



NEPEAN CONSERVATION NEWS

SEPTEMBER 2017



Above: Cameron's Bight. Photo: Ursula de Jong.

Front Cover: Lady Wren; Back Cover: Mister Wren. Photo: Ursula de Jong.

Below: Everlasting Daisy. Photo: Ursula de Jong.



From the president

I write on the first day of Spring in our southern hemisphere: but it feels more like Winter. We have been told by the Bureau of Meteorology that we have just had a dry three months, the warmest Winter on record, and at the same time the coldest mornings for decades. But even as frosts and gale force northerlies continue, Spring is everywhere evident on the Nepean Peninsula. Birdsong is in the air! To my delight the blue wren and harem have returned to the E G Ritchie bushland reserve. The bearded heath, tea tree, swainson pea are in flower; the clematis is draped over weeds and shrubs and trees alike, bountiful and beautiful in full bloom. New growth is evident in grasses, groundsel and much more. Sprouting weeds ensure that our Friends Groups work is never done!

I am reminded of our recent May spent in Finland and Norway, where winter was only tentatively letting go of its hold, and Spring was literally bursting through the ground, with carpets of blue, white and gold in the forests of pine and birch. All deciduous trees were budding, and we were told when the rains come the landscape would turn green overnight. We still had much ice and snow, though we were blessed with a number of glorious sunny days while travelling. Temperatures were well below zero overnight with the daytime barely reaching 6 or 7 degrees C. But day light hours were so long, from around 4.30 am until 10.30 at night. In Finland we enjoyed the lakes and inland seas, and the Baltic where the icy winds blow; grasses and reeds, every sort of duck, birds nesting everywhere; squirrels and hares. The tall straight forests, grow on granite; little arable land here; huge timber industry, locally manufacturing plywood. In Norway we journeyed to experience the fjords and UNESCO world

heritage sites such as the Geiranger and Hardanger Fjords. We were overawed to learn that the fjords were as deep as the snowcovered mountains were high on either side of us. Waterfalls astounded us in their magnificence and power, and the sheer thundering volume of water fed by the slow snow melt. Meadows of flowers delighted us everywhere. A beauty, way of life and climate so different from our Nepean Peninsula.

I have not had time to write and produce the NCG Newsletter, being on Long Service Leave for three months then returning to a full workload. Thank you for your patience. Nonetheless, your committee has been extremely busy with all matters to do with planning and development, with biodiversity, with grant applications, with Friends Groups and with getting our NCG Archives in good order to protect them for the future. In this newsletter there are reports to update you on all these matters. This newsletter has been produced in three parts: the NCG Spring newsletter, an AGM supplement and a planning supplement.

I take this opportunity to thank all of the committee for their hard work and dedication: Barend Frielink (Vice President and Acting President while I was away), Edward Cohen (Treasurer), Jill Robinson (Secretary), Ruth Belfrage, John Trewarne, Sarah Patterson, Eddy de Jong, Gary Naughton, Lisa Howard and Ian Haskins. John Franklin has stepped down from the Committee, but remains as Membership Officer of the NCG.

Happy reading.

Dr Ursula de Jong
president@nepeanconservationgroup.org.au

NCG Membership matters

Welcome to new members: Andy and Silvana Robinson Luon; Steve and Croline Robinson; Lucille Phillips; Ian Gray; Leigh Lansdown; Sam Lake; Murray Holmes; Margaret Letcher; Chris Smyth; Christian Wales, David syne, Chrissy Gordon, Megan Bortolussi, Rhonda Day and Dennis Toth. The NCG looks forward to your participation and contribution.

NCG Membership Report

Note: 81% of memberships in 2016 have been renewed as of 02/09/2017. New memberships for the year total 14. In June we still had nearly 100 non-financial memberships not financial. 40 memberships were contacted by email resulting in a further 15 memberships being updated. Phone calls were made to most of those not contactable by email. The results has been disappointing, with a trickle of renewals occurring over the last few months. Three (3) memberships have been cancelled due to death. A further 7 memberships have been cancelled due to other reasons mainly lost contact or moving from area. We still have 45 non-financial members.

We remind current members of the invitation to join up one new member per annum.

