

# From Your Committee

## TWO DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

**O**ur AGM is on Sunday 28 July, the day after our tree planting activity at Tidal River on Saturday 27 July. We would love to meet up with you at the AGM as it is a great opportunity to :

- Δ Listen to the Committee's review of the past year and provide member feedback.
- Δ Hear from Prom senior managers about staff activity in the Park over the past year and about major strategic issues facing the Prom over the next year.
- Δ Elect a new Committee and office bearers to guide us through the next 12 months.
- Δ Listen to a guest speaker present on a topic of interest to members — this year we have arranged for Madelaine Dwyer, Honours student of Wildlife Conservation Biology in the Department of Environment & Genetics at La Trobe University in Melbourne. She is the fourth recipient of the Friends of the Prom student research grant and will present the results of

her research project the "Impacts of fire regimes and Coast Tea-tree on Siliceous Sand Heathlands at Wilsons Promontory National Park: implications for management and recovery".

- Δ Enjoy a free lunch.

Please consider nominating for a position on the Committee. This is an opportunity to use your talents to develop and support conservation programs for our precious Prom. It is also an opportunity for personal development as you extend your knowledge and skills. We always welcome new people on our Committee who can offer fresh ideas and skills.

## Camping at Stockyards

The Stockyards camp site has been closed to the general public for a while now, with Friends of the Prom being the only exception. This privilege applies strictly for the duration of our authorised activities as advertised on Park Connect and should not be abused by extending your stay beyond the duration of the activity. If you want to extend your stay at the Prom, you should book and pay for a site at Tidal River.



## VALE GARY WALLIS, MAY 2024

**G**ary Wallis grew up in Melbourne and trained as a field geologist where his lifelong passion for rocks led to field research on the Wilsons Promontory granites 50 years ago.

Gary was active in native vegetation protection and revegetation landcare projects and was Biodiversity Manager (Bushcare) for 3 years. As a farmer for over 50 years, he managed beef and dairy farming businesses in South Gippsland.

Gary was a long-term volunteer at the Prom, leading geology walks for Coastcare at Walkerville and for Parks Victoria, and has contributed to various publications on the Prom's geology, including his own, 'Walkerville Coastal Geology'.

40 years ago, he recognised the potential of a wildlife corridor linking Cape Liptrap Coastal Park with the Strzelecki Ranges via the Hoddle Range. He advocated for this in various roles ever since, most recently through the formation of Prom Coast Ecolink. This community group has gone from strength to strength over the past couple of years and is now well placed to continue Gary's vision.

Our heartfelt condolences go to his wife Marion and his family and friends.



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**NEWSLETTER #236  
MAY 2024**

## Restoring Hooded Plover habitat on Prom beaches

The weather was excellent for our autumn Sea Spurge weeding activity held over three days from Friday 22 to Sunday 24 March. Picnic Bay was the focus of our attention on Friday and Saturday, and Squeaky Beach on Sunday.

Attendance was satisfactory – 11 volunteers on Friday, 19 on Saturday and 7 on Sunday, although we would always be happy to have more.

For those interested in the stats, 27 individual volunteers

attended over the three days with 20 attending for one day, 4 for 2 days and 3 hardy volunteers over the full three days. This amounts to 37 person days of Sea Spurge weeding over the three-day activity.

There was good progress with Sea Spurge removal at Picnic Bay over the two days. The first two-thirds of the dunes are largely clear of the weed (see blue area in attached map), and we expect to continue hand weeding this area with no further spraying.

The last one-third of the dunes at the South end (see yellow area in attached map) have patchy thick areas dominating the dunes where spraying would significantly improve our ability to bring the weed under control by hand weeding.

PS. Our contractor sprayed the southern end of Picnic Bay on 22 April. This was funded by our 2023 Victorian Government Coastcare Grant which is now fully expended.



