

## Presentations at the AGM

We were fortunate to be able to hold a face-to face AGM in the thetrette at Tidal River on Sunday 4th July 2021. Covid social distancing restrictions meant that we were limited to a maximum of 24 people inside the thetrette. It is disappointing that some of you had to miss out and forgo the opportunity to hear two great presentations and chat with old friends over lunch. Thanks

to Parks Vic's Tara Ellard who arranged to live-stream the proceedings, a few of you took up that opportunity to see and hear what was going on, even though they could not take an active part. Thanks also to Tara and Cam Downing for organising our BBQ lunch.

The Committee's report on its activities for the past 12 months is at the end of this newsletter on pages 8/9.



Photo: Jim, Tara and Cassie at the end of the meeting

## Yanakie Isthmus Grasslands Restoration

Jim Whelan, Ecological Restoration Project Officer for the Yanakie Isthmus Grasslands Restoration, briefly set the scene for the current scientific research work on the Isthmus. He showed a short video explaining the importance of ecological cool burning to prevent regrowth of Tea Tree and to promote a natural ground cover of herbs and grasses. However, this was only one part of restoring the area. Parks Vic uses an adaptive management approach to the restoration project and is advised by an expert Technical Advisory Panel. This means they try treatments on a small scale,

observe what happens, then scale up if those treatments are successful. This approach requires a lot of scientific research work and they also try to enlist the help of the community where possible – for example, the grazer monitoring project where *Friends of the Prom* volunteers visit every 6 weeks to count animal pellets.

Also contributing to the research effort is the *Friends of the Prom's* research study grants, the most recent of which enabled Cassie Kalafatakis to investigate the natural regeneration of Coast Banksia.

# Friends of the Prom

NEWS#224

July 2021

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## Cassie's Project on Coast Banksia

Jim introduced Cassandra Kalafatakis, honours student at Latrobe University, and the recipient of FOTP's second research study grant. She presented the findings of her research project on factors affecting the natural regeneration of Coast Banksia at the Prom.

Cassie's project started from the premise that Coast Banksia is not regenerating to replace dead and dying mature trees on the Isthmus. The aims of her project were -

- Investigate apparent recruitment-failure.
- Investigate the survival of both naturally occurring and planted banksia seedlings in different sites.
- Assess the effectiveness of the surrounding vegetation in providing refuge for seedlings and reducing grazing by herbivores.
- Assess the survival of seedlings inside and outside of fenced plots.

Cassie's investigation soon found there was an abundance of seed and seedlings on the ground and therefore seedling dispersal was not the problem.

She set up 8 plots in each of 3 different vegetation types - Coast Tea Tree woodland, Coast Banksia

grassy woodland and Open Canopy Bracken Dominant patch. She ended up with 144 separate sites with 6 banksia seedlings in each site - 864 seedlings in total. Each of these seedlings was measured and monitored over the course of the investigation. Exclusion plots made from fencing material were erected to test for the impact of herbivores. Camera traps were set up at some sites to record visits from herbivores.

Cassie's project found there was clear evidence that browsing by herbivores plays an important impact on seedling survival and that survival was higher when herbivores were excluded in all patch-types.

The refuge provided by dense bracken cover may allow seedlings to escape the attention of browsers as this vegetation type is often avoided by herbivores due to its poor nutritional value. There was a complete absence of primary browsers (Swamp Wallabies and Hog deer) and indirect grazers (Eastern Grey Kangaroo) in camera trap images in the Bracken areas compared to the other vegetation types. Banksia seedlings in bracken dominant patches grew, on average, taller, thicker and retained and grew more leaves during the study period. This indicated that seedlings that emerged in this patch type exhibited a greater capacity to survive and grow.



Top: Hog deer grazing at one of Cassie's study sites

Bottom: A curious emu poses for a selfie at one of Cassie's study sites

**A copy of Cassie's research paper is available from this link — <http://friendsoftheprom.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Cassie-Kalafatakis-Thesis.pdf>**

**Ecological Burning**

In exciting news for the *Friends of the Prom*, Jim Whelan announced that he has donated US\$3,000 (A\$3,882) to *Friends of the Prom*, so that we can extend our research study grant program. Jim received the money for his 'highly commended' recognition in the 2021 International Ranger Awards. Congratulations Jim on your award (we think you thoroughly deserved it!) and thank you for your incredibly generous donation.

