

Friends of Belgrave Lake Park

Report for SDLG AGM August 2021

Wendy Cross

It goes without saying that the past 12 months have seen only limited progress at Belgrave Lake Park. Weekly working bees were severely limited by the repeated lockdowns and as a result, it was very difficult to keep weeds at bay. Only the permitted daily two hours of “exercise” made it possible for two of the group members living within 5 km of the park to maintain some semblance of control. However, the difficulty was compounded by the fact that during the year, the group lost three members – two have moved away from the hills and one has apparently lost interest. This leaves just three people and, without more community involvement, the future of the group looks bleak.

Only two dozen new plants were installed by the group during 2020-21, partly because of the difficulties outlined above and partly because the Southern Dandenongs Community Nursery was unable to fill an order placed in 2020 and again in 2021. This shortfall was, apparently, due to the pandemic’s effect on wholesale suppliers. The group had planned to source some plants – including tree ferns – elsewhere, using funds currently held on its behalf by SDLG but, given the current restrictions, it is unclear whether this will be feasible in the short term.

During the year, Melbourne Water fenced off the area known to park regulars as the Dog Beach, restored a section of the degraded creek bank there and installed a number of plants, most of which appear to be doing well, although weeds are now appearing in locations previously maintained by the Friends but now inaccessible. The group was not consulted by Melbourne Water prior to the work being carried out and the Dog Beach closure is a contentious issue with many regular users of the park.

The big storm which swept across the Dandenongs on June 9 did surprisingly little damage at Belgrave Lake Park. However, on that night and in the weeks since, a number of mature manna gums and silver wattles have uprooted, destroying existing plantings and in several cases partially damming the creek. The silver wattles, which are said to have been planted about 30 years ago, are an ongoing danger as dead or alive, they repeatedly drop branches.

Plastic Bag Free Dandenong Ranges Report for SDLG AGM August 2021 Michele Kohout

Our group hasn't met much due to COVID restrictions, but some of us have been sewing at home. We can report we have:

- Made 266 library bags for the Eastern Regional Library, which they are really chuffed with.
- Given away 80 Borrow and Bring Back Boomerang Bags to local businesses.
- Sold 75 Bought to Support Boomerang Bags to local businesses.
- Sold 10 produce bag sets to local businesses.
- Contributed to a display to the Ferntree Gully Library during Community Week the first week of May
- Run a bag-sewing workshop at the Belgrave library in May.
- We celebrated the completion of a project we started in 2019, the 'Bags for Schools' project. We made 5 Boomerang Bags for each school in the Hills and gave out 185 bags! We celebrated this by having some photos taken with the principal of Kallista Primary, Christine Finighan, and some of their students.
- Fabric that is donated to us but we cannot use was donated to a local called Linda, a lover of all things creative, sustainable and community based, who uses the fabric in workshops for upcycling and mending, and sustainable kids craft activities. Linda gave us some fabric suitable for bags in return.





Friends of Upwey South Reserve

Activity & Achievements Summary for 12 months to 30 June 2021

Friends of Upwey South Reserve were formed at the invitation of Yarra Ranges Council in 2017. Since then, we have met, mostly monthly for weeding, planting and good company. Our overarching aim is to improve natural values and increase local biodiversity of the reserve for the benefit of all users. The results of our past efforts become increasingly evident as time passes, which is a source of great satisfaction and pride to us all. We have been well supported and supplied by Yarra Ranges Bushland Management and Volunteer Support staff, who ensure we are equipped, training is available and provide some funding. We have repaid this welcome support not only through our regular working bee efforts, supporting construction and revegetation of the new wetland and engaging the local community in a low-key way, but also by offering local knowledge to help them fine tune their management of the reserve.

Lockdowns have resulted in a marked increase in people regularly walking through the park, often with their families and dogs. They are all benefiting from the work of YRC, the contractors and the Friends group and often passers-by will comment favourably when they see us at work. The Pandemic has highlighted the value of local reserves and open space for the health and wellbeing of residents.

Despite the constraints of pandemic lockdowns, we were able to have 10 working bees in the last year. We have also attracted some new volunteers in David, Leah, Tom and Alannah and are very grateful for their additional contributions.

