

## From your Committee

Victorians are looking to resume their normal lives and get out and about after a year dominated by Covid19 lockdowns and tight restrictions. The coronavirus threat has not disappeared, but we are trying to return to our normal lives whilst still observing sensible Covid19 precautions.

Perhaps this explains the upsurge in interest from people wanting to be involved in outdoor activities such as those offered by *Friends of the Prom*. All the activities we have run since restrictions eased last year have had very strong volunteer turnouts, including the 60 who turned out for our recent annual beach clean/tree-guard building activity.

For our part we have hit the ground running in 2021, with an extra Sea Spurge weeding activity in early February, shoe-horned into our normal program at short notice.



Above: Darby River and chalet, about 1922. Photo courtesy of Parks Victoria

## Archiving our historical records of the Prom

A small group of FOTP members has recently begun work on a project to assist *Parks Victoria* digitise its archive of historic and current slides, photos, images and maps that former head-ranger Jim Whelan has collected over his long career at the Prom. He hopes to make the collection of research papers, historical records and visual materials available to researchers and the interested public. Karin has begun test scans with the guidance of the *Parks Victoria* archiving team as regards details of resolution of scans, numbering and filing system and slide selection criteria. Jim Whelan hopes to involve summer rangers in sorting the large slide collection to determine those to be scanned for the archive.

# Friends of the Prom

NEWS#221

March 2021

## WHAT'S INSIDE

- 2 A Postscript to the 2020 Biennial Shore Bird Count; Sea Spurge blitz
- 3 Sea Spurge continues; Koala habitat; new and old members
- 4 Beach clean February
- 5 The Nursery; about ParkConnect
- 6 Article on Volunteering at the Prom
- 8 Upcoming events and Contacts

## *A postscript to the 2020 Biennial shore bird count*

Ranger Tess Hoinville reported in our last newsletter that the November 2020 *Biennial shore bird count* recorded a pair of Hooded Plovers at the south end of Norman Bay. Tess continued to monitor this pair, duly finding a nest of three eggs. She reported that the eggs hatched on 20th January, first spotted by FOTP members Valerie and Gerry de Lang, who, by happy coincidence, were visiting their daughter at Tidal River and decided to check out the nest that day. By early February, there were only two chicks and these were again spotted by Valerie and Gerry on 27th February, the day of our beach clean activity. In fact, Valerie and Gerry can claim a special relationship with this Hooded Plover family, having been part of the group that identified the adults for the Biennial count.



*The Hooded Plover pair at South Norman with two chicks visible (Tess Hoinville)*

## *Sea Spurge blitz continues*

They started by wearing raincoats and finished in shirt sleeves — typical Prom weather!

We hit the Sea Spurge at Squeaky Beach hard last November and this latest activity on Wednesday 3rd of February was intended to mop up any Sea Spurge stragglers. It

was organised at short notice by Jo Stubbs, our excellent intern.

21 volunteers turned out to remove the last of the Sea Spurge. However, the weed refuses to give up that easily, and so the President's prize for the last Sea Spurge plant on Squeaky Beach is yet to be claimed.

So in the short term we need to revisit Squeaky Beach regularly to keep on top of the regrowth and 'protect our investment'.

Rangers Tess Hoinville and Luke Johnson did a great job helping Jo set up this activity and working with us on the day.

*Below: Sea Spurge volunteers with rangers Tess and Luke at Squeaky Beach, 3 February (Bill Hansen)*

*Right: Sea Spurge regrowth at Squeaky beach (Peter Stanton)*



## Sea Spurge at Picnic Bay

You may recall we were lucky enough to receive another Coastcare grant last year. The grant allows us to open up a second front against Sea Spurge, this time at Picnic Bay. The start was delayed because of Covid-19, but now the contractor sprayed the northern 2/3 of the beach early in February which gives the spurge 6 weeks clear to die off before our first scheduled weeding activity on 26, 27 and 28 March.