Our research study grant program commenced in 2019 with the aim of encouraging young scientific researchers to take on projects associated with the Prom. To date we have awarded two students with \$1,000 each towards their projects, and our Committee has set aside funds for the next grant in 2021.

## Your new Committee

We have a new Committee for the next 12 months —

- President — Bill Hansen**
- Vice President — Deb Henry**
- Secretary — Karen Ruff**
- Treasurer — Peter Wilson**

Other Committee members are: **Olga Wilkinson, Kelsey Fraser** (also our social media editor), **Charlie Ablitt and Peter McDowell**.

Although not formally on the Committee, **Lynne Muir** has kindly agreed to continue as newsletter editor.

We welcome two new Committee members — **Kelsey Fraser and Peter McDowell**. You were introduced to Kelsey in the December 2020 newsletter when she signed on as our social media editor.

**Peter McDowell** has been a regular volunteer at our activities and decided to dial his involvement up a notch by joining the Committee. Peter has sent us a brief profile:

*Hi my name is Peter, I am married with two sons and a grandson on the way. I worked for Telstra for 36 years in various roles from exchange maintenance to project managing. My parents have a block of land at Sandy Point so when I was growing*

*up a lot our holidays were spent there. I have fond memories looking across at the familiar hills of Wilsons Promontory at the end of the bay. We would often visit the Prom to go bushwalking and swimming. When I left Telstra, I wanted to do some volunteer work, so Friends of the Prom was a perfect fit. I joined in 2019 and have enjoyed the sense of community amongst the group and getting to know the Prom better.*

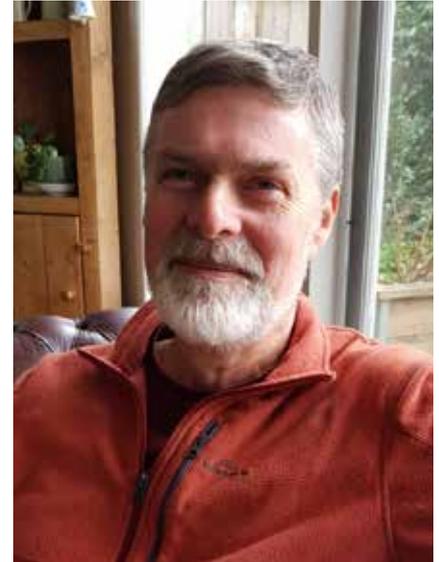
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A special mention goes to **Bert Fabel** who retired from the Committee after many years. He was happy to step aside for ‘younger members’. Bert has served on the Committee since 2009, much of that time as Treasurer. In whatever role, Bert was always valued for his common sense advice, practical skills and willingness to pitch in. It will take some getting used to a Committee without Bert. We will continue to see him at the nursery with his wife Christine, where they remain as active volunteers. Thank you Bert.

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We would also like to thank retiring Committee member **James Wilkins** for his insightful input to many of our Zoom meetings over the past 12 months.

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Above: Peter McDowell



Above: Bert at the nursery with his ingenious device for placing wooden stakes for tree-guards — made out of recycled stakes!

## Walking track plan for the Prom

Our June newsletter included the Committee’s response to proposals for a walking track strategy for the Prom. We recently received a reply from Parks Victoria making the following points:

- They tested all walking track concepts for consistency with the Wilsons Promontory National Park Management Plan 2002.

- Most of the concepts they had been asked to consider were not consistent with the management plan and/or the statutory controls that apply to the Prom e.g. those concepts involving new facilities or tracks within remote and natural areas.
- No more work on these rejected concepts will be done before the park management plan review is completed.

- Parks Victoria wants to start this review once the \$23 million Wilsons Promontory Revitalisation project is well in underway. It will include community and stakeholder consultation.

We are still not sure which of the walking track proposals will go ahead under the Prom Revitalisation Plan.

