

From the President

G'day one and all,

Autumn is upon us and the colour of the bush canopy doesn't change much - but look at the forest floor. The fungi are out. As the soil becomes damper and begins to cool, up they pop. Fungi seem to be called mushrooms nowadays; however, when I was young they were called toadstools, or the shortened name was toady. Mushrooms were the edible fungus that grew in cow and horse paddocks. Those that grew in the bush were avoided. Fungi season nowadays sees people with buckets or bags laden with the brown pine forest fungi at Devilbend and I wonder if in time they will be gone because they don't have time to spread their spores for future populations. The white spotted red fungi (Fly Agaric) that elves live in and grow in the pine forest are poisonous and are invasive. Also invasive is the Orange Pore Fungus, which is quite



Orange Pore Fungus - MF

The vandals were busy in March in time for Easter. They had graffiti all over the toilet block, inside and out, at the Devilbend picnic ground. I wonder what they do in their spare time!

Marnie Fitzsimons, President

small and grows on decaying wood. Fungi are good to photograph as they don't fly away or blow in the wind. Following the water bug census I had a wander in the Bittern pines forest and the Fly Agaric was appearing. The edible fungi must've been up too as there were many cut off stems.

Lots of echidna diggings through the pine needles of the forest, and beyond

under the copious pitto canopy.

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Devilbend Foundation Inc.:

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Email President:

devilbendfoundation@gmail.com

2023-2024 DFI Council:

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

The following 2023-2024 member groups are represented on Committee:

Birdlife Australia; Friends of Kangerong Flora Reserve; Mornington Environment Assn.; Peninsula Field Naturalists Club; 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'm currently reading *The Book of the Murray* published in 1975. Quite a lot has changed in 49 years since this book came out. Glowing pictures were painted of the Murray River water that was used with gay abandon on suburban lawns, the giant pumps used to irrigate vineyards and citrus groves, land clearing, felling giant red gums for timber. The vineyards are bigger now and further from the river and the water needs to travel longer distances.

Marnie Fitzsimons

FOUNDATION NEWS

FRIENDS of DAANGEAN (FOD)

The FOD bush maintenance work began on Saturday March 2nd this year with seven erstwhile volunteers. What a good lot we are! The bush was very dry with all pittos drooping and the smallest holding on tenaciously when pulled. The team found themselves in a patch of small gorse plants that will take off in time. No birds were noticed: however, the bush was full of leaf-curling spider webs that had snared



Part of the supreme team - MF

multitudes of small insects which indicated much flying activity, so it was probably their mating time. It was difficult not to go through them and become covered with the webs. The gahnia and bracken was high, thick and difficult to fight our way through. A cool burn at the appropriate time would do much to clear the way for us.

The Vic Emergency site had a warning of a fire in Woods Reserve and on Daangean Point, but apparently the Woods Reserve fire wasn't there but on private property somewhere off Moorooduc Rd. Seeing the bush was tinder dry it wouldn't have taken much wind to send it through to Woods Reserve and then into Woodland Break.

Luckily the fire crews saved the day. I heard that the Daangean Point fire was a

campfire that some nong had lit. Likewise had it got away then it would have become a conflagration through the Devilbend bush.

March 30th was to be the next FOD day but it was deferred to April 6th because of Easter and people being away.

Saturday April 6th had a team of four. As previously it was heavy going through the bracken and gahnia undergrowth. One needs legs of steel to push through it! Blake, whom we met at the AGM at The Briars and who accompanied us on the Lionel Lauch walk last November, joined the toiling team. As he has youth on his side I hope he can rearrange his work commitments so that he will return with us. That is, unless he went home in a state of shock and exhaustion. A group of cyclists who stopped to ask for directions to Woodlands Rd were informed they would be provided with tea and bikkies if they joined us instead. They graciously declined - I wonder why.