Yarra Ranges Council kindly provided a small maintenance grant of \$1000 from YRC, under the auspices of Landcare Victoria Inc. covering running expenses for insurance, small tools and other supplies. We managed to spend it all! We have successfully applied for the same amount again for 2021-2022. This kind of support makes it possible to keep running successful and safe working bees.

Our excellent working relationship with the Bushland Management crew of Yarra Ranges Council continues. We always have a joint planning consultation each year. They provided materials and many plants this last year and managed Working for Victoria crews to help on a large planting session and spread a lot of mulch! Most recently we were consulted about plans to gravel some of the paths through the scrub to make them safer and improve drainage. We were able to highlight risks to areas where orchids grow and mark them out to avoid damage by machinery. Our gratitude goes to Gavin, Steve, Shane and all their staff who have worked in the reserve.

For calendar year 2021 we have requested 310 indigenous plants in tube stock to be supplied from Southern Dandenongs Nursery and funded by YRC. These are now accumulating at the nursery as they become ready.

A particular highlight was production of a video virtual tour of Upwey South Reserve, in which some of us and our activities were highlighted. This exercise was skilfully managed by Jen, the Volunteer Coordinator. It can be found on the YRC website, https://youtu.be/p-r_pZOi7wY.

WORKING BEE STATISTICS

1 JULY 2020 TO 30 JUNE 2021

Working bees: 10

Average volunteer attendance: 4.6

Average volunteer time on-site: 12.8 hours

Total volunteer time on site: 140 hours

Planted: 578, including 500 jointly with YRC

Bags of weed removed: 36

Value of volunteer time: \$5,859.57

Friends of Upwey South Reserve

At the Yarra Ranges Council offices both Jen and Sarah as Volunteer Co-ordinators have supported us and many other environmental volunteer groups throughout the pandemic. They have often worked in their own time setting up events, online conferences, organising courses to educate and empower groups and ensuring we are aware of our responsibilities for safe working and Child safety. They have continued their wonderful service working from home during the pandemic. This year they finally managed to find a time between lockdowns to celebrate environmental volunteers in the Yarra Ranges with an event at Healesville Sanctuary, including a visit to the Sanctuary itself, all at YRC expense. Several of us were able to attend and thoroughly enjoyed the occasion. We really do appreciate their work, behind the scenes though much of it is. Our heartfelt thanks.

YRC contractors Indigenous Designs have continued their skilled weed control work in the reserve. They always share their plans and advise us when they are working in the reserve to ask what we might want them to do as part of their usual work. Many thanks to Ross, Dylan, Hakea and their team.

During the year we also applied for a Community Volunteer Action for Biodiversity On-ground Action and Stewardship grant, again auspiced by LVI and supported by YRC, from the Victorian Department of Environment, Water and Planning. The grant would amount to almost \$40,000. It would cover revegetation works by contractors on a narrow strip on the very steep slope below Dean's Road, in an area that is too hazardous for volunteers to do substantial work. However, we will be able to contribute some weeding and planting in a small part of the project area. We will learn if the application is successful later in 2021. If we are unsuccessful this time the application can possibly be improved and re-submitted in future years as it is the first step in a multi-year plan.

We have been able to facilitate a study project by three students of Conservation and Environmental Science at Federation University who, as part of their course, have developed a plan to extend the work proposed in our grant application. We have a copy of their project report which was distributed electronically recently. It will be a useful resource for future applications and planning should we obtain the grant from DELWP.

FoUSR is a group member of Southern Dandenongs Landcare and a benefit we gain from that association is valuable online exposure of our working bee results by inclusion on their Facebook page and background information and recruitment information on their web page which is currently being refurbished.

Ian Rainbow

Facilitator, FoUSR

June 2021

Friends of Minak Reserve

Minak Work Plan for SDLG AGM August 2021

Karen Davies

Goals

Address key threat weeds across the reserve to reduce impacts and spread.

Improve quality of creek and drainage lines by removing weeds and considering supplementary planting.

Focus on orange "Restore/Rehabilitate" areas identified in Map Management Goals for Vegetation.

Monitor edges (eg. Reserve boundaries, path edges, oval edge) for weeds moving into the reserve and more intact vegetation.

