

From Your Committee

PLANNING DAY

These days, we find it harder and harder to arrange for our committee members to meet face to face for meetings, but get around that by usually convening our meetings on-line. On-line meetings are very convenient but not as productive or sociable as meeting in person. In a bid to buck the trend, the committee found a day, Friday 24 November 2023, when everyone could meet in person at Tidal River to devote the day to *Friends of the Prom* issues – and there are always lots of issues. All members of the committee attended apart from Michelle who was unavoidably absent for health reasons.

The meeting had a large agenda, including two items which are much easier to resolve when everyone's in the same room – planning interesting activities for our members in 2024; and sharing out the day-to-day tasks of running *Friends of the Prom*.

This was an enjoyable and productive meeting which firmed our resolve to do it more often, at least once a year.



Above: The committee at Tidal River, 24 November 2023



FRIENDS
— OF THE —
PROM

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MARCH 2024

Introducing our new liaison ranger

Gaby Mitchell has recently joined the team at Tidal River managing the Prom. Gaby reports to Cassie Nolan and has taken over Cassie's role as liaison ranger for *Friends of the Prom*. We look forward to working with Gaby and want to thank Cassie for her support over the past two and a half years.

We asked Gaby to introduce herself and she writes:

"I grew up on a family farm in

Gippsland and studied a Diploma in Natural Resource Management and a Bachelor of Applied Science (Parks Recreation and Heritage) when I finished school.

I have recently commenced in an 18-month Ranger position with the Nature Conservation Program Team at Tidal River. Prior to this, I have worked in the field of Natural Resource Management for a period of approx. 20 years. Although this is my first stint

working for Parks Victoria, my past employment has been mainly with DEECA (predominantly in Fire Management), as well as with the West Gippsland CMA as a Biodiversity Officer and Landcare Facilitator and with Fisheries Victoria as a Fisheries Officer.

I love being out in nature/the great outdoors and am looking forward to working with the *Friends of the Prom* on many rewarding projects this year."



Above: Ranger Gaby briefing volunteers at the Stockyards

Introducing Madeleine (Mads) Dwyer —2024 FotP Student Research Grant Recipient

Friends of the Prom is very pleased to again be able to support scientific research at Wilsons Prom with a student research grant. This year Mads Dwyer, an Honours student of Wildlife Conservation Biology in the Department of Environment & Genetics at La Trobe University in Melbourne is the recipient.

The title of Mads's project is *Impacts of fire regimes and Coast Tea-tree on Siliceous Sand Heathlands at Wilsons Promontory National Park: implications for management and recovery*, which very much complements the work of our 2023 recipient and that of Jim Whelan and other rangers at the Prom. At our 2023 AGM student researcher Aaron Heap spoke about his research on "Restoration of eucalypt forest in Wilsons Promontory National Park:

Implications for forest values and site and landscape flammability."

In her application for the FotP grant, Mads described the three main aims in her research:

- △ Determine and quantify current condition of Siliceous Sand Heathlands in Wilsons Promontory National Park, in terms of species diversity, community composition and invasion status.
- △ Determine whether there is a relationship between the condition of heathlands and their fire regime history.
- △ Determine if there are relationships between heathland composition (above and below-ground) with respect to degree of Coast Tea-tree and Brown Stringybark cover/density/stand age.

The La Trobe research team is working to understand the biogeographical factors that have led to the current distribution of the sandy heathlands in the Park. If they can determine if there are ecological thresholds for recovery of sand heathlands, both with respect to fire history and after invasion by Coast Tea Tree and Brown Stringybark, this information could be crucial to better understand management of sandy heathlands. Their potential for recovery after invasion and the outcomes of controlled ecological burns could be more accurately predicted. We look forward to hearing more about Mads' research later this year.

All our student research grants are paid from the generous donations from members and well-wishers.



Mads doing fieldwork at the Prom for her research project.

A lesson in preparedness

One of our members, Lisel Thomas, has drawn our attention to an article on Bushwalking Victoria's website about a snake bite incident at the Prom in October 2023.

A day walker was bitten by a snake at Oberon Bay. The walker had the presence of mind to stay immobile while his companion fortunately had mobile phone coverage and was able to quickly alert emergency services. Meanwhile members of a walking club, who were camped nearby, rushed to the scene to offer assistance. They applied pressure bandages around his foot and ankle and two snake bandages around the leg up to the thigh. If there had been no mobile phone coverage the walking club members were equipped with a PLB (Personal Locator Beacon) and two Garmin *InReach* devices to call for help.

A Prom ranger was there within 30 minutes and a second ranger arrived with two paramedics after a further 30 minutes. The injured walker was transferred to the rangers' 4WD vehicles and ferried out to the ambulance waiting at the Telegraph Track. A helicopter was not called in this time because the patient was not showing symptoms up to that stage. The ambulance drove the patient to Wonthaggi Hospital (instead of Foster Hospital) because it is the nearest hospital equipped with anti-venom and 24-hour emergency service.