A big team is needed to tackle the pitto seedlings/regrowth before they get out of



Pitto seedling regrowth - MF

control again, and our previous eight or so years will have been for naught. Quite a number of blackberry seedlings were evident which bodes ill for Woodland Break's future.

No birds were evident other than the musical sounds of the distant bell miners amid the swamp gums. April 27th was the next bush bash with six of us. Alisson from PV intended joining us but was held up elsewhere. I took some moth balls to toss around our tool storage place, hopefully to deter the animal activity that leaves various calling cards of the solid and liquid kind over everything. One needs a bath before starting work after handling things.

It was a beautiful day in the bush and everyone came earlyish, so we were able to start earlyish. The pruning saws from the recent FOD grant have come in handy on the larger regrowth. More blackberries and the appearance of boneseed this time, no gorse.

There was a spot of excitement when a broken-into Chubb safe was discovered in the bracken beside the track, along with some keys and some rubbish. A decent amount of manpower (or should I say person-

power so as not to sound gender biased) would've been required to carry it so far inland. The door alone had some weight to it. It was decided that the police should know and when they came they couldn't find us. Of course not, we were in deep in the bush in the shoulder high bracken. They didn't seem particularly interested and took some photos, but the walk in the bush I'm sure was a pleasant break.

The spiders were fewer in number this time; however, the fungi were making an appearance after the recent

The secreted safe in the bracken - MF



Safe contents missed by someone - MF

rains. No birds evident this time either although the tinkling of the bell miners wafted through the trees.

Marnie Fitzsimons



Volunteers needed to preserve paradise on the Peninsula

From Mornington Peninsula Magazine, People and Places, 28/04/2024 (thanks to Sarah Halfpenny)



An aerial view of the picturesque Devilbend Natural Features Reserve, a haven for wildlife conservation efforts

Jamie Edgerton, a founding member of the Devilbend Foundation Inc. committee, speaks to Sarah Halfpenny about the organisation's journey from its inception to its ongoing efforts to preserve the Devilbend Natural Features Reserve in Moorooduc.

How did the Devilbend Foundation Inc come about, and how long have you been involved in its activities?

The Devilbend Foundation Inc was founded in 2006 as a formalisation of the advocacy efforts of an alliance of over 40 environmentally concerned community groups to retain the decommissioned Devilbend Reservoir site in public ownership. A public consultation process in 2003 found strong support for a 'community vision' that proposed retention of the site for restoration as a wildlife reserve. In 2006 the site was designated as a natural features reserve, with Parks Victoria as its land manager. Most DFI committee members, including myself, have been involved in DFI and its informal predecessor, Devilbend Steering Group, since early 2004.

Why is Devilbend Reserve considered of significance?

The State Government's 2004 Devilbend working group found overwhelming evidence of the ongoing local extinction of native species and threats to biodiversity on the Mornington Peninsula. The community process highlighted the urgency of restoration of patches of wildlife habitat of meaningful size, and the Devilbend site was recognised as an ideal site for this critical purpose. The site has about 150 native plant species, of which 83 are regionally significant; 11 ecological vegetation classes, all regionally rare, vulnerable or endangered; more than 84 fauna species of regional or higher significance; and numerous Aboriginal archaeological sites and stone artefacts.

What initiatives are the Devilbend Foundation Inc currently working on?

In collaboration with Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water, we are working on:

- Bird monitoring – continuing monthly bird counts in Devilbend Reserve and the adjoining Woods Reserve. These have been conducted since 2004 in collaboration with BirdLife Australia, and over 150 bird species have been recorded
- Water quality monitoring – a Waterwatch and Macro Invertebrates team take monthly observations

- Habitat restoration – monthly weeding of mostly woody weeds in the reserve, and periodic participation in planting of local native species.



Members of the Devilbend Foundation Inc diligently weed amid the tranquil beauty of the reserve.

Tell us about the Friends of Daangean group and its role in caring for the park through habitat restoration.

