure they are reading correctly. The pH. meter is calibrated with 3 different chemicals, and the conductivity meter is calibrated with 2 different chemicals. The before and after settings of each are recorded on the appropriate form and filed.

At the second collection site, Melbourne Water has been replacing pipes and valves and associated hardware. The area is covered in soft sticky mud because of the rain and all the big machines they are using, so it wasn't wise to attempt to drive in as we usually do. We had to don our gumboots (or wellies) and carefully hike into where we get our water samples. The water quality is also good at this site.

Bittern Reservoir was found to be too wet and slippery to risk driving along the catch drain to the Devilbend Creek outlet. The site near the dam wall was good to get to, and testing went smoothly with good quality water and some bird activity. The water was flowing very fast through the old infrastructure with the catch drain almost

overflowing.

According to the weather station at HMAS



**Full catch drain with reflections - MF**







Cheers *Graham White*

Richard Akers from Melbourne Water came with two trainees, Marita and Ben, on 20<sup>th</sup> July to have a look at what we do and to collect some water samples using their e-DNA machine. Also, macro-invertebrate collecting added to the day's activities. Although the weather was cold and the macroinvertebrate sampling is done later when weather improves when there's more critter activity, there was a surprising number of water life captured. What was interesting was that the water collected from a hole at Bittern was full of macroinvertebrates, due to no predators being in this water body.

Large rafts of coots on Devilbend, for reasons known only to them, took sudden scurries across the water. They began as one and stopped as one, afterwards bobbing around as though nothing had happened. At Bittern Reservoir, not many coots were seen, but we spotted a couple of musk ducks, one cormorant and a few swallows.

On Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> August the waterwatch team worked in reverse, i.e. Bittern then Devilbend as we were to meet the AQUEST team from RMIT

and Jamie in the reserve car park at 12 noon. The AQUEST team's estimated sampling time of one hour extended to two and a half hours, a good amount of which entailed lengthy trudges to three of the four proposed sites. High water levels and intermittent rain were a trifle tedious, and the vehicle only ventured in to one site. As I was delegated to lead to each site, I was worn ragged by the time I returned home. It was very long day.

*Marnie Fitzsimons*



**Annabel with her water sample at Bittern - MF**

## PARKS VIC NEWS

### Devilbend Update

1. 30,000 trout were released into the Reservoir.
2. Working on a Southern Toadlet program with The Crew at Daangean, Melbourne Water, Holmesglen TAFE and Craig Cleeland, monitoring the existing population and how we can boost numbers and encourage recruitment.
3. We have applied for two Melbourne Water grants to undertake weed works along Devilbend Creek.
4. A deer program is scheduled to happen in Oct/Nov, pending school holidays and approvals
5. DISA monitoring and treatment will begin in October. If you see any new sites, please send through GPS locations to Gemma Hocking (gemma.hocking@parks.vic.gov.au). There is currently a DISA working group underway to gauge threat and management options
6. The Crew at Daangean have installed art seats along the walking trail, built by local schools and the Bunjilwarra group
7. The Bunjilwarra Centre are also interested in having the remaining water tank at the visitor node painted
8. We're replacing signage that has been stolen around the carpark at Devilbend Visitor Area



Seat near the fishing platforms - MF

Gemma Hocking

Ranger I Northern Peninsula

Mondays – Thursdays

M 0447 863 895 I E

[Gemma.Hocking@parks.vic.gov.au](mailto:Gemma.Hocking@parks.vic.gov.au)

*“Parks Victoria respectfully acknowledges Traditional Owners, their cultures, knowledge and their continuing connection to and cultural obligations to care for their Country”*

### BIOLINKS UPDATE

#### Creating links for nature across the Mornington Peninsula

##### DEVILBEND-HASTINGS BIOLINK

To protect and enhance valuable and threatened fauna and flora, corridors of bush (biolinks) are being preserved, developed and linked right across the Peninsula. This exciting initiative, now in its 5th year, is called Linking the Mornington Peninsula Landscape (LMPL: <https://impl.org.au/>). All Landcare groups across the Peninsula are progressively being included in this initiative. The project is run by the Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network (<https://mplandcare.org.au/>) and funded by the Natural Resources Conservation League

So far Biolink plans have developed with selected landholders in the catchments of Merricks-Coolart, Manton & Stony Creeks, Red Hill South, Dunns Creek, Sheepwash Creek, Watson Creek, Main Creek and the region of South West Mornington Peninsula. All the Landcare groups that have developed biolink plans have since received grants to engage contractors to undertake works set out in the plans.





**Bush regeneration after removal of invasive woody weeds**

Devilbend-Hastings Landcare is now being funded to develop a plan. This area focuses on properties around Devilbend Reserve, a 1,005 ha park that includes Devilbend Reservoir, the largest inland body of water on the Mornington Peninsula, and a haven for wildlife, particularly birds.