Locate significant plant species identified in Karen's Diploma Management Plan. Add additional plants of these species to secure their existence with in Minak.

Monitor the condition and function of leaky weir system Darcy implemented in drainage area off Wombelano Rd below Community House. Also monitor effectiveness of rock beaching work done off Charles Street. Investigate fixing placement of rocks and/or removing sediment from channels as required.

Maintain condition of revegetation works done in drainage line off Wombelano Rd below Community House.

Periodically (eg. Annually) complete flora surveys of the reserve.

Each official working bee spend some time looking for and recording fauna found in the reserve.

Tasks from Opportunities/Threats in Minak Management Plan

- Monitor course sediment trap associated Charles St creek line. It requires cleaning out every 18months to 2 years. Check inlet pipe near Community House for blockage. Rehabilitate this creek line.
- Care of landscaped garden beds around tennis courts, public toilets etc. Consider using these areas to showcase indigenous vegetation with signage and promoting activities of friends group.
- Monitor mown edge between western boundary of buildings and bushland for weed encroachment into bushland. Check for clear defined boundary b/n mown edge and bushland.
- Reinvestigate quality of remnant Herb Rich Foothill Forest along Mimosa Road and lower tennis court edge. Consider regular hand weeding around good vegetation to limit off target damage from any weed treatment works occurring here.
- Remnant vegetation along Mimosa Rd surveyed in 2011 found Clustered Everlasting (*Chrysocephalum semipaposum*) and Trigger Plant (*Stylidium gramifolium*). Collect seed from these plants, grow and add to other areas of the reserve to ensure their long term survival.
- Check condition of Banool and Wombelano Rd cnr. Diploma Management Plan mentions recent (2011) spraying of Kikiyu here. Has it returned? Does the area need further treatment and/or rehabilitation?
- Monitor Agapanthus spread into the reserve from properties on Banool Rd. Work with neighbours to encourage deheading or replacement with more suitable, ideally indigenous species.
- Check vegetation in cnr of Banool Rd and Mimosa St for condition. Diploma Management Plan mentions this was area of disturbance resulting from erosion due to drainage points. These points were closed so erosion disturbance stopped. Opportunity to rehabilitate.
- Check clear verge along Banool Rd acting as a fire break to existing properties. Weed edge and ensure edge to bushland clearly defined. Consider establishing the fire break and built road bank with low flammability and low maintenance indigenous ground cover species.
- Monitor the rate of incision/erosion of creek bed in Borang Rd Reserve. Investigate options to prevent it.
- Long term goal – Rehabilitate Toolang Creekline. This area is very weedy and large volumes of water entering are resulting in gully erosion. Rehabilitation needs to implement plan to stop/reduce effects.

- Monitor Toolang Rd entry point for key threat weeds here that could enter reserve. In 2001 the following species identified – Blue Periwinkle, Cape Ivy, Trad, Willow, Jasmine, Ginger Lily and Rhodante.
- Investigate pile of dumped tiles (reported in Diploma Management Plan) on slope behind No 2 Minak Rd. Could be costly to remove with likely weed invasion resulting and rehabilitation required. Suggestion to create mulch bed on top and establish ground ferns on it.

Key Threat Weeds and When to focus efforts

Weed	Predominant location	Time of year to target
Tradescantia Top Priority	Main Creek, Top Creek, Main Borang, Toolang Creek, Floodplain Creek, Charles St Creek	All year round
Japanese Honeysuckle Top Priority	Track entering from Minak Rd, Borang Rd Res fenceline and into Res from Borang Rd, track of Wombelano Road in vegetation midway between road and Floodplain Creek. Check in veg between oval edge and Floodplain Creek as survey picked up here in 2011	Hand weed year round Spray Spring and Autumn
Creeping Buttercup High Priority	Floodplain Creek, Main Creek, Minak Rd drain and anywhere it is more isolated in good vegetation.	Dig out all year
English Ivy	Target smaller and more isolated patches first. Seedlings anytime seen. Borang Rd Res high priority to maintain high qual veg here.	All year
Blackberry	Scattered across reserve, cut/paint or chip out	Any time except Winter as dormant. Especially target in Autumn to address tip rooting
Square Stem St John's wort Top Priority	Drain along Wombalano Rd, Floodplain Creek including open area,	Nov – Feb Target when flowering to reduce seed set.
Asparagus Fern	Toolang Creekline, Main Creekline, Main Borang, and around Nature trail walking track	Winter. Sweep of reserve to prevent fruiting. Easy to dig out.
Umbrella sedge, Cyperus eragrostis	Floodplain Creek, Minak Rd drain, Charles St Creekline, Main Creek (isolated)	Spring and Summer.
Dolichos Pea	In vegetation off Banool Rd	Spring This is flower time so should be easier to spot
Water Cress	Floodplain Creek	All year
Angled Onion	? scattered	June, July, Aug.
Montpellier Broom	Bushland corner of Charles St/Wombelano Rd, vegetation between Minak Rd and oval edge, vegetation off Mimosa Rd and Banool St.	Aug, Sept, Oct Flowering months
Bamboo High Priority	From property along Toolang creekline. Push back to fence and prevent from entering reserve.	All year.