The patient did develop more severe symptoms while in the ambulance but recovered in hospital after receiving the anti-venom.

This incident is a reminder of the challenges that can arise at remote sites at the Prom, particularly in the snake season –

- △ Be vigilant for snakes.
- △ Know First Aid for snake bites.
- △ Do not move the patient.
- △ Carry First Aid kits including 2 snake bandages.
- △ Carrying a PLB or other device to contact emergency services where there is no mobile phone coverage.
- △ Be prepared to wait for help.

Right: Tiger snake on the 5 Mile track February 2023
Photo Eddie Pang



Beach Clean and Database

On Saturday 24 February 27 volunteers gathered at the Stockyards campsite for our annual beach clean-up at the Prom. This activity is timed to coincide as close as possible with the nationwide Clean Up Australia Day (the official date is Sunday 3rd March). Our new liaison ranger Gaby briefed volunteers on safety issues and our president Olga split us up into groups to visit four of the more remote beaches – Hourigans (Shallow Inlet), 5-Mile, Cotters and Darby River. We didn't include the beaches closer to Tidal

River this year because they are regularly patrolled by Parks staff.

After the clean-up, each of the groups returned to Stockyard to weigh, sort, and record their rubbish. This data will be sent through to Tangaroa Blue Foundation's Australian Marine Debris Database.

It was perfect beach walking weather – protected from the sun by an overcast sky, no wind and mild temperature.



Top left: Meiring and Olga weighing rubbish at the Stockyards
 Top right: Shauna, Mary and Meiring sizing up rubbish at the Stockyards
 Bottom right: Katrin, Jane and Glen sorting rubbish at the Stockyards
 All photos by Nelleke Gouws and Sigrid Meier

Beach	Weight of rubbish sorted kg*	
	2024	2023
5 Mile	10.5	9.5
Hourigans (Shallow Inlet)	4.0	30.8
Cotters lake	18.5	11.0
Darby	14.0	7.7

* in some cases, there were items found which were too heavy to carry back to Stockyards

Beach Clean — 5 Mile Beach

Katrin and Karin report: “Ranger Gaby led 10 volunteers to 5 Mile Beach for the beach clean-up.

Those unfamiliar with the 17.5 km drive were impressed by the views over Corner Inlet and varied bushlands along the way. The beach access is being repaired, but we were able to cross the creek on a narrow metal support without any mishaps.

We divided into two groups to cover as much of the length of the beach as possible in 2.5 hours. The northern party found a very clean beach and rubbish was scarce. Even the campsite was quite clean except for 2 large fishing buoys from Panama!

The southern party returned with a bigger and more interesting bounty of rubbish, with Shelley being

applauded for her intrepid forays into the dunes and full sack of rubbish.

It was a real privilege to enjoy the stunning scenery, spotting sea eagles and a rest stop at the beautiful Miranda Creek while picking up rubbish. The group's tally was 10.5 kg of rubbish including robes, floats, lots of Styrofoam, plastic and bottles, plastic containers large and small and balloon remnants. We couldn't help but notice the sea spurge seedlings along the beach, but not reaching into the sand dunes. Probably some seedlings get washed back to sea during king tides, as they are sparsely distributed.

We returned to the Stockyards and sorted our findings into the categories provided by Tangaroa Blue Foundation.”



Top left: Glen, Richard, Karin and Keith take a break at 5 Mile Beach

Top right: Henri with plastic buoys from 5 Mile Beach

Left: Karin taking in the scenery at 5 Mile Beach

All photos by Katrin McMahon

Beach Clean — Darby River Beach

Olga reports: their group of 5 volunteers walked about 7km in their quest for rubbish and spotted 6 Hooded Plovers along the way. They just made it back around the headland before high tide. There were very little of the usual types of rubbish like deflated balloons, straws and streamers, but no shortage of shipping debris like rope, fenders, cabling, light bulbs and plastic containers.

Photos: Clockwise from top left:
Rounding the headland at Darby Beach at high tide,

Olga and Robert unravelling cable at Darby Beach

Group photo (Nelleke, Shauna, Robert, Olga and Meiring) with their rubbish haul at Darby Beach

Boat fender rope at Darby Beach
All photos by Nelleke Gouws



Beach Clean — Cotters Beach

Sigrid and Charlie report: We picked up 18.5 kg rubbish which was taken back to Stockyards for sorting and recording. We also came across two big tangles of rope which was too big to carry – we sent the GPS co-ordinates to Gaby for later collection by Parks Vic staff.

We spotted at least three Hooded Plovers on the beach.