This is crucial if the NCG is to be able to continue its advocacy work with respect to local issues, such as biodiversity and planning, on the Nepean Peninsula. With the weather improving from now on, it would be good to get out meet and greet your neighbours, welcome new residents and encourage them to take an active interest in this very special part of the world.

Thank you to John Franklin for keeping all our membership records up to date, and providing regular updates to the NCG committee.



Swainson pea. Photo: Ursula de Jong.

Reminder that all memberships fall due on 1 January each year – so your membership is due for renewal on 1 January 2018.

We enclose yellow membership forms for your use (new and/or for renewal) with each newsletter – we ask that if you do not need it, to pass it on to a friend, neighbour or family member. Thank you in advance for your continued support.

Thank you to Jill Robinson

For the past three years Jill has been secretary of the NCG Committee. For health reasons Jill has had to tender her resignation effective immediately (September 2017). The NCG Committee takes this opportunity to thank Jill for bringing youthfulness, energy and enthusiasm to the NCG and its committee. Jill set up dropbox for the committee to order and file its agendas, meetings, correspondence and work – all much appreciated when everyone is extremely busy. We wish Jill and her family well, and look forward to welcoming her back some time in the future.



Grasses between driftwood. Photo: Ursula de Jong.

Friends of the Hooded Plover (Mornington Peninsula) Inc Annual Debrief

Friends of the Hooded Plover (FoHP), BirdLife Australia's Beach-nesting Birds team and Parks Victoria held the 2016-2017 Mornington Peninsula Beach-nesting Bird season debriefing on 21 April 2017. Dr. Grainne Maguire (Birds Australia Beach-nesting Birds team manager) chaired the meeting.

Reports from the Data Portal on of the Hooded Plover and Red-capped Plover breeding season were analysed by BirdLife. Parks Victoria provided their views on how the season was managed. BirdLife also discussed a number of new research projects. A PV fox trapper/baiter attended in order to answer any questions. This day was for all members, to hear what has been happening on the beaches, what research may be in the pipe line for next season, and discuss any issues or ideas you may have and catch up with other members.

Keep up to date: <https://hoodedplover.com/mornington-peninsula-2/>

Birdlife Australia news

snippets from September 2017 e-news

Aussie Backyard Bird Count is back.

The Aussie Backyard Bird Count is back for 2017, bigger and better than ever. Australia's favourite birdwatching event begins on 23 October. Have you registered yet?

Leave that chick alone

They look cute and helpless, but chicks out of the nest don't always need your help. BirdLife Australia suggests you step back and assess the situation before 'rescuing' one.

Pied Oystercatchers

How old is Australia's oldest Pied Oystercatcher? A recent sighting may surprise you.

Threatened Species

Researchers from BirdLife Australia are playing an integral role in developing a Threatened Species Index which will allow us to track the trends of target species, assisting conservation actions.

Birds in September

Click here to look forward to what you might see this month, and look back at past records.

Australasian Ornithological Conference

The 2017 Australasian Ornithological Conference will be in Geelong, Victoria, in November. Book your place now!

Keep up to date:

<http://www.birdlife.org.au/>



Gary Naughton and Ruth Belfrage moving archives into their new home.

NCG Archives

Archives find a new home, Ruth Belfrage

The old Information Centre at the entrance to Point Nepean National Park is now the new home of the NCG archival material. We give a big thank you to Parks Victoria for coming to our aid and agreeing to the use of this space for a year. We have signed an agreement to have access to this special building and can now work with the archival material in a clean and secure space. I especially love working in a space where the walls are covered with fantastic interpretive signage, maps and photos of the historic Point Nepean and the area. These cultural stories remind me of the sense of place down here on the Nepean Peninsula.

Several years ago the NCG employed an historian to begin archiving the many boxes containing papers and materials that the committee has

kept since its beginning. One of the recommendations in the report that followed was to find a decent home for the boxes. They were stored at a house at Police Point Shire Park. The house was in a poor and dilapidated condition and the archival material was deemed at risk, being exposed to mould and damp.

We were using the porch on a house nearby to transfer the documents into proper archival boxes as we could not work inside the old house. This was a short term solution as weather was a big issue working outside.