Nature Play Project

Report for SDLG AGM August 2021

Eliza Lamb

It's been another strange year for running groups amid a global pandemic. We saw many sessions cancelled but luckily our group was able to meet on a few occasions here and there for some gardening, play activities and a chat.

We finally were able to hold our two guest speaker events that had been previously cancelled in 2020. David Moncrieff gave a wonderful presentation in April on the beehives at Birdsland. Families that joined us for the session enjoyed tasting honey and asking lots of questions about bees and beekeeping at home. At the start of July we had David De Angelis give a very informed talk on frogs that are found in the Dandenong Ranges. He discussed their lifecycle, habitat and played frog calls for us to listen to.



David Moncrieff led us on a walk to the hives, it's great having these pollinators so close to the garden!



David giving a mock demonstration using the smoker to subdue bees at the hive



David De Angelis gave a very informed talk on local frogs and habitat requirements

While it has been a quiet winter in the vegetable garden at Birdsland with few sessions running, we have started making new garden beds and paths using mulch and cardboard to suppress couch grass. The children have painted a set of cupboards to act as our Community Seed share.



Our community seed share will be up and running soon, stocked with seeds collected from the Birdsland garden and from our own backyard veggie patches.

~ Friends of Belgrave Rail Trail Report, 2020-21 ~



WORKING BEE, SWAN BEND, 11 JULY 2021

L-R: Eva Davis-Jones, Jordan Cook (kneeling), Rob Pergl, Catherine Keil (in green vest), Eliza Lamb, Ros Baxter, Jan Loden Judy Donnelly, Cathy Sewell with baby son, and Ian Rainbow

Introduction

As with all Friends groups across Australia, but particularly in Victoria, the past year brought many challenges the primary being numerous lockdowns during which times we were not permitted to work on the Trail. In spite of this we were able to complete a major project involving five working bees, and are now looking forward to relaunching regular weeding and planting sessions in the coming year, when permitted.

Summary

Convenors: Judy Donnelly (JD) and Catherine Keil (CK) were Co-Convenors during the past year.

Insurance

We were obliged to switch insurance from Landcare to the Shire of Yarra Ranges. This required paperwork and a physical inspection of the Trail by the Council staff which finally took place March 23 2021.

Council Support

As a result of this insurance, we receive additional assistance from Council in the form of high-vis vests with the Friends name on them, formal working bee forms, tools, feedbacks, new signage (underway) and support for future events.

First Aid Training

Under the insurance terms, we must have a trained FA person at all working bees. CK is already well-qualified; JD completed training provided by Council.

Swan Bend - Communities Environment Program (CEP) - AusIndustry Grant

The Friends' major focus in 2021 was the completion of work relating to the regeneration of Swan Bend, funded by a \$5,000 grant from the CEP program which had been applied for in 2018 by Vicki Boyle, then-SDLG Vice-President and Rail Trail Convenor. Work had not commenced on the grant in 2019 so CK applied to AusIndustry for an extension (granted) and JD became signatory for the project. Rob Pergl's firm, EcoSystem Land Management, had been awarded the contract. This required acknowledgement of potential conflict of interest, as RP is also President of SDLG and has close relatives working with the Southern Dandenongs Community Nursery (SDCN) from whom the project was to purchase plants. This was resolved with AusIndustry and RP was able to start in early April 2021. He and his crew completed major works on the site, including weed removal, erosion control, translocating approx. 200 plants within the site, and planting 350 tube stock obtained from Knox Environmental Society and SDCN. As per the grant agreement, over 100 hours of volunteer work were also completed, primarily planting on the west side of the gully and weeding English Ivy on the east side. A list of all plants is included at the end of this report for future reference.