Friends of Daangean is the arm of Devilbend Foundation Inc which works with Parks Victoria on habitat restoration. ‘Daangean’ is the local Bunurong name for the site. They have been conducting monthly working bees on the site,

primarily engaged in the removal of woody weeds such as sweet pittosporum. Friends of Daangean are also an active participant in planting and weeding activities organised for the public by Parks Victoria.

Considering the Bunurong people's connection to the land, how are they involved in advising and participating in the Devilbend Reserve's management and conservation efforts?

In recognition of the significant cultural and archaeological values of the reserve, Parks Victoria involved the Bunurong Aboriginal Land Council in the consultation and design process for the preparation of the Devilbend Natural Features Management Plan. Staff of the land council have also been involved in related management activities, including the identification of key archaeological sites, the routing of public pathways in the reserve, and the installation of soil conservation measures to protect sites of special significance.

In what ways can volunteers contribute to the preservation and improvement of the reserve?

Volunteers from all age groups are needed to join in each of our ongoing activities. Specifics can be found on our website at devilbendfoundation.org.au, and by subscribing to our quarterly newsletter, called DFI News.

devilbendfoundation.org.au

VOLUNTEER WATER-QUALITY SURVEYING

Waterwatch Report

Our Waterwatch team continues to make the monthly trip to Devilbend and Bittern Reservoirs to monitor the water quality at four regular sites. The water levels at both reservoirs had been very high over several months, with the track at Site 2 underwater and forcing us to don gumboots to gain access to the water there. Because there was virtually no rain and hot weather in March the water levels have dropped a lot and very quickly, so the track is now accessible. However, the reeds and cumbungi have grown out to the water's edge so now we have had to select a new site a couple of hundred metres further along. We may need Parks Vic to make a new track for us. Regardless of the water depth, whether high or low, we can still carry out our monitoring jobs with very accurate results.

The site at Bittern is still easy to get to and we can drive the car very close. The site in the catch drain near the diversion pipe where Devilbend Creek comes out is nearly dry, so testing at that site is seasonal and depends on rainfall.



Phosphate kit - MF

Although though the water levels are fluctuating, the quality is still rated as good - but as the water level gets lower the electrical conductivity will get higher. Conductivity is relative to salt in the water, the less water the higher the salt is concentrated. The conductivity is measured with an electronic meter and is measured in micro Siemens/cm (us/ cm) conductivity at Devilbend does not fluctuate greatly and is between 1210 and 1250 us/cm over the year tested monthly. Bittern fluctuates a lot and can be between 2320 and 4200 us/cm over the year as water levels drop. Prolonged very high EC could affect the bugs and fish in the water. Research in America has found quick high spikes in conductivity (salt) can kill mayflies in the

water. Monitoring the macroinvertebrates and bugs in the water twice a year will give us data and the affect if any the conductivity has on the bugs and water plants as well.

We will be doing our regular macroinvertebrates monitoring and recording in May. If we get good rain over winter it will raise the water level and dilute the salts.

Over the hot weather there is an increase in visitors to both reservoirs, so there is an increase in litter left behind: plastic, cans and bottles, and even a canoe that was abandoned in the scrub. It is not really difficult for visitors to take their rubbish with them when they leave. It is worth noting there has not been any rubbish or fishing line left on the fishing platforms, although there was a broken fishing rod at the 2nd site. The resident black swans are still making Bittern their home but the numbers of coots and other birds are still very low. There must be other water bodies in the area with plenty of food. I watched a spoonbill fishing at

Bittern and in less than 10 minutes it had dived its head under several times and come up and swallowed a total of seven fish indicating the water and the environment there is good and the fish are breeding well. Water levels are measured according to Australian height datum (AHD) in our case metres above sea level, so when you see the gauges around the reservoirs and on the water towers it is metres above sea level.