Soon after Parks Vic took pity on us, we had a morning working bee to move all the boxes. Thanks to John Franklin, Gary Naughton and myself we managed to shift all the material to our new archives home. Our challenge was to keep the boxes in the correct order, as they were in the old house.

John Franklin and I have been working through the boxes. As we complete a number we then transfer them to a hired storage facility in Rosebud. We have had a lot of laughs putting shelving units together. The NCG is grateful to Parks Victoria for their invaluable support and look forward to working with them in the future.

Memorandum of Understanding NCG and MPS

Memorandum of Understanding: a Partnership between Mornington Peninsula Shire and Nepean Conservation Group Inc. in the scoping, design and delivery of bushland conservation works to achieve best practice bushland restoration in the Shire managed bushland reserves; agree on an Annual Works Program; duration of this MOU shall be for three years from the date of signing until the 30th of June 2020.

This MOU covers the Shire managed bushland reserves associated with Nepean Conservation Group Inc. which include:

- 1.1.1. Dimmicks Bushland Reserve, 45 Mungala Crescent and 58 Carslake Avenue Blairgowrie.
- 1.1.2. E.G. Ritchie Memorial Flora Reserve, 36 Summoner Street Blairgowrie.
- 1.1.3. Jack Ritchie Track Bushland Reserve, 51 Dana Avenue Blairgowrie.
- 1.1.4. Sid Baker Bushland Reserve, 15 Summoner Street Blairgowrie.
- 1.1.5. Fawkner Avenue Bushland Reserve, 25-31 Fawkner Avenue Blairgowrie.
- 1.1.6. Slips Reserve, 11-17 Stringer Road Blairgowrie.

- 1.1.7. Tyrone Bushland Reserve, 7-17 Hibiscus Grove Rye.
- 1.1.8. Sullivan Bay and the Western Sister on Sorrento Foreshore, Property number 127926.
- 1.1.9. Tuckey Track Reserve, 2 Lady Nelson Drive Sorrento.

Both parties agree to update the MOU each time a reserve or new work location is added or removed.

Flinders Reserve Rye

The land at 50 Flinders Street, Rye is now in the hands of the Department of Treasury and Finance having been moved from the Department of Education and Training. Since the 2012 report and review of the land, the Mornington Peninsula Shire has been keen to retain the land and put proposals to the State Government to include some money to help maintain it. DOTF are aware of the MPS interest in the block, however the decision on what happens with the land is in state governments hands.

The NCG has been advised that the MPS would be supportive of a new friends group starting on the reserve if the Shire becomes the manager or owner of the land. Until then the MPS does not have the power to undertake any works on the site.

The NCG is asking NCG members to contact DOFT to pressure them into securing the land for conservation before they choose to do something else with it (like housing).

NCG members, Rhonda Day and Inez Dussuyer, have begun a campaign (see leaflet adjacent).

Have you noticed...?

Included with our Shire rates is a welcome leaflet on noxious plants. All bar 3 of the photos are from the NCG Guide to Indigenous Plants and Problem Weeds on the Nepean Peninsula brochure. Matt Stahmer was given 10 days to produce the brochure and contacted us for our support. This is another way that the NCG is supporting our broader community. The NCG is acknowledged on the MPS pamphlet.

Smarty grants

MPS Community Placemaking Grants Program 2017

“it takes a place to create a community, and a community to create a place”. It is the people, places and spaces that make the Mornington Peninsula a great place to live. The MPS community placemaking program aims to support community led initiatives that support our strategic goals, specifically to enhance public places and spaces and develop a healthy and connected community.

Every day placemaking was looking for positive ways to make things better in our community. The MPS was looking for placemaking projects focusing on enhancing both our social and built environments; working together to achieve these goals through

Protect natural bushland in the heart of Rye Mornington Peninsula. Prevent sub-division for housing.

Save more than 3 hectares of open space with environmentally significant native plants and grasses, orchids, old Moonah woodland and native birds.

(The land bordered by Flinders St, Alexandra Ave, Milton Rd and Sarazen St.)



The State Government, Department of Treasury and Finance, and Council must conserve rare green space for the community in this highly residential area by acquiring the land and protecting the bushland reserve from sub-division for housing.

