

Friends of Belgrave Lake Park

Annual Report 2022

There has been little progress at Belgrave Lake Park during the past 12 months. With only one member of what has, in any case, always been a very small group available for almost all this period, “working bees” have been non-existent and the weekly activities of just one person have not been sufficient to keep on top of the ever-burgeoning weed problem. In July, following a request for assistance, Council’s Bushland Team committed to carrying out several weed “blitzes” and other tasks that cannot be handled by one person alone. However, to date, there has been no action.

Fewer than two dozen new plants were installed during 2021-22, although the Bushland Team has available a selection of hardy grasses which it promises to instal in a particular problem area once the ground dries out. The recent La Nina rains – and consequent repeated flash flooding of Monbulk Creek – have caused substantial damage to both old and new vegetation. The creek itself has been dammed in several places by litter carried along by the floods and although Melbourne Water has been advised of this, it appears that it may be several months before any clean-up will occur. Meanwhile, more litter is certain to accumulate each time the creek floods. See photos below. Note: The plant guards included in the litter are those used by Melbourne Water, not Yarra Ranges Council.

In a bid to raise its profile and thereby attract new members, Friends of Belgrave Lake Park had a stall at the Platypus Festival in October. As a result, one new member has joined and there have been a further two expressions of interest. The newcomer is very experienced and knowledgeable but, unfortunately, is available on a very limited basis only. Thus, for the time being, the problem of inadequate manpower remains.



Friends of Belgrave Rail Trail Annual Report, 2021-22

This year we were disappointed that COVID restrictions, illness and work commitments greatly affected our ability to hold regular working bees, we nonetheless met on five occasions, accruing 63 hours of volunteer time.

During lockdowns, long-time volunteer Christine, who lives nearby, worked diligently on the patch on Dickinson Street where the street meets the Trail. We planted this area in our earliest years of 2015-2016. Some plants had thrived but the patch was overrun with weeds. Christine did an enormous amount of work on her own, even paying for plants and obtaining some from the YRC Bushland crew. She's done a stellar job and still monitors and works on this spot in her spare time.



Our working bees focussed on this patch and the area immediately east towards the station. We were mostly weeding but also planted 50 Kidney Weed (*Dichondra repens*) to supplement existing *Dichondra* that was thinning. Unfortunately, many new plants were eaten, Christine suspects by a rabbit! The mature mid-storey shrubs along this section, planted some years ago, are doing very well. We weeded around these shrubs to create a space to facilitate safe spraying by Council of the *Erharta* and *Tradescantia* that had taken over much of this section. In March, we were delighted to find a large patch of Forest Nightshade (*Solanum prinophyllum*) as shown in the photo.



In early October we returned to Swan Bend where much planting and translocating of Rough Tree Ferns had been done last year thanks to an AusIndustry Communities Environment Program grant. We had monitored the plantings during the year, and it was encouraging to see many flourishing, particularly the grasses, Bidgee-Widgee, *Dichondra* and many ferns. We weeded the area and will monitor for Sycamore Maple (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) seedlings which are in abundance. We noted the presence of several Burrowing Crayfish chimneys and what appear to be some kind of 'bowers' (two found on two different occasions).

We were guided in our efforts at Swan Bend by SDLG President Rob Pergl, and Sander Groeneveld who, as a YRC contractor, has undertaken work on the Trail for many years. Rob and Sander walked the Trail on 31 August with Judy and shared valuable information and suggestions. They suggest we focus on hand weeding English Ivy (*Hedera helix*) and Asparagus Fern (*Asparagus scandens*) in the area east of the Bend which has not been touched for some time by the Friends' group. Sander's crew was working that day behind The Hub parking lot, and it was heartening to learn there's remnant vegetation there and in many spots on the Trail.

As part of our educational goals, during each bee the Friends spoke with passers-by and handed out YRC weed and plant brochures. Locals show great interest in learning about the environment, so we will certainly continue this practice.

We deeply regretted the absence this year of two long-time volunteers, Ros and Cathy, who for various reasons were unable to assist. Fortunately, we welcomed several new neighbours from Station and Seymour Streets who are attending regularly and are eager to learn. We were grateful that Ian Rainbow (Friends of Upwey South Reserve) also joined us several times and shared his knowledge, answering many of our questions as we came across unknown plants, and SDLG President, Rob Pergl, who has done the same and himself monitored (and weeded, with SDLG Committee member, Eva Davis-Jones) Swan Bend several times. We also thank SDLG Committee member Sally Everitt who came to some of the bees.

We are planning a working bee/Christmas party on the Trail before the end of the year and look forward to holding bees more regularly in the upcoming year.