*Right: Sea Spurge at Picnic Bay yellowing off at the end of February after being sprayed earlier in the month (Barry James)*



## Koala habitat restoration project

While everyone else was scouring beaches for rubbish on Saturday 27 February, 6 volunteers stayed behind at the Yanakie works yard to finish off the building of tree-guards for Stage 2 of the Koala Habitat Restoration Project. We started on this stage in November 2019, and six sessions later, have completed all 230 guards. 126 of these are already in use, protecting Swamp Gum seedlings at the airfield, 18 more are at the airfield waiting to be used, and there are now 86 at the works yard ready for transport out to the airfield where they will be used to plant more trees for koalas at our May activity.

We thank all the volunteers who helped build the 230 guards over 15 months, with a special mention to John, Geoff R, Dale, Peter, Harry, Peter, Stan, Geoff M and Bill who put in multiple sessions.



*Above: (l to r) Thomas, John, Dale, Geoff R, and Justin — the gun team with the last of the tree guards on 27 February (Bill Hansen)*

## Old and new members

### NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to a new family member group – Casey and Matt Bateman, Islah and Arley Bateman, and Luke Marshman.

Many of our long-standing members will remember Emily, the grand-daughter of Geoff Mee, one of our regular volunteers. As a child, she was a regular fixture at *Friends of the Prom* weekends with her grandfather and her family, busily running around Stockyards campsite, always on a mission.

Well, time passes only too fast, and Geoff announced recently that Emily is now a mum, having given birth to a baby daughter Scarlet on Friday 29th January (8 lb 10 oz).

We wish Emily and Scarlet all the best and hope to see, eventually, little Scarlet running around Stockyards too.



## Beach clean 27 February

There was a strong turn-out for our annual beach clean on Saturday 27 February. This activity is the *Friends of the Prom* contribution to the national *Clean Up Australia Day* — we were a week early as the official day is Sunday 7 March.

54 volunteers spread out to scour the beaches for rubbish at Oberon Bay, Norman Bay, Squeaky Bay, Picnic Bay, Whisky Bay, Darby Beach and Cotters Beach as well as the Big Drift track.

Groups reported that the amount of rubbish was down on previous years. But they still found the usual array of discarded tissues, plastic bottles and drink containers. There is always at least one used baby's nappy and a number of unusual items — this year Mary found a boogie board far from the ocean at The Big Drift.

Peter and his co-leader, Alister, took their group of five 8th Knox scouts to the south end of Norman Bay via Biddys Track, returning along the beach and collecting rubbish as they went. They also did a sweep of the estuary and carpark before returning to the nursery shed to sort and count their haul of rubbish. They finished the day with

a swim at Norman Bay. Needless to say, the scouts were weary after such a busy day and were more subdued at the campsite that night.

Olga reported from Cotters beach north that Lesley and Gordon organised a systematic patrol of the beach with Scottish efficiency, ensuring all sections of the beach from shoreline to dunes were inspected for rubbish, without overlap. This beach attracts a large quantity of sea-borne rubbish — Sigrid sacrificed her dry shoes to retrieve a balloon from the water and the group had no trouble filling their bags with all sorts of items including a gaff-hook and a diver's flipper.

Mark led a small group of fit walkers along the coast trail to Oberon Bay. Valerie and Gerry went only as far as Little Oberon Bay collecting rubbish from the track and the beach. They collected about 1/3 of a bag, mostly tissues and plastic bottles, a notable find being the take-away coffee cup that had lasted someone all the way from the Tidal River store before being thrown into the bush. They were pleasantly surprised by the number of walkers who took the time to stop to chat and thank them for their efforts.

Mark, Deb, Ric, Emma, Eddie and Basia and went on to Oberon Bay where they split into little groups to scour the beach, Growler's Creek estuary and the campsite, finding more rubbish than they could handle, particularly along the creek. They left their rubbish bags at the campground to be collected by Parks Vic staff at a later date.

An important part of this activity is to sort the rubbish into different categories and record the quantities for *Tangaroa Blue Foundation's Australian Marine Debris Database*. For most volunteers, the day finished about 3:30 pm after groups had finished sorting and recording. The Oberon Bay volunteers had a longer day, returning to the campsite for happy-hour at about 5:30pm.

We pass on a big thank you to seasonal ranger Ryan who supervised the activity and helped us out during the day.

*Below: Sigrid's balloon on Cotters beach*

*Right: Sorting and recording rubbish at Stockyard (Olga Wilkinson)*



## The nursery

The nursery has been buzzing lately, with a number of new faces. The increased numbers allow us to do some serious work around the Tidal River campsite.