Abandoned watercraft - GW



Probably has a hole and doesn't float - MF



WW site 2 Jan 2024 - MF



WW site 2 April 2024 - MF

In March at Waterwatch site 2 someone had been through the bush and cut a pathway for ease of access. Annabel picked up a big sheet of plastic and a beer can there, although the site which is generally clear of most rubbish. The Ph level at all sites was between 7.2 and 7.4. At site 2 in April the water level was down considerably and there was evidence of much foot traffic through there. There was a bit of an oil slick around the water's edge and someone had the wit to hang a can up a tree. Site 2 was smelly when stirred up by our walk through the mud, possibly from the long-inundated decaying vegetation around the edges, and the dead prickly ti-tree that doesn't like wet feet for long periods.

Cheers, *Graham White*

Macro-invertebrates

Macro-invertebrate day was on May 15th, which began rather chilly but turned into a nice day. As the water levels in both reservoirs had dropped a significant amount it was easier to collect waterbugs from among the aquatic vegetation. Samples were taken from two sites, one at Devilbend reservoir (DB) and one at Bittern reservoir (Bittern). Surprisingly *Gambusia* were almost absent with only one being caught in DB, and two in Bittern. The water is usually alive with them. Water boatmen were high in number at DB whereas at Bittern

abundance was less but still present. Bittern had a high number of water beetles and none at DB. Shrimps were few in number at both reservoirs. There were no mayflies or dragonflies at DB, but mayflies were in abundance at Bittern. It must've been recent hatching time for both mayflies and water boatmen because the greater abundance of both was better seen under magnification. Overall, the low abundance of most waterbugs at DB indicated the water quality was Poor; however, trout could be the source of the low numbers and not the actual water quality. Bittern water score attained a High quality rating this May and looking back to April 2021 score sheet the Bittern score indicated Good.

Marnie Fitzsimons

BIRD MONITORING REPORT



Black-shouldered Kite - MM



Black-shouldered Kite

We have recorded Black-shouldered Kites (*Elanus axillaris*) most years during the 20 years of the count. One or two may hang around for three or four months and then are not sighted for six months or more. The most we have seen is four, in February 2024.

From time to time we get good views of Black-shouldered Kites at Devilbend perching on open upper tree branches or hovering for minutes with dangling legs then dropping down on small prey.

They are a solitary, nomadic species found throughout mainland Australia. They nest in forked branches of tree canopies, sometimes pine trees south of Graydens Road. During the breeding season the female incubates while the male hunts and hands over prey which consists of small ground animals and insects. They are diurnal feeders. What are they feeding on at Devilbend?