Friends of German Gully

Activity Report for 2021 – 2022

FoGG has been less active than usual this year with weather, COVID, roadworks and other commitments.

We have mostly worked on the roadside planting along Lockwood Rd south of the 'five-ways' roundabout.

A couple of local families have joined in and planted and maintained around 200 plants.

Approximately 400 plants were planted across our few sites and properties, with another 300+ to be planted soon.

Sharon McNeil

Convenor, Friends of German Gully



Images of our narrow roadside work site showing plantings

Friends of Minak Annual Report 2021-22

Friends of Minak meets monthly on the first Saturday of each month from 10am to 12.30 pm approx.

We are a small group with regular attendance by about 4 people.

Our goal is to continue Darcy's work, trying to address key threat weeds within the reserve, maintain areas of high-quality vegetation and maintain the areas that have already had much work put into them. Trying to ensure Minak remains a special place for the community and retains habitat values.

Some of the work and areas we have focused on this year include:

Trying to maintain the swamp area opposite and below the community hall that Darcy literally transformed. There is much work to continually be done here and it has been subject to impacts from recent heavy rain events.

Some work addressing trad along the main creek line running through Minak.

Considerable work addressing Japanese Honeysuckle from walking track leading into the reserve from Wombelano Rd. Significant improvement made in pushing this weed species back here. More work needs to continue following up small patches remaining then moving onto larger patch.

Some work along Banool Rd edge, Agapanthus and any other key threat weed that can be easily dealt with.

Some work along drainage line from Charles Street down to under Community House and within this vegetation cell.

We are always happy to welcome anyone who would like to join us.

Contact Karen Davies Ph: 0400 385 918 or kdav246@yahoo.com.au



A recent view of the entry to the swamp below Selby Community Hall.



Us hard at work.

Nature Play Project Report 2021 – 2022

by Eliza Lamb, SDLG Committee Member and
Founder of Nature Play



It's been a busy 12 months at Nature Play at Birdsland. At the start of 2022 we were joined by members of Dandenong Ranges Bush play which is a local meet up group for young families to explore the beautiful surrounds of the Dandenong Ranges. Members of this group took over facilitation of our Thursday sessions, which occur once a month. Many thanks go to Maria, Jacqui, and Jacinta for taking this on and introducing many families of this group to Birdsland and our community garden. Being a facilitator of a playgroup is particularly hard work, especially when you have your own young children to attend to! In February 2022, one of our founders, Andrea, stepped down from hosting events, we thank Andrea for all her time and efforts, particularly in designing our logo and running numerous art experiences over the years!

In 2023 our facilitators will concentrate on the Sunday session, with scope to run an adult-only session at another time in the month to maintain the garden space and keep on top of all those weeds!

Some highlights this year:

- A consultation with Aunty Gail and Aunty Julianne from the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation was undertaken to look at indigenous food plants for the bush food garden, a project significantly delayed due to the pandemic. We are grateful for their assistance and sharing of knowledge particularly around the use of the Woi wurrung language to label species in the garden.
- Working with Living Learning to host an upcycling workshop for our attendees. The group took part in recycling clothing to make a piece of art for the Birdsland Environmental Education Centre (see photos). Many thanks to Jeroen Modderkolk and the rest of the YRC Bush Crew for making us a base for the art piece using tree branches and a stump from the June 2021 storm.
- EVENTS!! It was wonderful to be a part of the Minibeast Festival and The Platypus Festival this year and connect with families attending.



The upcycled fabric art piece looks beautiful at Birdsland Environmental Centre, complete with flowers made from old clothing and fabric offcuts.



Our creative table at the recent Platypus Festival was a hit! Thanks to Garrique from SDCN for supplying Hakea fruit for us to use.

Plastic Bag Free Dandenong Ranges Report 2021 – 2022

We are a group of volunteers who sew in our spare time to support the Plastic Bag Free Dandenong Ranges (PBFDR) group by making Boomerang Bags and produce bags, which we sell or donate to encourage the use of alternatives to plastic bags. At the start of this calendar year we moved to our new sewing location at the Birdsland Environment Education Centre, where we sew most Wednesdays.

Our activities are highlighted at on our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/plasticbagfreedandenongranges>

In the last financial year, we have:

- Sold 177 'Bought to Support' bags, 45 PBFDR logo bags, 24 drawstring vegie bag sets, 81 library bags
- Donated 166 'Borrow and Bring Back' Bags



Eastern Regional Library bags

Our largest repeat customer to date has been Proserpina Bakery, and we are very grateful for their support. We are yet to stock our bags in their new location in Ferny Creek.