To protect Flinders Street Reserve
Go to **Change.org** look under Environment,
Save Flinders Street Rye Reserve,
and sign the petition.

Contact your local Councillors
customerservice@mornpen.vic.gov.au
Tel: 1300 850 600
Contact your local MP
The hon. Martin Dixon
martin.dixon@parliament.vic.gov.au
Telephone 03 5986 6661

Contact Nepean Conservation Group.
www.nepeanconservationgroup.org.au



FOR ENQUIRIES

Rhonda Day 0447 096 379 Inez Dussuyer 0419 448 334

partnerships with community groups and organisations. The MPS argued that anyone can be a placemaker. It's a partnership of residents, visitors, property owners, businesses, Council and other agencies. By having these conversations, together we can create active local spaces and projects that bring local communities together. We want to hear about your ideas and support you to achieve them. The purpose of the grants is to kick start a project that will make a difference to our community.

The NCG asked to be supported in the reprinting of the Guide to Indigenous Plants and Problem Weeds of the Nepean Peninsula Your, arguing that our project

- Benefits users of the place with potential to increase community use and inclusion in a positive way
- Shows evidence of collaboration and partnerships, and
- Involve community members in planning and doing the project

On 1 June 2017 the NCG was notified that our application for the reprinting of the Guide to Indigenous Plants and Problem Weeds of the Nepean Peninsula has been successful with a grant amount of \$5000. Council acknowledged the valuable contribution made to our townships through collaborative partnership and the tireless efforts of our volunteers.

Thank you to Ruth Belfrage for writing and coordinating the grant application on the NCG's behalf.



Working bee at entrance to Dimmicks Bushland Reserve in 1998

Seasonal Ramble June 2017

Ramble at Dimmicks Bushland Reserve, Ruth Belfrage

Our June seasonal ramble was held at Dimmicks Bushland Reserve in Blairgowrie. This reserve is nestled between the Mornington Peninsula National Park and the end of Mungala Crescent and the corner of Carslake Ave. This reserve evolved when locals fought to protect the land from being subdivided and sold off by the Shire. Importantly, it meant that the community retained access to the beach.

Our host for the morning was Keith Murley. We meandered through the reserve, as Keith showed us about and spoke of the bush restoration and revegetation that has been achieved there. Thanks to the Dimmicks Friends Group which Keith has been a part of for the past twenty years, they have removed all the woody weeds including Sweet Pittosporum *Pittosporum undulatum*, Polygala *Polygala myrtifolia* and



Keith Murley and Ruth Belfrage enjoying the winter morning sun

Mirror Bush *Coprosma repens*. They also tackled creepers such as English Ivy *Hedera helix*, Cape Ivy *Delairea odorata* and Dolichus Pea *Dipogon lignosus* and various scramblers and ground covers.

Subsequently, the friends group has planted many grasses and coastal shrubs, as well as Moonahs *Melaleuca lanceolate*, Tea Tree *Leptospermum laevigatum* and Coast Banksias *Banksia integrifolia*. They have received direction and support from the Shire. We enjoyed identifying several plants using the Guide to Indigenous Plants brochure which we had on site. Keith learnt a new plant name Coast Pomaderis *Pomaderis paniculosa*!

This bushland reserve is thriving and I'm sure the birds and other fauna are grateful for this healthy wedge of habitat. Perhaps it's the most weed free entrance into the National Park and access to the ocean on the Southern Peninsula. Thanks to Keith

for his generosity and well done to the Friends of Dimmicks Bushland Reserve for their ongoing work.

The Friends Group meets the 1st Sunday each month at 10am at Mungala Crescent South

Contact Keith Murley 5988 9124 (Melway 167 G7). Everyone welcome.

Why not join the NCG on our next season ramble Sunday 8 OCTOBER 2017?

Bridgewater Bay to The Divide, along the cliff track overlooking Bass Strait.

Meet 10.00 am sharp St Johns Wood Road carpark, Mornington Peninsula National Park.

Bringsuitable clothing for the weather, walking shoes, hat, sunscreen and water. Come and meet some of your fellow NCG members. Bring along a few friends. We will talk and walk for about two hours!