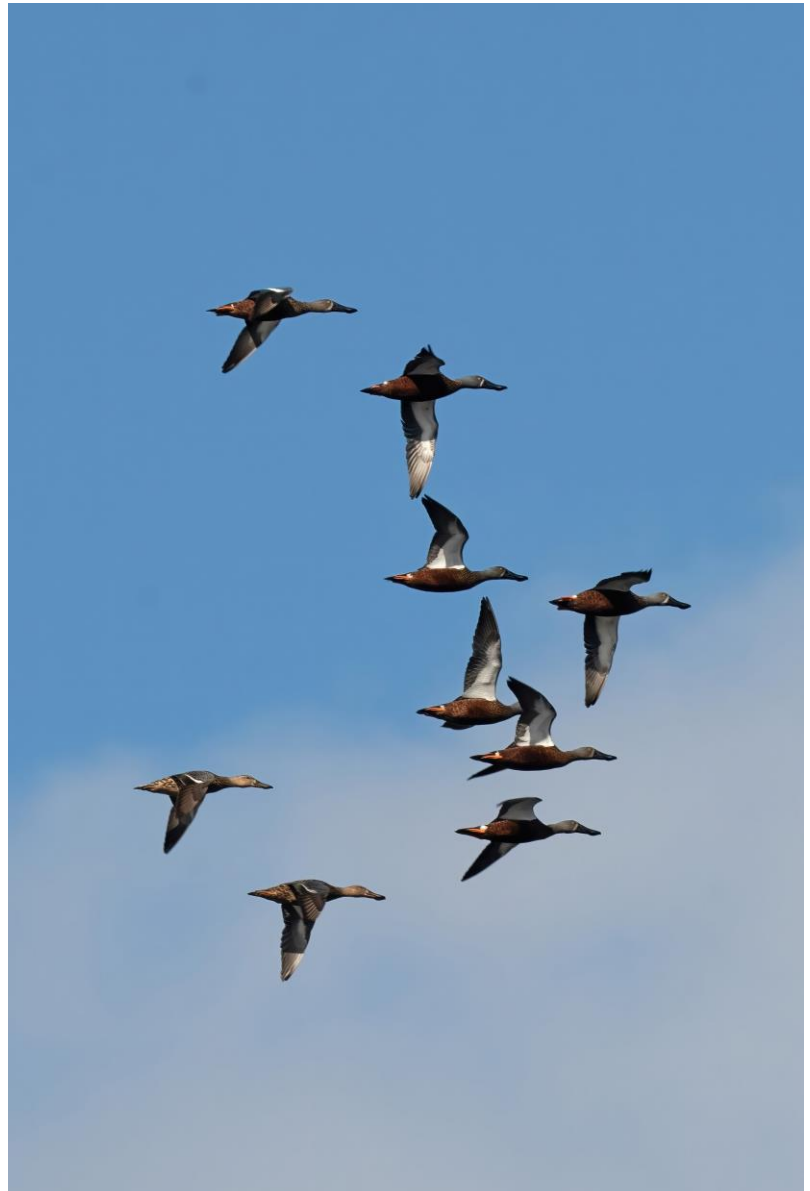
Prey might include native swamp rats (*Rattus lutreolus*) which are in wetter zones of the Reserve. They have short tails and are much cuter looking than *Rattus rattus*. They have extensive tunnels but are sometimes observed running from one protective long grass patch to another. They are vegetarian, eating the swamp grass stems and roots.

Australasian Shoveler

This is a nice picture by Michael Mann of a flock of Shovelers showing the prominent bill and the strong white markings under the wings. We see them at any season of the year up to nine in a flock.

The Australasian Shoveler (*Anas rhynchos*) is considered sedentary, but like all our wetland birds is nomadic when conditions demand. At Devilbend and Bittern Reservoirs it has a preference for the cumbungi areas and tea-tree zones, often in small parties. It is specially adapted to feeding off the surface of water, straining water or mud through lamellae in their broad bill. They sometimes feed in an arrowhead formation when the stirred-up mud of the bird in front is filtered by the following birds.

Roger Richards



Australasian Shovelers in flight - MM

PARKS VIC NEWS

Devilbend Update

We have the Peri-Urban Weed Management Program continuing in the Woodlands Block, where the Seeds Bushland crew is smashing through the Pittos. We hope to treat the Gorse in the northern section of the block, and there is a potential ecological burn planned for the block. It would be great to kill the Pitto seed bank. We are aware that the Gorse would thrive with the fire; however, we have a plan in place to manage the regrowth of gorse and hope that the DFI crew can continue to sweep through the block and treat any new growth, post burn.

It was great to see the roadside treated as well to complement the work happening in the park.

Thankfully, despite the hot and windy weather we have had, there have been no significant fires in our district. Our PV team has been supporting DEECA with the efforts up north.

You may have heard that there was a fire in Woods Reserve recently. The fire in the Shire-managed section was quickly contained and didn't require our involvement.

The black swans within the reservoir are starting to become aggressive, due to increase in feeding opportunities from the general public. PV is looking at installing signage to warn people not to feed the wildlife.

There has been an increase in swimming within the reservoir which PV are aware of. We do a thorough walkthrough of the site at least once a week to do some education about swimming in the reservoir and to clean up any rubbish.