Our highlights this year have included donating bags to food relief organisations, community gardens, women's refuges, community organisations involved in post-storm recovery to name just a few. We continue to form links through our donations within the community and enjoy highlighting those doing good things on our Facebook page. We are currently working on bags from children's prints which we are donating to toy libraries, playgroups and childcare centres. Our handmade bags from recycled fabric are currently being sold in Unwrapped Pantry, Your Local Pantry, Avonsleigh General Store, The Patch Store.

We attended the Mini Beasts festival on 3 April where we sold small plain bags which we helped children to decorate in minibeast themes

We also welcomed some new sewers, Mary, Denise, Raffaella and Miani.



Some of our sewers: Ros, Sue and Michele



Our stall at MiniBeast Festival

Friends of Upwey South Reserve Report 2021 - 2022

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 clear as time passes, which is a source of great satisfaction and pride to us all.

We are well supported by Yarra Ranges Bushland Management and Volunteer Support staff, with equipment, training & funding. We endeavour to repay this support with regular working bees, engaging the local community, and direct communication about issues that need their attention.

Despite the constraints of pandemic lockdowns, we were able to have 12 working bees in the last year.

Membership has been stable with ten active members.

Highlights

1. **Tennis Courts Upgrade:** Discussions with YRC project engineer and Bushland Management led to preparation & planting of garden beds beside the entrance drive. Both YRC departments generously supplied funding, plants, and labour for this project to help beautify the entrance and establish screening vegetation.
2. During lockdowns we were unable to plant several hundred tube stock we had ordered. YRC agreed to fund extra effort by Indigenous Designs to plant 259 plants over 8 different areas before a late morning tea!
3. We excluded from mowing a small experimental patch to protect a small population of Early Nancy (*Wurmbea dioica* ssp. *Dioica*) and a carnivorous perennial herb now named on iNaturalist as Grassland Sundew, (*Drosera hookeri*) to flower and produce seed. This was successful and as a bonus many other significant species appeared including Common Onion Orchid, Chocolate Lily, and Kangaroo Grass and quite a few weeds to create a small wildflower meadow. This project will continue, and we look forward to next Spring.
4. First Aid Training. Two of us were able to attend a YRC supplied First Aid course.
5. Consulting ecologist Dr Graeme Lorimer gave a Plant identification tour of USR for members and guests. We all learned a great deal about plants and weed control. Graeme also left us with a comprehensive list of most native species in USR for future reference.
6. FoUSR participated in the Foothills Festival with a small information stand. This was a great networking opportunity. A first draft of our new brochure was quickly prepared by Thomas McGarr.
7. Thomas has now completed the brochure, including a wonderful new logo, and followed this with a poster to display during working bees for passers-by to learn of our activities. Tom's contribution will enhance our group's public profile greatly.
8. We used our small grant from YRC to cover insurance, printing costs and to buy a Gorilla Cart.
9. Vinnie Aulich, the new YRC volunteer co-ordinator, replacing Jen Ellison, now on parental leave and a proud parent, joined us for a working bee and a tour. He will help develop written plans in consultation with YRC Bushland Management & contractors for USR.
10. Our list of orchids grew this year with addition of Maroonhood to the list which also includes regular sightings of Nodding Greenhood, Common Bird Orchid, Mountain Greenhood and Common Onion Orchid. These are testament to the health and importance of our lovely reserve.

WORKING BEE STATISTICS

1 JULY 2021 TO 30 JUNE 2022

Working bees:	12
Average volunteer attendance:	6.5
Total volunteer hours on site:	178.5
Planted jointly with YRC	598
Bags of weed removed:	82
Total Volunteer Contribution	
@ \$41.72 per hour	\$7447



11. A European Fallow Deer was an unwelcome addition to our wildlife list!

Credits

I would personally like to extend my congratulations to all of our group for a wonderful twelve months of enjoyable activities where we achieved much, despite the restrictions required to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Our excellent working relationship with the Bushland Management crew of Yarra Ranges Council continues. They supplied materials, many plants this last year and funded extra contractors to plant when we were unable. Our gratitude goes to Gavin, Steve, Shane and all their staff.

Ross, Dylan, Michelle and other staff at Indigenous Designs are always helpful informing us of their plans and being available to consult.

Once again Yarra Ranges Council have kindly supplied a small maintenance grant of \$1000, under the auspices of Landcare Victoria Inc. covering running expenses for insurance, small tools, and other supplies.

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.

Next Year

Next year we will continue to run working bees on the last Saturday of each month as allowed by lockdowns and weather.

Ian Rainbow

Secretary, FoUSR

July 2022

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