Left: Progress of March weeding activity and area to be sprayed (Peter Wilson)

Below: Picnic Bay (Eddie Pang)



## Restoring Hooded Plover habitat on Prom beaches

Sea Spurge at Squeaky Beach has been reasonably under control for a few years but requires repeat visits to maintain it that way. On Saturday, Mary and Peter decided to leave the main group at Picnic to visit Squeaky Beach, which has easier access. They weeded the mostly flat area on the north side of the creek (aka Mary's patch). This patch remains almost totally clear of Sea Spurge weed and they found only about a dozen small plants. They also inspected along the creek and found about 50 large plants

in full flower that had clearly been there for some years, along with some smaller ones. They removed all these.

On Sunday all volunteers came to Squeaky Beach and we worked our way south along the dunes. With plant density remaining low, a large area was covered with just the seven of us, getting to the end of the first blowout located about halfway down the beach. The northern half of Squeaky is in good condition with the southern half still needing attention. With each weeding day we tend to cover a greater area as

the Sea Spurge reduces in density. In time, if we keep at it, most of Squeaky will be like Mary's patch.

*Below clockwise from top left: Michelle and Alex contemplating higher things at Squeaky Beach*

*Weeding Sea Spurge Picnic Bay*

*The Sunday Sea Spurge weeders at Squeaky Beach (Michelle D)*

*Yeshani's first time weeding Sea Spurge at Squeaky Beach*



## Two postscripts to the Sea Spurge weekend

1. ABC Gippsland interviewed our President, Olga on air on Tuesday 26 March about our Sea Spurge removal project. This gave Olga the opportunity to sing the praises of our small army of volunteers who helped to make the weekend a success.

2. The hidden talents of our members often come to light in

unexpected ways. Alex, one of our creative committee members, was relaxing at Stockyard camp after weeding Sea Spurge by working on her embroidery when she noticed a rip in Mary's well-used camping chair. It had been patched with duct tape – rough and ready but did the job. Not good enough for Alex though, who got to work with her darning needle to produce an

impressive piece of craftwork. Mary was delighted with the result. Great job Alex.

*Below left: Alex's repairs job on Mary's chair (OlgaW)*

*Below right: In amongst the Sea Spurge at Picnic Beach (Sigrid Meier)*

*Bottom: Volunteers at Picnic Bay 23/03/2024 (Sigrid Meier)*



# Grazer Monitoring Project

## ...and good news for the restored grasslands

**F**riends of the Prom volunteers gather once every 6 weeks during the cooler months to count grazing animal pellets (dung) at sites where the grasslands are in the process of being restored. Data collected by volunteers is fed back to Parks Victoria's scientists to estimate the grazing animal populations. Meanwhile Park staff are continuing with programs to suppress the re-growth of Tea tree and Coast wattle, control of pest animals and re-seeding with grasses.

The Dungflingers recently

resumed work for this season. On 16 May, they visited all plots in the grasslands and cleared them of all pellets in preparation for the first count 6 weeks later on 28 May.

The 9 volunteers supervised by Brooke Love (Restoration Ecologist), made two notable observations – one was the abundance of Kangaroo grass and the other was the scarcity of dung pellets from rabbits and deer. Brooke explained the reason for this – “Recent feedback from the scientists tells us that pest animal numbers have now reduced

to sustainable levels for the newly restored grasslands to thrive. Ongoing monitoring will inform Parks staff when the thresholds are exceeded and control programs need to be activated. With the vegetation growing thicker and faster as the grasslands are restored, it is getting more difficult to find and count dung so some of the program may be moved over the road to SouWest corner track in the future, once that ecological burn is delivered and the restoration process has begun at the new site.”



Above left: Michelle and Dinah clearing their plot; right: Karin and Jim clearing their plot  
Below: The dungflingers volunteers and Restoration Ecologist Brooke



# Restoring Koala habitat on the Yanakie Isthmus

It was a busy month for this project with three activities.

WE BEGAN ON SATURDAY 20 APRIL with retrieving tree guards for re-use. This was the first time that we tried to recover tree-guards and there was uncertainty about how many we would get. In June 2023 we counted 88 trees that were mature enough to have their guards removed and we thought there might be even more maturing in the intervening 9 months. The weather was on our side (starting off cool and improving as the day went on) and we had a strong attendance with 22 volunteers, supervised by the Prom's Restoration Ecologist Brooke Love, who also joined in with the work.