Gemma Hocking

Ranger

Northern Peninsula, Southern and Maritime Region

Ph: (03) 8427-2107

2 Hinton Street, Rosebud VIC 3939

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

BIOLINKS UPDATE

Successful grants for Mornington Peninsula projects

GB2AS BIOLINK PROJECT UPDATE – May 2024

It has been a while since the DFI readership has been updated regarding progress made on the Greens Bush to Arthurs Seat Biolink (GB2AS). The Greens Bush to Arthurs Seat Catchment Stewardship project is into the final stages of its second year, after the Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network (MPLN) was awarded another substantial grant through the state government’s ‘Our Catchments Our Communities’ initiative. The MPLN engaged Regenerating Farms to help deliver on this project.

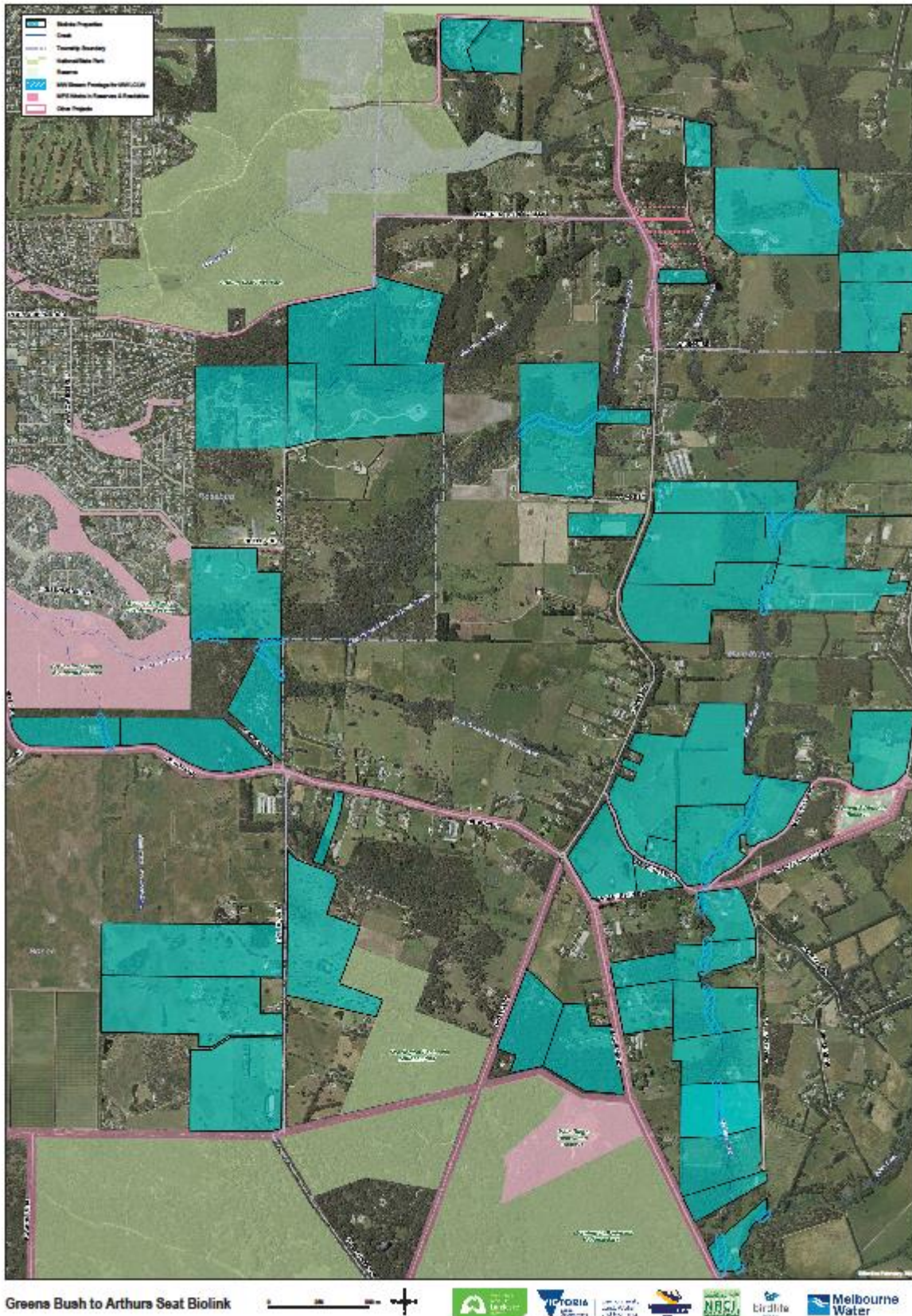
This two-year project has increased the stewardship of eight new farm properties on a combined works area of 32.45 hectares in the GB2AS project area, helping to contribute to improved catchment health and better outcomes for the Mornington Peninsula’s unique and precious biodiversity. With a strong emphasis on capacity building, the project has seen the development of eight Land Management Plans, with each Land Management Plan assisting landholders to document the biodiversity assets on their farm. The information gathered has been used to guide management actions tailored to the individual farm and the specified land use. Included in the overall Land Management Plan is a detailed Revegetation Plan which is based on a template developed by Greg Holland.