Over the school holidays we were joined by a cohort of our own volunteers' grandchildren who not only brightened up the place, but helped out with picking up rubbish, weeding and watering.

An even smaller visitor surprised us in January. A Pygmy possum chose to leave life in the tree-tops and set up home in a box of tea-towels in the nursery's kitchen.

We were sorry to farewell Jo Stubbs on Thursday, our intern, who worked alongside us for just over two months. Apart from helping out with chores associated with the nursery, Jo was able to:

- prepare a procedures manual for the nursery – particularly for new volunteers;
- compile an interactive list of plants associated with the nursery with links to botanical descriptions;
- prepare a procedures manual for Sea Spurge removal; and
- organise a Sea Spurge removal activity for Squeaky Beach on 3 February 2021.

We look forward to reading a copy of Jo's final report on her internship and wish her luck for the remainder of her Masters of Horticulture studies at Melbourne University.



Left: Pygmy possum visitor to the nursery (Jo)

Right: Bill, Jo and Mary checking out Swamp Gums planted for koala habitat by FOTP at the airfield, January 2021

Below: (l to r) Antoinette, Chloe, Kelsey, Linda, Olga and Heather weeding and planting behind the lodges at Tidal River



## Registering for an activity on Park Connect

A. For first timers:

1. Get into *ParkConnect* through your browser
2. Register as a volunteer with *Parks Victoria* and provide contact details and emergency contact
3. When registered, click Search activities and Groups, find the group 'Friends of the Prom Inc' and join (not the same as being a financial member)

Only do Steps 2 and 3 once.

B. If you have completed Steps 2 and 3:

4. Log into *ParkConnect* via your browser
5. Click 'My activities and Groups'. The name 'Friends of the Prom' will appear if you have previously registered as a volunteer on *ParkConnect* and 'joined' Friends of the Prom.
6. Click 'Friends of the Prom' and the Friends of the Prom page will load.
7. Click on the activity you want to join.
8. Click 'Join activity'  
You are in!

## Volunteering at the Prom— an article for 'Just Community'

Wilson's Promontory is a spectacular formation at the southernmost part of the Australian mainland. The promontory is an ancient granite mass jutting out into Bass Strait and is made up of granite mountains connected to the mainland by the low and narrow Yanakie Isthmus and a number of islands. One of Australia's oldest and most iconic national parks, it is affectionately known to generations of Australians as the Prom.

Some areas of the Prom are remote and wild, retaining superb natural values, while others have been drastically changed by past farming practices and wildfire or are under pressure from high visitor numbers and the spread of feral animals and weeds.

The *Wilson's Promontory Conservation Action Plan* (Parks Victoria 2017) defines and prioritises conservation strategies to tackle the most serious threats to the Park's conservation assets. The plan highlights restoration of the Coastal Grassy Woodlands on the Yanakie Isthmus as a high priority for the park managers as it has been largely over-run by Coast Teatree. Before European settlement, this open ecosystem once extended across about 50 sq km of sandy low-lying country of the Yanakie Isthmus. Parks Victoria (Parks) has focused its initial restoration efforts on a block of approximately 200 ha where it works closely with academic researchers to develop trials and experiments, the results of which are the basis for continuing improvement to the method.

The Victorian State Government recently announced funding for the Prom Revitalisation Project (Parks Victoria 2020). This basket of capital works is aimed at improving the natural conservation values of the Prom but also improving the visitor experience. The pressure on the Park from high visitor numbers during peak season will be addressed by building a new visitor precinct just outside the park with an education centre, new and upgraded walking tracks on the western side of the Prom, additional low-impact

accommodation inside and outside the Park and measures to reduce traffic within the Tidal River campsite.

However, the most exciting part of the project is the building of a predator-proof fence across the Isthmus at the Park boundary to create the Prom Sanctuary. The benefits to conservation programs within the Park are far-reaching because it will support the recovery and re-establishment of native animals, plants and habitats, free from the risk of predators.

Against this backdrop, volunteer groups like the Friends of the Prom (FOTP) provide a conduit for community involvement in Park Victoria's conservation and restoration

its conservation and restoration of degraded areas. The Prom is a great space for the public to enjoy nature and escape the growing footprint of human impact on the planet. But it is not as pristine as we could hope for, and the public can engage by volunteering to help reverse degradation.