Community Coalition meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month.

Barend Frielink and Gary Naughton attend on behalf of the NCG. Thank you!

Strengthening Parks Victoria

During 2016 Parks Victoria sought community feedback on how it could be strengthened to become a world class park management agency. Following on from this work the government is considering governance and funding arrangements to help Parks Victoria achieve this vision. The 2017/18 State Budget included \$31.8 million for up to 60 additional rangers (https://www.budget.vic.gov.au/explore-budget-map?ipd_nid=6752).

The Parks Victoria website will also be redeveloped as part of the funding commitment to encourage people to take advantage of and see all the benefits Victorian parks have to offer.



Ursula with a Marine Park buoy.

Point Nepean National Park

Stakeholders (including NCG) have been advised that updates to the community will be forthcoming in September 2017. As you are all aware, Parks Victoria is renewing the Point Nepean National Park Master Plan to reflect government policy and community views. The renewal seeks to validate the information and strategic intent of the draft master plan released in 2010 and build on knowledge gathered during community and stakeholder engagement in 2010–2016. Parks Victoria are currently finalising the master plan in response to community and stakeholder feedback gathered from Dec 2016 to Feb 2017.

Marine and Coastal Act

The Marine and Coastal Act Consultation Paper was released by the Minister on 30 August 2016 for an eight-week consultation period. The paper outlined a series of reforms to Victoria's coastal and marine management system, including a new Marine and Coastal Act, to help Victorians manage coastal and marine areas now and into the future. An extensive consultation process was undertaken to gather input and ideas for how the Victorian marine and coastal environment could be best protected to meet long term challenges such as impacts from climate change, population growth, and ageing coastal infrastructure.

A consultation summary document was publicly released in March 2016, summarising the feedback received from the 115 submissions and over 150 participants who attended consultations sessions.

Proposed legislative reforms are currently being developed in preparation for the drafting of the Bill, which is expected to be introduced to Parliament in late 2017. A transition plan that provides detail on the non-legislative reforms is being developed concurrently and is expected to be completed by November 2017. DELWP will consult with key stakeholders throughout September/October 2017 to ensure stakeholders are informed and provided with an opportunity to help shape the transition plan.

Reference: <http://www.vic.gov.au/news/marine-and-coastal-act.html>

Connecting Coastal Champions

Please see below an opportunity to attend a forum on coastal and marine management. The day will consist of guest speakers from a variety of backgrounds.

To register contact the event organiser, The Central Coastal Board (ccb@delwp.vic.gov.au).

Date: 23 November 2017; Venue: Novatel St Kilda, 16 The Esplanade, St Kilda.

Ross Kilborn, Chair, Central Coastal

Board invites you to be part of the inaugural Connecting Coastal Champions Forum. Don't miss this opportunity to hear from and meet a diverse range of thought-provoking speakers who bring different perspectives on coastal and marine management. The forum has been designed to bring people together from across the Victorian coastal sector and beyond - building a connected and informed network of champions for the coast. Our aim is to showcase advances in coastal sciences, research, planning, management and practice, sharing knowledge and information to inform decision-making and on ground adaptive coastal management. This event will bring together the coastal sector from across Victoria and interstate including elected officials and decision makers, coastal planners and managers from state and local government, agencies, academics, consultants and not-for-profit coastal associations. The Forum will showcase innovation, expertise and learning to advance knowledge and practice. You will hear from a diversity of different professional perspectives - through presentations, a deliberative panel and networking (9.00 – 5.30). **The networking function** is a gathering of the people and organisations involved in the protection and management of the coast. It provides an opportunity to engage and strengthen networks, 5:30 pm onwards.