## Changing of the guard

**P**arks Victoria's liaison rangers for *Friends of the Prom* have been a bit like a revolving door in recent times. However for the past two years while liaison rangers came and went, Tara Ellard (as the Team Leader) was always there as a backstop to do what was needed for us. The Covid pandemic made this a difficult period, with many changes to our activities program and constant email traffic. We are very grateful to Tara for her help during this time, all the while retaining her patience and characteristic good humour. We will miss working with Tara and wish her well in her new position.

Emily Green is returning to the Team Leader position that Tara occupied for two years and Cassie Nolan, the newly appointed Marine Ranger at the Prom, is our new liaison ranger. We look forward to working with Cassie and Emily.

*Right: Ranger Tara Ellard at Picnic Bay, Dec 2020 (Bill Hansen)*

*Below: Cassie Nolan, our new liaison ranger*



**H**i everyone! My name is Cassie and I am the new Marine Ranger at Tidal River. I grew up on the Mornington Peninsula and have a science background, studying a BSc (Global Challenges) at Monash University, with a zoology and marine biology focus. My main passion lies with the marine environment, but that is closely followed by my love of the terrestrial environment. Anything nature focused and you can count me in! After university, I worked around Australia in various marine tourism roles, including white shark cage diving and Australian sea lion swimming tours in Port Lincoln, South Australia. I then briefly worked as a coxswain on Lizard Island on the Great Barrier Reef.

I have also been lucky enough to travel and volunteer at various places around the world, including India, Malaysia, Europe, and North America. One of my favourite experiences was spending two months in Alaska, including ten days tracking and monitoring humpback whales.

I love to learn and try new things, and I'm really excited to work with you all at FOTP. See you all soon!

Cass

## Tree planting at Tidal River 3rd July

Winter is the time of year we like to get as much planting done as possible. The *Friends of the Prom's* nursery at Tidal River is full of last year's seedlings which could not be planted due to Covid-19 restrictions.

On Saturday 3 July 2021, 24 volunteers made a start by planting 470 trees, shrubs and grasses at the Tidal River camp ground. We split

up into 5 teams, each working on separate sites, which has been cleared in preparation for the activity.

We are restoring the tree canopy and bushland understorey through the Tidal River camp ground. The original tree canopy is diminishing through natural ageing and storm damage, and the remaining trees find it harder to withstand high winds. Many large trees were blown

over by recent storms. Natural regeneration of bushland is not happening because of browsing animals (deer and wallaby) and human foot traffic.

We want to thank Parks Vic's Cam Downing and Lyndon Bath, who did a great job preparing the sites for planting before the event and kept us supplied with tools, plants and materials on the day.

*Clockwise from right: Briefing for the tree planting (Eddie Pang); Geoff and Peter at the tree planting (Eddie Pang) Tree planting at Tidal River (Bill Hansen); Camping at Tidal River after the tree planting (Olga Wilkinson); Emily planting a seedling using Bert Fabel's device to position the stakes (Bill Hansen)*



## The Nursery

Mary Walker, the nursery coordinator, is much happier now that the nursery has taken delivery of some of the supplies it had been waiting on for some time. We now have a supply of potting mix, moss treatment solution and cable ties.

The nursery crew introduced a small group of young children and their parents/grandparents to the work of the plant nursery. They were attending the school holiday program run by Parks Victoria. All were very enthusiastic and proved to be exceptionally good workers, planting 50 plants with tree-guards in about an hour. Mary took them on a tour of the nursery to round off their horticultural experience. This program has been a success for the children and for us, and we see that some families have returned to the program from the previous year.

Our new liaison ranger Cassie Nolan introduced herself to the nursery group on a recent Thursday. She had her laptop with her and helped some of the nursery volunteers apply for a *Working with Children Check* and register with *ParkConnect*.

*Right: Christine, Bert and Kelsey working in the nursery's hardening off house June 2021*



### *New members*

A warm welcome to recent new members -  
Mine, Arne & Lena Protz (Thank you for the donation)  
Mark, Jackie, Abigail & Grace Cant  
Fiona Christensen (5/5/21)  
Cornelia Homburg  
Barbara Wellstead  
Keith McDougall  
Pat O'Malley  
Eddie Pang  
Patrick Synan & Nicky Walker

## EVENTS FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2021

### RESCHEDULED TREE PLANTING AT TIDAL RIVER

It was to have been an event for National Tree Day on 1st August, but the Covid lockdown forced us to cancel and reschedule to Saturday 28th August. Everything else is the same, just a different day – refer to the details in the activity notice emailed to you on 23rd July. As always, please register for this activity on *ParkConnect*.