FOTP, formed in 1979, is best known for running the plant nursery at Tidal River. Established by Parks in 1997, the nursery has a dedicated group of volunteers, who meet fortnightly to collect seeds and cuttings to propagate seedlings for restoration projects throughout the Park. An important principle in establishing the nursery was that any areas revegetated use only

However, the most exciting part of the project is the building of a predator-proof fence across the Isthmus at the Park boundary to create the Prom Sanctuary.

projects at the Prom. [Another volunteer group, the Prom'n'aides, was formed in 2005 to survey the recovery of vegetation after a large part of the Prom was burnt by wildfire. The group, with 60 members, met once a month for 10 years until 2015 and collected a huge amount of data] Our volunteers share a love of the Prom and relish the opportunity to work outdoors in a beautiful environment while knowing they are contributing towards



*Future Koala habitat —Swamp Gum seedling protected by steel tree-guard June 2020 (Peter Wilson)*

plants propagated from seeds or cuttings originating close to that area.

FOTP has several projects associated with restoration of the Coastal Grassy Woodland on the Isthmus. The first is to restore Koala habitat in its original location near the old airstrip. We have been planting Swamp Gums over the last fifteen years with mixed success. These trees take time to mature to the point where they can withstand browsing by kangaroos, wallabies, deer, wombats and rabbits. Various types of tree-guards have been used in the past, but the only successful ones are made from heavy-duty steel mesh and wire netting, 1.1 m high by 0.9 m diameter. Since 2017, FOTP has been lucky enough to receive grant funding from Landcare and other Victorian government programs to cover the cost of purchasing the materials. Volunteers have constructed 460 tree-guards to date. The idea is to continue building tree guards until the trees are mature enough for the guards to be removed and re-used. Swamp Gum and Manna Gum seedlings are propagated in the plant nursery at Tidal River and volunteers plant out the

seedlings and install the tree-guards at weekend working bees.

We are assisting Parks with a research project designed to assess the population trends of native and introduced grazing animals on the Yanakie Isthmus. Our volunteers collect data from marked plots at six week intervals during the cooler months. We identify, count and record grazing animal pellets and also remove pellets from the plot so that they are not double counted on the next visit – so we are affectionately called the “dung flingers”. Academic researchers designed the project, analyse the data and report on the trends shown.

A small group of FOTP members have also recently begun work on a project to assist Parks digitise its archive of historic and current slides, photos, images and maps that former head-ranger Jim Whelan has collected over his long career at the Prom. He hopes to make the collection of research papers, historical records and visual materials available to researchers and the interested public.

Sea Spurge (*Euphorbia Paralias*) is an invasive weed originating in the northern hemisphere. It has spread along the southern Australian coastline from NSW to southern WA and out-competes native vegetation, changing dune habitats in coastal environments. Spurge infestations can disrupt the breeding and nesting habitat of the threatened Hooded Plover. Many beaches at the Prom are infested with

this weed and the Prom Conservation Action Plan (Parks Victoria 2017) gives priority to its removal.

FOTP was inspired by the Tasmanian volunteer group Wildcare SPRATS, which showed that Sea Spurge can be controlled (but not necessarily eradicated) by spraying with weedicide followed up by hand weeding. Plant re-growth decreases drastically after 2 or 3 visits and this method has proved effective at removing Sea Spurge from 650 kilometres of coastline in remote south-western Tasmania.

FOTP, with Parks, decided in 2018 to apply a similar method to the badly infested Squeaky Beach which is also home to several breeding pairs of Hooded Plover. It received Victorian Government Coastcare grants in 2018 and 2019 for

taken on many challenging projects, with the current ones mentioned above just the tip of the iceberg. Some volunteers come to FOTP with specialised skills and experience on conservation matters. Some develop these skills along the way. With the high turn-over of staff at the Prom as rangers follow their career paths across the State, it is not unusual for the volunteers to be the ones providing the continuity of knowledge and expertise for particular conservation projects. Perhaps not widely recognised, volunteers play an important training role for new Parks staff.