Through the funding it received the MPLN has been able to offer financial and practical support to participating landholders for the implementation of select priority actions identified in the individual Land Management Plans. At the end of the 22-23 fiscal year, this included the protection of remnant vegetation through fencing, habitat improvement through assisted regeneration of remnant vegetation through weed control (17.5 ha) and revegetation through indigenous plantings including shelterbelts and plantings for native pollinators (6 ha). The outputs for this financial year are still being tallied.

In addition to the Land Management Plans and on ground actions achieved, the MPLN also delivered a series of workshops to increase landholder capacity to achieve improved biodiversity outcomes and sustainable agricultural practices. These capacity building workshops and field days were not only attended by participating landholders, but last financial year included 170 community members as well.

GB2AS is making tremendous inroads into its goal to reconnect the Mornington Peninsula National Park (Greens Bush) to Arthurs Seat State Park. With over forty properties now signed on the project, we have updated our project area map. All biolink properties are highlighted and shown in teal on the project map, and as you can see the gaps are fewer and farther apart. As the project continues to grow, we will achieve

even greater connectivity in the landscape to provide viable linkages for Indigenous flora and fauna, promote overall catchment health and responsible land stewardship now and for future generations.



Chantal Morton

facilitator@mplandcare.org.au

If you have a property that you feel meets the criteria, submit an expression of interest to Landcare Facilitator, Chantal Morton at facilitator@mplandcare.org.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.



National Tree Day Planting

Sunday 28th July



Scan QR code to register

NATIONAL
TREE DAY
28 JULY



Hi Devilbend,

We have a tree planting day coming up and we need your help! And wanted to give you plenty of notice so you can save the date.

This National Tree Day, 28th July, we'll be meeting at Devilbend where we will be focusing on improving a habitat area adjacent to where our toadlets are found.

Through the generosity of two amazing people, Aaron Simmler and Liz Sarrailhe, between them gifting \$1000, Mornington Peninsula Plant Society gifting \$200, and the Citizen Science Crew putting in \$500 via our Parks Vic VAP funding, we now have enough trees to make a real impact for our endangered Southern toadlets.

[Registration for our National Tree Day planting site can be found HERE](#)

Please feel free to share this email and spread the word.

- Date: Sunday 28th July
- Time: 10:00am
- Meeting location: [Hodgins Road - HERE](#) and I'll have the volunteer flag and sign will be out to help you spot the spot :)
- Please wear appropriate clothing and bring some gloves. All other equipment is provided. Don't forget to bring some water and a snack.

If you have any questions please feel free to give me a call.