**Proposed biolink area**

**LMPL project coordinator Michele Sabto is seeking landowners in the area, with an interest in hosting a section of biolink on their property.**

In the longer term, this would mean restoring or setting aside a portion of land for native vegetation, and aims to finalise all property plans before the end of this year.

Participating landowners receive a plan for preserving or replacing native vegetation on their land. The plans are developed by a qualified and experienced bush restoration person, without obligation or cost. Participants are also invited to a social event to meet their fellow biolink landholders, which will include a walk-and-talk through private property that has already undertaken bush restoration works.

***Benefits to participating landholders:***

- Support for control and reduction of exotic weeds
- A plan that will be used by Devilbend-Hastings Landcare to obtain grants
- Increase in habitat for native flora and fauna
- Regrowth of rare native flora
- Shade, wind and runoff protection
- Mitigation of erosion and loss of topsoil; improved soil health

***We work with interested property owners to:***

- Establish agreed areas for biolink connections
- Detail the works required (e.g. fencing, weed control and/or revegetation)
- Develop and implement a work plan
- Estimate costs of the works and identify potential funding for works
- Ensure that plans and on-ground works are complementary to and do not encroach on agricultural activities



Swamp wallaby - photo *Mark Lethlean*



Rufous fantail - photo *Mark Lethlean*

**Contact us**

If you would like to find out more, or wish to register your interest in participating please call Michele Sabto, Coordinator of the Linking the Mornington Peninsula Landscape project, on 0402 459 009

*Chantal Morton*

For more information, contact Project Coordinator *Chantal Morton*: [chantal.morton@mornpen.vic.gov.au](mailto: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](mailto:thecrewatdaangean@gmail.com), or [devilbendfoundation@gmail.com](mailto: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*

**MARRON IN DEVILBEND**

Australia has a number of interesting species of freshwater crayfish, including the largest freshwater invertebrate in the world: the Giant Tasmanian freshwater crayfish. Marron, another large freshwater crayfish native to south-west Western Australia, is of particular local interest because of the establishment of feral populations in a number of waters on the Mornington Peninsula.



Sometime ago the Devilbend Foundation alerted the Government to the need to ensure that marron are not translocated beyond the waters of the Peninsula. This could place at risk indigenous populations of freshwater crayfish, including some endangered species. In order to prevent marron from becoming established in Victorian waters the two known species are declared noxious under Victorian fisheries legislation.

The opening of a recreational fishery in Devilbend, for the first time in Victoria, allows anglers to fish in waters containing marron. This raises the question as to whether it is likely that marron will be caught or taken by anglers either accidentally or intentionally.

Marron can be caught in a number of ways. In Western Australia they use snares, scoop and drop nets. The snare is simply a pole with a loop of wire on the end which is then slipped over the tail of the marron. They can be attracted to an area by bottom baiting with poultry pellets or similar baits, as marron are regarded as benthic omnivores.

Experience in Western Australia indicates that it is highly unlikely that marron would be taken by normal angling methods.

Illegal netting of marron in Devilbend is always a possibility, particularly at night which is the preferred time for this type of activity. The danger of this could be minimised by having a resident Ranger appointed to the Reserve and by Fisheries Officers extending their inspection duties beyond daylight hours.

*Kevin Street*

Republished from DFI Newsletter 1 2012

### **Websites to peruse:**

Mornington Environment Assoc Inc – [www.morningtonenviro.org.au](http://www.morningtonenviro.org.au)

<https://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au>

Wiley Online Library – <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/emr.12467>

Echidna Research & Conservation – [echidnacs@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:echidnacs@adelaide.edu.au)

Dirt Radio – <https://www.3cr.org.au>

<https://www.thebushfirefoundation.org>

<https://www.dungbeetles.com.au>

<https://weeds.org.au>

<https://invasives.com.au>

[www.pestsmart.org.au](http://www.pestsmart.org.au)

<https://www.nature.com>

<http://www.wildthingsaustralia.org.au>



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All donations over \$2 can be claimed by donors as tax-deductible, so do help us raise funds & benefit yourself as this financial year comes to a close through our Devilbend Conservation Reserve Trust Fund as we are listed on the Register of Environmental Organisations under Section 6.1.1 sub-section 30-55 (1) of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997.

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I will use the Foundation's Bendigo Bank, Mornington: BSB 633 000, 'Devilbend Conservation Reserve Trust Fund Account' number 130522204 & let you know that I donated to this account direct (Ring DFI Treasurer Sue Milton on 0407 350 175).

Name.....Signed.....

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### “STRATEGIC PLANNING APPROACH” BOOKLET

Please send me a copy of the Foundation's 20-page coloured publication '*Devilbend Reserve – A Strategic Planning Approach*'. Post form to Westernport and Peninsula Protection Council

Attention: Devilbend Foundation Inc.

PO Box 9  
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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](mailto:marniefitz1@gmail.com) or post this to PO Box 9 Hastings 3915

Name..... (Please print)

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My special interest in Devilbend Reserve is.....

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