Fuel Management Program

Reference: “Safer together, A new approach to reducing the risk of bushfire in Victoria”. The Government response to the review of performance targets for bushfire fuel management on public land. http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/319531/DELWP_SaferTogether_FINAL_17Nov15.pdf

In November 2015, the government released a policy position on bushfire management, “Safer Together” combining stronger community partnerships with the latest science and information to more effectively target actions to reduce bushfire risk. This whole-of-government and whole-of-sector policy responds to the Inspector-General for Emergency Management’s review of performance targets for bushfire fuel management on public land, among other key drivers, and uses a risk reduction target to guide fuel management on public land. This target for maintaining bushfire risk at, or below, 70%, took effect on 1 July 2016. Current residual risk is estimated to be between 62 and 65%. Victoria uses the risk reduction target to focus our bushfire management activities, like planned burning, in areas we know, through fire modelling, will have the greatest impact. In the 2016-17 season, Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic) undertook approximately 350 planned burns and treated

over 125,000 hectares of public land though both planned burning and mechanical treatments such as slashing and mowing. FFMVic has more than 221,000 hectares of burns planned for 2017/18.

As a result of below average rainfall over winter to date and the forecast of below average spring rainfall with above average temperatures, Victoria and SE Australia are predicted to expect an above average fire season, beginning early and potentially ending late. With the drying conditions, some areas of the state have started conducting planned burning and it is likely that spring burning and mechanical fuel treatments will increase during September.



Moonah Woodland. Photo: Ursula de Jong

Parks Victoria's State of the Parks

Parks Victoria's State of the Parks (SoP) program (reference: <http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/park-management/environment/research-and-scientific-management/state-of-the-parks>) evaluates the condition of the parks network and effectiveness in meeting park management goals for nature conservation, culture and heritage, visitor services, community engagement, and fire and emergency management. The earlier reports are available on line.

The current program has commenced with the update of a large range of datasets on the key indicators such as the extent of the parks network, extent, significance and representation of ecosystems, flora and fauna, cultural and heritage values and visitor use. In spring 2017, a comprehensive park-based assessment process will commence to gather best available information on the evaluation of the management programs and services across approximately 300 parks and reserves (95 per cent of the area of the parks network). These assessments, which are based on the IUCN management effectiveness evaluation framework gather valuable information on the condition of priority park values, the status of threats to them, management inputs, the extent to which management objectives are being met and emerging issues to address. These park based assessments will be reviewed by

internal subject experts during early 2018. Key evaluation results will be provided to the community in mid-2018.

Biodiversity Plan 2037

Reference: <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/biodiversity/biodiversity-plan>

In April 2017, the Victorian state government released "Protecting Victoria's Environment - Biodiversity 2037", a long-term plan to protect the environment and Victoria's rich biodiversity.

In this plan, there are two primary goals:

1. To connect Victorians with nature (and thus conscript their assistance in protecting biodiversity), and
2. To achieve demonstrable improvements in the conservation status of species and the extent and condition of Victorian natural habitats.

Parks Victoria through its management of many of the best examples of Victoria's natural environments and its high biological diversity, is ideally placed to be a lead agency in helping to deliver this plan and its goals. On the Mornington Peninsula the NCG looks forward to working with PV and the MPS to achieve good outcomes with regards to our conservation obligations and aspirations in our local area.

New appointment

Ursula de Jong was appointed as a member of the National Parks Advisory Council (NPAC) in 2017. This Council is established under section 10 of the National Parks Act 1975 (the Act). The current responsible Minister is the Hon Lilliana D'Ambrosio MP, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change.

The NPAC advises the Minister generally in relation to the administration of the Act, areas on which the Minister seeks advice, on any proposed excision from a park, certain leases, and consents in relation to various earth resources tenements and operations within parks. The NPAC jurisdiction is across Victoria's entire park system. 139 parks and reserves, with a total area of more than 3.45 million hectares are managed under various provisions of the Act. This includes 45 national parks. As well as 13 marine national parks.

New CEO of Parks Victoria

Mr Jackson joined Parks Victoria as Chief Executive Officer in February 2017. Mr Jackson has been involved in nature-based tourism and education for most of his career, starting as a zoo keeper at Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary in Queensland, known for its largest collection of native Australian animals. Mr Jackson is an experienced conservation and environmental professional and has

also worked in the private sector in marketing and distribution.