Hansi

[0432 307 634](tel:0432307634)

OPINIONS & OTHER COMMENTS CORNER

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

Our past regular scribe Kevin Street is unable to present his past adventures at this stage due to other commitments. Hopefully he will rejoin the fold in the near future.

Vale

Hans Brunner who died on Thursday April 25th 2024

I encountered Hans on several occasions at SPIFFA meetings and at Chisolm/Tafe when I was doing the Conservation & Land Management course. He gave a talk on animal hair identification and wrote a book on mammalian hair identification. He was involved in the Lindy Chamberlain and dingo case and was employed at the Keith Turnbull Research Institute. Hans was an interesting and approachable man. My condolences to his family and friends.

Marnie Fitzsimons

Websites to peruse:

Mornington Environment Assoc Inc – 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

Dirt Radio – <https://www.3cr.org.au>

<https://www.thebushfirefoundation.org>

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

<https://weeds.org.au>

<https://invasives.com.au> – Invasive Species Council

www.pestsmart.org.au

<https://www.nature.com>

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

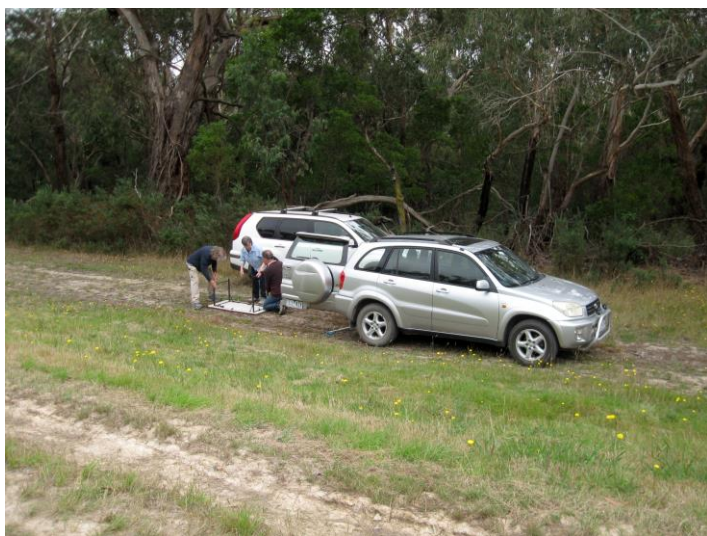
Filling in a gap at the end



A very hairy caterpillar - MF



On the site 2 track Michael's WW attire - MF



Wrestling with the WW table - MF



Water level WW April 2024 - MF



DEVILBEND FOUNDATION INC

SUBSCRIPTION – Please return form via email to DFI: with subscription, and pay on line (**place name in Reference for Direct Deposit and Receipt.**)

YEAR JULY 2020 – JUNE 2021

AMOUNT: \$20.00 (DFI Bendigo Account: BSB 633-000 ACCOUNT NO: 129079448)

NAME:.....

STATUS:.....MEMBER SINCE(approx).....

(General Member, Group Representative Member- state group name)

Address:.....

.....

EMAIL.....

TELEPHONE NUMBER.....

Paid on Line (date).....\$20 enclosed/attached (date).....

DONATION TO DEVILBEND FOUNDATION Inc.

WE ARE A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE ORGANISATION! HELP US TO RAISE FUNDS TO MAKE DEVILBEND A WORLD CLASS CONSERVATION RESERVE!

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.

Yes I would like to donate \$..... to the Devilbend Conservation Reserve Trust Fund

I attach a cheque, or postal order addressed to:

Westernport and Peninsula Protection Council
Attention: Devilbend Foundation Inc.
PO Box 9
Hastings
Vic 3915

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.....

Address.....Date.....

“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
Hastings
Vic 3915

Name.....Phone.....

Email.....

Address.....

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

Name..... (Please print)

Phone.....Mobile.....

Email.....

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

Signed.....Date.....