The tree guards were designed to be readily removable with minimal effort, and they would have been if: 1) nature hadn't decided to make our job more difficult by growing Cranberry Heath around the base and sponsoring at least one Coast

Wattle inside each tree-guard; and 2) the guards had all been built to specifications – quite a few were not, requiring surgery to spring them apart.

Nonetheless, the volunteers rose to the challenge and removed 134 guards on the day – a wonderful effort.

A lot of work by Park staff went into making this activity a success – our thanks to Gaby (our liaison ranger) who slashed the track beforehand so we didn't have to wade through knee-high bracken; to Brooke for infecting us with her enthusiasm over the restoration plans for this part of the Prom, but also for erecting signage and providing maps so we wouldn't get lost in the thick scrub of Tea-tree and Coast Wattle; and to Jim Whelan (ranger-on-long-service-leave turned volunteer) who not only is a fount of knowledge for anything Prom, but also showed us how to remove a tree guard in double quick time. Who would have thought of avoiding dismantling a

tree-guard by lifting them vertically off trees, some well over 3 metres tall (unfortunately not possible for all the trees).

ON FRIDAY 10 MAY, three volunteers returned to the airbase to prepare the tree guards for their next use – the tree planting on 18 May. Quite a few needed repairs to make them serviceable, but the work was completed in about 2 hours.

AND THEN LASTLY, we got to re-use the tree guards on Saturday 18 May. As Karin Ruff reports – *“Thank you to the 18 volunteers who attended Saturday's tree planting activity. With 165 eucalypt seedlings going in and protected by the recycled guards, the area should continue to return to something like it was over a hundred years ago. It was good to hear from ranger Brooke Love that fresh koala scats have recently been found in the area and hopefully the koalas will return to feast on our expanding forest.*



Above: Mary and Brooke apply some aftercare to a tree after its guard was removed; right: Eddie and others remove a guard from a banksia



Above: Geoff and Shauna slide a guard off its tree;

# Restoring Koala habitat on the Yanakie Isthmus

It was a very chilly morning, but the hardy volunteers soon started shedding layers, warmed by the work and the sunny weather. We formed three groups, one to work on planting trees along the airfield access track, the second in two areas near the sheds and the third at more remote northern sites. A group of four young emus and numerous kangaroos observed our progress.

Thomas reported that the northern group of volunteers, led by Brooke, drove about 1 km

north of the old airstrip, where an area had been cleared of tea trees about 2½ years earlier using a combination of rolling and burning. The uneven ground with short tree stumps poking up slowed progress somewhat but the group managed to cover all locations marked for tree planting, thereby linking existing stands of remnant eucalypts.

Almost all the manna gum, swamp gum and Promontory peppermint gums the Nursery had

provided found a new spot. It was a satisfying day for all and we felt very lucky to have a sunny day between two rainy days for our activity."

Peter recorded the GPS location of the tree planted by each of our two youngest volunteers, aged 6 and 3, for them to revisit in future to check on its progress.

And also a big thank you to rangers Gaby and Brooke for all their hard work preparing the site for planting in the days leading up.

Top, l to r: Thomas and Jim repairing tree guards near the airbase; Alex moving the planting tools; our two youngest volunteers enjoying the day Middle, l-r: worker repairing tree guard, Brooke's final briefing (Karin Ruff)  
Bottom: Mob of curious onlookers to the repair crew, the team



## Nursery news

The Friends of the Prom nursery at Tidal River has just received a shopping list of orders for new plants for Prom projects.

The nursery volunteers met with Parks Victoria's Regional Program Coordinator and Project Manager – Revitalisation, Titaina Hunnam, who likes to be called "T". She explained the current planning work for Prom projects and the rules of the game for implementation.