Right: Tim re-purposes an item of rubbish found on Cotters Beach

Below: Cotters is a long beach – Lisel, Rittesh and Tim out front

Bottom: Group shot at Cotters Beach (plus Sigrid taking the photo)

All photos by Sigrid Meier



Restoring Koala habitat on the Yanakie Isthmus

While most of us were busy cleaning up Prom beaches on Saturday 24 February, six volunteers remained behind to re-condition some steel tree guards and begin the next phase of restoring koala habitat. These tree-guards had been surplus to Parks Victoria's needs on Snake Island and were taken to the Yanakie Works Yard where they have been waiting for us to work on.

While only 19 in number, these guards are a useful addition to our existing stock of 690 steel tree guards

that *Friends of the Prom* volunteers have built since 2017 using grant money to buy raw materials.

Many of the trees we have planted at the airbase are now large enough to go it alone. We have scheduled an activity for 20 April to start removing their tree-guards so that we can re-use them for new plantings later in the year.

We hope to have enough recycled tree guards, including the 19 guards re-conditioned on Saturday to plant a few hundred more trees out at the airbase.



Top left: Former Snake Island tree guards at Yanakie works yard

Top right: Thomas and John at work on the Snake Island tree guards

Below: Justin, John, Thomas, Peter and Mary standing before their handiwork (Bill is taking the photo).

All photos by Bill Hansen



Nursery news

On 14 December 2023, volunteers celebrated the nursery's 29th year of operation at their annual Christmas party held at the Stockyards shelter. 20 nursery volunteers attended along with three Park staff – Cam Downing, Cassie Nolan and Gaby Mitchell.



It is not always party time for the nursery volunteers, over the past few months they have collected seeds and cuttings, propagated trees shrubs and grasses, re-potted older seedlings, maintained the nursery facilities, maintained previous plantings and planted more seedlings around Tidal River.

A local newspaper, the South Gippsland Sentinel Times, recently published an article about Mary Walker and her long-standing commitment to the Friends of the Prom's nursery at Tidal River.



*****The Dungflingers are taking a break over the warmer months to allow native dung beetles to do what they do best at this time of year and will resume the pellet counts in autumn. *****

DONATIONS

Friends of the Prom has benefited from generous donations by well-wishers over the past few years. We use these donations to encourage scientific research at the Prom through our program of grants to tertiary students to help with expenses. We have now made the process of donating easier by registering our organisation with Landcare Victoria's Deductible Gift Recipient Fund.

You can make a tax-deductible donation via Landcare Victoria's fundraising page <https://landcarevictoria.org.au/donate>; alternatively, scan the QR-code below using your smartphone. Please make sure you nominate '**Friends of the Prom**' under '**I would like to support a particular group**' on the first page of the online donation form. This will ensure that Landcare passes on your donation to us.



FEEDBACK FROM YOU

If you have any thoughts on what we do, our activities, or any reports in this newsletter, we would love to hear from you – put your comments in an email to the Secretary:

info@friendsoftheprom.org.au

MEMBERSHIP FEES

You don't have to be a financial member to participate in our activities. But we urge those of you who have attended more than one or two activities to become financial.

Your membership fees keep us afloat (just) – without them we cease to exist. The fees we receive are low and only just cover our basic running costs, most importantly our public liability insurance.

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

Please remember to provide your full name as a reference so we can identify you on the bank statement.

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a very warm welcome to the following new members –
Sue Davis,
Lissa Board and
Hannah Kohlman.

EVENTS CALENDAR FOR 2024

Except for the nursery, which is every 2 weeks throughout the year, we will email out details of all activities before the dates shown.

WEEKEND ACTIVITIES

DATE	ACTIVITY
Friday 22, Saturday 23 & Sunday 24 March	3-day sea spurge removal
Saturday April 20	Airbase tree guard recycling – remove from suitable trees and stockpile
Saturday 18 May	Tree planting at airbase
Saturday 27 July	Tree planting at Tidal River (coincides with National Tree Day Sunday 28 July)
Sunday 28 July	AGM at Tidal River
Saturday 24 August	Cultural heritage workshop
Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 October	iNaturalist Bioblitz (location tbd – possibly Vereker Fire Trail, Five Mile Rd)
Friday 15, Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 Nov	3-day sea spurge removal

WEEKDAY ACTIVITIES

Tidal River nursery	Every second Thursday – meet 9:30 am at the nursery compound in Tidal River – see contact below
Grazer monitoring project	To be advised – we expect to re-convene in early autumn 2024

REGISTERING WITH PARKCONNECT

Please remember to register for all activities on *ParkConnect* and make sure you have a **Working with Children Check** loaded on to *ParkConnect*. WWCCs are now compulsory (unless you are volunteering with us for the first time). If you need assistance with navigating your way through *ParkConnect* or the WWCC process, you can contact *Friends of the Prom's* Peter McDowell by email: pdmcdowell101@gmail.com.

CONTACTS

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