#### SATURDAY 28 AUGUST

National tree planting day at Tidal River in lieu of National Tree Day

#### 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*.

### WEEKDAY ACTIVITIES CONTINUE IN 2021

- ♻️ Tidal River nursery – every second Thursday (Register on *ParkConnect* or contact Mary Walker).
- ♻️ Grazer monitoring project  
The next visit is scheduled for Tuesday 17 August. Register on *ParkConnect* or contact Bill Hansen.

### WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK

All volunteers registered on park Connect received a message from *Parks Victoria* CEO on

20th July, re-stating its policy requiring all volunteers to have a current **Working with Children Check**. This message is in response to concerns expressed by many volunteer groups, including *Friends of the Prom*, about the policy and how it is being implemented. We are disappointed that the CEO's message does not address any of the Friends groups' concerns, except that the date when it becomes mandatory has been set back to 31st December 2021.

We urge all our volunteers to apply for a **Working with Children Check** as soon as you can. The application process is straight-forward if you follow Parks Victoria's instructions in its email message. Don't disqualify yourself from volunteering with us for want of a **Working with Children Check** - we need you all!

## MEMBERSHIP FEE RENEWAL

Memberships expire on 30 June each year, so please consider renewing your membership for 2021/22. Your membership fees keep us going – without them we cease to exist. They cover our basic running costs and most importantly our public liability insurance.

To renew your membership, please contact our Treasurer Peter Wilson at [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

Single: \$15, Couple: \$20, Family: \$25

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

## CONTACTS

### Media Enquiries

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### Membership & General Enquiries

Karin Ruff (Secretary)  
[info@friendsoftheprom.org.au](mailto:info@friendsoftheprom.org.au)

### Nursery Enquiries

Mary Walker  
0408 530 638

### Treasurer

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

# Friends of the Prom Committee Report to the 2021 AGM

Three main things spring to mind when thinking back over the past 12 months (July 2020 to June 2021):

- the Covid19 pandemic played havoc with our scheduling of activities;
- the amazing support we got from our volunteers during this time; and

- the Government's announcement of the \$23 mill Prom Revitalisation Project.

Anyone who thought the Committee could take a break for the duration of Covid restrictions were mistaken. The last 12 months were busier than ever for us — re-scheduling and organising extra activities, managing grants and maintaining the information flow out to our members and friends all against rapidly changing Covid rules.

## OUR PROJECTS

### Sea Spurge

Covid restrictions limited us to a maximum of 10 volunteers for the first half of the year and for four of those months, the Melbourne lockdown allowed only local volunteers.

Squeaky Beach received little attention for over 12 months and we were concerned that Spurge infestation might return, negating all our hard work. We initiated a blitz on Squeaky — 5 days in November (limited to 10) and another day in February (no limit). It is now largely under control again but will need further regular visits to check re-growth.

We decided it was time to open up a new front in the Sea Spurge war and were lucky enough to receive a CoastCare grant to restore Hooded Plover habitat at Picnic Bay. The grant paid for contractors to spray the beach last February plus a re-spray next August. We had planned a three consecutive day hand weeding activity in March to follow up the first spray. The first of these days was cancelled, this time due to flooding, but the other two days were well attended and our BBQ dinner on the Saturday was well received.

### Koala Habitat Restoration

We were on track to meet our commitment under the 2019

Landcare grant to plant 230 trees with steel tree guards by May 2020 until Covid messed up our plans. We were given an extension to June 2021 which we met after our loyal team of tree-guard builders finished off the remaining guards in two sessions after the Melbourne lockdown was lifted. A team of local volunteers planted half the trees in November last year and the remainder were planted in May this year (12 months after originally planned).