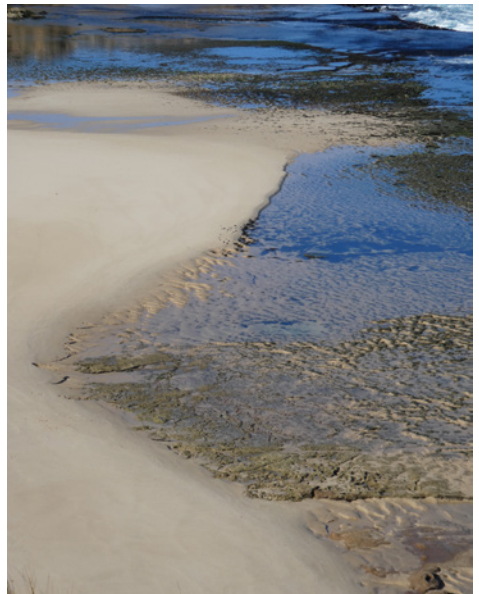
He has extensive experience in environmental research, conservation, education, wildlife

management, operational management and stakeholder relations. Prior to working at Parks

Victoria, Mr Jackson was the Chief Executive Officer at Phillip Island Nature Parks for six years and before that held other senior roles within the organisation. Mr Jackson completed a Master of Business Administration from Southern Cross University in 2004.

Reference:

<http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/about-us/news/new-chief-executive-announced-at-parks-victoria>



Low tide. Photo: Ursula de Jong

Article of interest from New Zealand

'Little evidence' of environmental payoff for tourism, New Zealand Environment, 26 July 2017. Source: <http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/335869/little-environmental-payoff-for-tourism-concessions>, by Kate Gudsell, Environment & Conservation Reporter, kate.gudsell@radionz.co.nz

The hurdles for tourism operators to gain access to national parks in NZ have been relaxed but promised conservation benefits are not being realised, new research shows. The NZ Department of Conservation (DOC) grants permission, known as concessions, for businesses to use public conservation land. But the Victoria University research has found little evidence to show DOC was including meaningful environmental requirements in the concessions. The paper, by public policy senior lecturer Valentina Dinica, is published by the Journal of Sustainable Tourism. Dr Dinica said, "We don't see an improvement in terms of conservation gain at contract level".

Dr Dinica said a vision of a conservation economy had been presented by the government, whereby rules and approval processes for concession arrangements would be relaxed in exchange for contributions from concessionaires to conservation, environmental and infrastructural challenges facing

DOC. She said this was actually reiterated in the department's Statement of Intent, which said DOC would work with businesses "to achieve conservation gains in ways that deliver environmental, social and economic benefits to New Zealanders".

However, Dr Dinica said this was not happening: "We don't see an improvement in terms of conservation gain at contract level, if you look at the concession regulatory framework, but we see change on the other side of the equation that now concession contracts are longer". She said the Conservation Act was amended in 2010, making it easier for concessionaires to get longer contracts, making it more difficult for the public to comment on it, and making it so that only arrangements longer than 10 years would be publicly notified - with the rest at the discretion of the Conservation Minister.

Dr Dinica said she was concerned there would be more businesses operating in protected areas and that the current planning system "will be watered down or weakened to allow these larger numbers to go wherever there is the high tourism demand, but it's possible that those areas will be also ecologically sensitive".

Forest & Bird chief executive Kevin Hague said he was astounded the research showed there was no evidence of benefit to the conservation estate as a result of the arrangements, which he said was what the country was promised. He



Leucopogon. Photo: Ursula de Jong

said there was a drift in conservation towards a focus on tourism and what benefited concessionaires, rather than protecting nature, and this was a worry: “We are seeing the Department of Conservation frequently forced into a position of distorting the priorities that are in the Conservation Act, where commercial activities like tourism should come after conservation and recreation, and yet all too often seem to be coming first.”

Tourism Research Institute director Simon Milne said national parks were front and centre of a lot of the country’s tourism marketing and there had been a growth in visitor numbers into the parks, and yet the benefits that flowed back to DOC were not coming through in the way that they should. He said there needed to be more rigid and clear guidelines about the kinds of benefits

and expectations that came from the concessions, and they needed to be followed up effectively.

Minister of Conservation Maggie Barry said she had not seen the research so could not comment directly, but she had been encouraging DOC to evaluate and tighten up its concession process. She said concessions were a complex area, and a suite of changes was being worked through around how DOC made sure it got appropriate levels of revenue for facility upkeep and contributions to conservation.