*Bill Hansen, President, FOTP and  
Karin Ruff, Secretary FOTP.*

A small group of FOTP members have also recently begun work on a project to assist Parks digitise its archive of historic and current slides, photos, images and maps

contract weed spraying, which is followed up with volunteer hand weeding of any residual plants and regrowth, particularly in and around native vegetation. As of early 2021, Squeaky Beach is largely clear of Sea Spurge.

This success has encouraged FOTP to begin Sea Spurge removal at Picnic Bay. A 2020 Coastcare grant will pay for contract spraying, and volunteers will follow up with hand weeding visits over 2021-22.

Over its 40+ year life, FOTP has

## References

**Parks Victoria 2017** - *Conservation Action Plan for Parks and Reserves Managed by Parks Victoria*. Wilsons Promontory. Parks Victoria: Melbourne, Australia 2017.

**Morgan et al 2018** - *What does it take to do successful adaptive management? A case study highlighting Coastal Grassy Woodland restoration at Yanakie Isthmus* by John Morgan, John Wright, Jim Whelan, Michael Clarke, Graeme Coulson, Ian Lunt, John Stoner, Tony Varcoe and James Shannon. *Ecological Management & Restoration*, Vol 19 no 2 May 2018.

**Parks Victoria 2020** - [www.parks.vic.gov.au/projects/wilsons-prom-revitalisation](http://www.parks.vic.gov.au/projects/wilsons-prom-revitalisation)

*Left: Volunteers weeding Sea Spurge at Squeaky Beach February 2021 (Peter Stanton)*



## MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Your membership helps us enormously. It covers our basic running costs – most importantly, public liability insurance.

To renew your membership, please contact

Treasurer Charlie:

[membership@friendsoftheprom.org.au](mailto:membership@friendsoftheprom.org.au)

You can pay via Direct Deposit to our Westpac account:

Account Name: Friends of the Prom Inc.

BSB: 033 152

Account Number: 188795

**Important: Please provide your full name so we can identify you from the bank statement.**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Weekend activities in 2021 – please add these events to your diaries, and don't forget to pre-register online in *ParkConnect* for any activity you want to take part in.

### FRI 26–SUN 28 MARCH

3-day Sea Spurge removal at Squeaky Beach

### SATURDAY 22 MAY

Tree planting for koalas at Yanakie Isthmus (also track clearing)

### SATURDAY 3 JULY

Tree planting at Tidal River

### SUNDAY 4 JULY

AGM at Tidal River

### SUNDAY 1 AUGUST

National tree planting day at Tidal River - public event.

### SATURDAY 25 SEPTEMBER

Tree planting and maintaining

plantings at Tidal River and Stockyard Cemetery

### FRIDAY 5 TO SUNDAY 7 NOVEMBER

3-day sea spurge removal at Picnic Bay

We will send out details of these activities before the above dates.

You will need to register with *ParkConnect*. See next column. ➔

### WEEKDAY ACTIVITIES CONTINUE IN 2021

☞ Tidal River nursery – every second Thursday (Register on *ParkConnect* or contact Mary Walker or the Secretary).

☞ Grazer monitoring project – next visit second half of April 2021 – date to be advised. Register on *ParkConnect* or contact Bill Hansen.

## A FRIENDLY REMINDER

This is a reminder that Parks Victoria requires all volunteers working in its National Parks have a *Working with Children Check*, and has extended the deadline for this until 30 June 2021 (due to Covid-19). The online form is easy to fill in and no payment is required, but once your application is approved, you need to go to a post office for your photo to be taken and submitted for your card, which then arrives in the mail. The permit is valid for 5 years.

The instructions to lead you through the process will be sent separately.

## CONTACTS

### Media Enquiries

Bill Hansen (President)  
0417 341 504  
[president@friendsoftheprom.org.au](mailto:president@friendsoftheprom.org.au)

### Membership & General Enquiries

Karin Ruff (Secretary)  
0411 084 295 <[info@friendsoftheprom.org.au](mailto:info@friendsoftheprom.org.au)>

### Nursery Enquiries

Mary Walker  
0408 530 638  
[marywalker295@gmail.com](mailto:marywalker295@gmail.com)

### Treasurer

Charlie Ablitt  
0400 967 054,  
[membership@friendsoftheprom.org.au](mailto:membership@friendsoftheprom.org.au)