### Restoring vegetation at Tidal River

We managed to fit in two tree-planting activities to move some stock out of the nursery. It was very heartening to see enthusiastic local volunteers coming out to support both the July mid-week event and the August National Tree Day event.

### Grazer monitoring

The first visit to clear the sites for the 2020 count was delayed until July because of Covid, three months later than usual. This was followed up with counts at 6 week intervals in September and October. Again our wonderful local volunteers came to the fore to support these events.

The 2021 count commenced Covid-free with site clearing in March and followed up 6 weeks later with a count in April. The June count was completed by the team of Parks Vic seasonal rangers because

the Park was closed again, courtesy of Covid.

## THE NURSERY

Like all our other activities, the fortnightly visits to the nursery were disrupted by Covid.

A limit of 2 volunteers inside the nursery compound meant that much of the activity was focussed on weeding and planting outdoors around Tidal River. To cap it off, nursery boss Mary Walker was stuck behind the 'ring of steel' and not able to travel to the Prom. Some of the vacuum was filled by Parks' Cam Downing who continued some plant propagation work and regularly checked on our precious plants.

The nursery crew enjoyed having Melbourne University horticultural studies student Jo Stubbs helping out for two months over summer, as part of her internship. Jo was able to learn what goes on in the nursery while also producing some operational manuals for us.

In 2021, following the Covid disruption of 2020, the nursery crew welcomed some new volunteers. This has boosted volunteers able to maintain plantings around the Tidal River campground, including the display garden as well as the other activities such as collecting cuttings and seeds, propagating plants, re-potting some of the larger plants, and sharpening tools.

In April we sadly farewelled Marc Moerkerk who passed away in April. Marc with his wife Elizabeth helped get the nursery off the ground in 1995. He was one of the select band of *Friends of the Prom's* life members.

Two challenges facing the nursery for next year are replacing rusted sections of the steel frames of the hardening-off house and forward planning for plantings to be propagated in the nursery. These have already been flagged with Park managers.

## ARCHIVING PROM HISTORICAL PHOTO RECORDS

This new project got off the ground this year. We are digitising a collection of historical photographic slides and photos taken by Park Managers around the Prom. Digitising this material will prevent further deterioration and provide a photographic reference source. We have been set up with professional equipment on loan — a scanning machine, a camera for photographing slides, and a laptop. A small group of volunteers is working on it in their spare time.

## COMMUNICATIONS

If there was a silver lining around the dark Covid cloud, it was the jump in volunteers wanting to be

involved with *Friends of the Prom*. Our financial membership increased by about 30%. The reason for this can be attributed to Covid as people looked for activities closer to home, but also to our vastly improved communications — and this is where we owe a debt of gratitude to Kelsey Fraser our talented social media editor, and Lynne Muir our amazing newsletter editor.

We wait to see if this level of interest is maintained next year, as borders are opened up and travel becomes freer, but also if the *Working With Children Check* requirement has a dampening effect on our numbers.

## THE PROM REVITALISATION PROJECT

The State Government's announcement of a \$23mill. injection of funds for the Prom was welcome news. Of most interest to *Friends of the Prom* was the inclusion of a \$6mill predator proof fence across the Isthmus at the entrance to the Park. The fence has great significance for management of the Park as a sanctuary and elevates the importance of the types of conservation and restoration projects in which *Friends of the Prom* gets involved.

Our enthusiasm is also laced with wariness because of the tension between managing the Park for

'conserving and restoring natural values' as distinct from 'improving the visitor experience'. We strongly support the former, but don't trust governments who want to develop dollar-generating tourism facilities which harm the very attractions they set out to promote.

We would like to see the current management plan for the Prom updated to recognise the big changes that now face the Prom since the previous plan was adopted in 2002.

## THANK YOU

The Committee would like to thank everyone who contributed to our cause over the past 12 months, including-

- Our financial members who keep us afloat;
- The volunteers who turned out for our activities and especially the local volunteers who kept us going through the long period of Covid restrictions;
- Parks Victoria staff who are always there to tend to our needs and keep us working safely. A special mention to Tara Ellard for her help — all with her patience and good humour — we will miss her as she moves on to another position.

*Below: presentation and lunch at the AGM, Tidal River*