CK and JD would like to acknowledge their gratitude to members of the SDLG committee and local residents Cathy Sewell, Richard Pearson and Jann who volunteered their time to ensure we completed the project. We are also grateful to RP for his advise on future management of the area, and of the Trail in general.

We hope to hold a community event in late October, with support from Council, including a Walk and Talk by RP to celebrate the uniqueness of this section of the trail, provide information about indigenous plants and invasive weeds in the area, and encourage more people to join the Friends group.



Sign explaining the grant and work carried out on the Trail.

Erected mid-June 2021.



Some of the hundreds of tube stock planted on the west side of Swan Bed



Translocated Rough Tree-ferns

Tecoma Primary School “Rewilding” Project

The school borders the western end of the Rail Trail, across from Tecoma Railway Station. SDLG Secretary Ros Baxter was approached in 2020 by the school for assistance in increasing the indigenous plantings on the property. CK and JD met with Deb Langford (DL) earlier in the year and walked around the property. It had been hoped that RP would be able to lead the project but his workload made this impossible. As of the writing of this report in early August, SDLG committee member, Ian Rainbow, had kindly agreed to take over the project. He, CK and possibly JD will confer with DL when the current lockdown ends and will endeavour to launch the project as soon as it is viable.



Proposed planting bed, Tecoma Primary



Deb Langford and Catherine Keil at Tecoma Primary.
Planting bed on the right; trees bordering sports oval on left.

Belgrave Railway Station Carpark - Application by VicTrack to SoYR December 2019

On behalf of the Friends and with significant input from members of SDLG, JD submitted an Objection to this application, and later presented the objection at the 23 March Council meeting. Particular concerns were the removal of many mature trees (weakening the already-fragile wildlife corridor), damage to native vegetation during construction and the inappropriately urban style design of the building. The application was approved with 24 conditions to be fulfilled - including greater protection to trees - prior to a permit being issued.

Plans for 2021-22 and Conclusion

Although lockdowns severely restricted our ability to hold working bees, the Friends group now has a solid base from the Swan Bend project from which to start rebuilding, and holding monthly working bees again. We will focus on maintaining

weed control around Swan Bend and hope to also return to other parts of the Trail that need attention. We have already had interest from two local residents wanting to join the group, and the many people who stopped and spoke to us at Swan Bend and thanked us for our work, confirmed the great interest our local community has in ensuring this area is well cared for.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Donnelly and Catherine Keil

Addenda: Planting at Swan Bend

Contractor Ecosystem Land Management identified over 200 small plants on the site that were suitable for translocation, and moved these primarily to the west side. Species successfully re-located included *Australina pusilla* ssp. *Muelleri* (Shade Nettle), *Blechnum cartilagineum* (Gristle Fern), *Cyathea australis* (Rough Tree-fern) and *Hydrocotyle hirta* (Hairy Pennywort).

Twenty-three different species (350 tubestock) were purchased, and planted by volunteers and the contractor. These included four species of overstorey (40 plants: *Acacia dealbata*, *Acacia melanoxylon*, *Eucalyptus obliqua* and *Eucalyptus cypellorcarpa*) nine species of shrubs (180 plants: *Bedfordia aborescens*, *Goodia lotifolia*, *Hedycarya augustifolia*, *Myrsine howitianna*, *Olearia argophylla*, *Olearia lirata*, *Ozothamnus ferrugineus*, *Pomaderris aspera* and *Solanum aviculare*); and ten species of understorey plants (130 plants: *Dichondra repens*, *Echinopogon ovatus*, *Gonocarpus tetragynus*, *Hackelia latifolia*, *Microleana stipioides*, *Plantago debilis*, *Poa ensiformis*, *Poa tenera*, *Tetrarrhena juncea* and *Viola hederacea*).