Something to think about: how relevant is this in Victoria? To the Mornington Peninsula? To the Mornington Peninsula and Point Nepean National Parks, to our coastal and foreshore areas, to public land, to land under the jurisdiction of the MPS?

NCG FRIENDS GROUPS CONTACTS LIST

FRIENDS GROUPS SUPPORT SUBCOMMITTEE

LIAISON OFFICERS: John Trewarne, Ruth Belfrage

FIELD OFFICER: John Trewarne OFFICER: Danielle Suffern

Contact: friends@nepeanconservationgroup.org.au

AUTHORITIES

Mornington Peninsula Shire – Hannah Brown: Natural Systems Volunteer Officer

hannah.brown@mornpen.vic.gov.au T: 03 5950 1356 M: 0408 823 286

(Nature Links) – Danielle Suffern daniellesuffern@naturelinks.com.au

Parks Victoria – Kris Rowe: Mornington Peninsula Area Officer kris.rowe@parks.vic.gov.au

FRIENDS GROUPS ASSOCIATED WITH NCG

FRIENDS OF BRIDGEWATER BAY

**Jack Ritchie Track Bushland Reserve,
51 Dana Avenue Blairgowrie.**

Blairgowrie (Melway 167 D4) SHIRE

CONTACT: Kate

friendsofbridgewaterbay@gmail.com

FRIENDS OF DIAMOND BAY Sorrento

(Melway 157 B11) PARKS

2nd Friday each month at 9.30 am

CONTACT: Richard Holland 0412 429 160

FRIENDS OF DIMMICKS BUSHLAND

RESERVE Blairgowrie (Melway 167 G7)

SHIRE

1st Sunday each month at 10am

CONTACT: Keith Murley 5988 9124

FRIENDS OF E.G. RITCHIE MEMORIAL

BUSHLAND RESERVE Blairgowrie

(Melway167 D5) SHIRE

1st Sunday every month 9:00-11:00 am

CONTACT: Margaret Finger 59888

882; Ursula de Jong info@

nepeanconservationgroup.org.au

FRIENDS OF HOODED PLOVER

Mornington Peninsula PARKS

CONTACT: Diane Lewis 0419 320 205;

email: hploversmornpen@gmail.com

FRIENDS OF SID BAKER BUSHLAND

RESERVE Blairgowrie

(Melway 167 E4) SHIRE

3rd Sunday alternate months 10-12pm

CONTACT: Suzie Mac Farlane 9817 5139

FRIENDS OF SPRAY POINT WILD COAST CONSERVATION GROUP INC.

Blairgowrie

(Melway 167 B2) SHIRE AND PARKS

Annual plantings and Working Bees

CONTACT: Ann Hayman 0402 049 797

FRIENDS OF SULLIVAN BAY AND

WESTERN SISTER Sorrento

(Melway 157 F1) SHIRE

4th Friday each month at 2.00pm

CONTACT: Richard Holland 0412 429 160;

John Franklin 0437 350 061

TUCKEY TRACK FRIENDS GROUP

Sorrento (Melway 157 D10)

SHIRE AND PARKS

CONTACT: Julie Corridon juliecorridon@

hotmail.com

FRIENDS OF SLIPS RESERVE

Blairgowrie (Melway 167 CD1) SHIRE

The second Monday of each month from

1:30 to 3:30 pm.

CONTACT: Chris Ekinsmyth

Phone: 59887014

**Tyrone Bushland Reserve, 7-17 Hibiscus
Grove Rye.**

OTHER FRIENDS GROUPS:

FRIENDS OF TYRONE FORESHORE

White Cliffs and Camerons Bight Foreshore

Reserve Committee of Management

Once a month alternating Saturdays and

Sundays

CONTACT: Terese Dalman: 0413 234 130

EMAIL: teresedalman@gmail.com



NEPEAN CONSERVATION GROUP INC

ABN 44 531 738 131 Reg. No. AOO 2079IU

PO Box 157, Sorrento, 3943

www.nepeanconservationgroup.org.au info@nepeanconservationgroup.org.au