*"Delivering projects in parks can be a complex and lengthy process. Taking time to complete assessments and planning is essential and thorough. Any ground disturbance (this includes tree planting or maintenance) requires Cultural Heritage approvals - Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal - as well as environmental assessments. This takes time and requires engagement with many stakeholders and regulators such as the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, the First People State Relations, Council, etc."*

The Prom is a busy landscape with many projects underway. This includes funding of infrastructure and capital works such as: Revitalisation (the Predator Proof Fence, Roofed Accommodations, an all ability 2km walk at the Wildlife Circuit, and the Visitor Centre upgrade); Victoria's Great Outdoors (internal refurbishment of toilet amenities at Tidal River, replacement of toilet pods on the Southern Circuit, Changing Places Facility at Tidal River (to increase accessibility, etc.); Storm Recovery (inc. replacement of Sealers Cove Boardwalk); Asset Regeneration (Water Tank works, Tidal River Footbridge maintenance works, etc.); Heritage Icons (light station, etc.); and the Tidal River Open Space project.

*We are looking to Friends of the Prom nursery for help with the revegetation/landscaping of the Visitor Precinct, Shipwreck accommodation, Wildlife Circuit and Open Space project. Some projects could be scheduled as early as Sept/Oct 2024."*

The nursery team were only too keen to be involved because propagating plants is what they do. As the nursery's co-ordinator Mary Walker noted - *"this programme means we need to get the cuttings and seed collection started now!"*

Since this meeting with the nursery volunteers "T" has advised us that, the first stage of Cultural Heritage Complex assessments at the Prom were completed over 4 weeks, sites at Tidal River and the Wildlife Circuit were assessed and more sites along the proposed Predator Proof Fence have started. These works, as approved by First People State Relations, involved teams of Archaeologists and the three Traditional Owner Groups.



Top to bottom:  
Parks Victoria staff briefing nursery volunteers on Prom project plans at Tidal River (Chris Beckingsale);

The nursery crew potting up eucalyptus seedlings;

Nursery volunteer Barb doing maintenance work in the campground

## Update on the Bushbank project

**N**ursery volunteers who were busy shaking sieves to separate eucalypt seeds for the Bushbank project last year will be very interested to learn how the project is progressing. As Restoration Ecologist Brooke Love reports –

*“This project aims to restore the wet forest in two large plots (about 16 hectares each), in the mountainous southern part of the Prom. A succession of wildfires in the early 1900s has killed off the original wet forest canopy, allowing understory shrubs to become overabundant.*

*Your last update in November 2023 reported on the collection and testing of eucalypt seed and the large amount of planning needed to be completed by Parks staff at each step of this innovative project – if*

*successful it will develop a protocol for restoring the remaining 1500ha or so of these collapsed areas across the Prom and inform similar restoration projects in other parks. In the event of future bushfires, there will be a plan in place for reseeded these areas.*

*In February/March 2024 the two blocks were sprayed with weedicide to defoliate the shrubby vegetation and prepare them for an autumn burn. The blocks were aerial sprayed using drones pre-programmed to follow set GPS routes and treat a strictly defined area, and to fly as low as possible to prevent spray drift. High-resolution aerial imagery was captured and used to identify tree ferns, so those sensitive areas could be excluded.*

*Park staff are currently waiting for the right conditions to burn these*

*two blocks before aerial sowing with wet forest eucalypt species following burning – again using drones. To see which seeds perform better, the seed collected from the Prom will be used at one site and ‘non-Prom’ seed at the other. Unfortunately, weather conditions this year have shifted from extremely dry to extremely wet, with the Lighthouse receiving 190mm of rain during April, compared with the April average of 84mm. Because of this it is likely the burn will be postponed until Autumn 2025.*

*Below is a photo the drone took of one of the big stags in the collapsed area, a reminder of what was originally there. There are many more stags like this but they have fallen over and are lying on the forest floor rotting away.”*

Below: spray area and stag; drone taking off (Brooke Love)



## 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](mailto: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](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**

***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 –

John Kelly,

Toby Beasley and

Tom and Coral Holman.

# 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
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](mailto:pdmcdowell101@gmail.com).

## CONTACTS

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