

# The year in review from your President

**F**riends of the Prom has enjoyed a full year of activities at the Prom. We began 2025 with our usual February beach clean – our contribution to Clean up Australia Day, with the data collated and uploaded on the Tangaroa Blue Foundation’s marine database.

Friends of the Prom members Kelsey Fraser and Michelle Darling had the opportunity to attend a special meeting of volunteers from various environmental groups and were introduced to some Landcare members and parliamentary members on Landcare Day in **January**.

In **March** and **October** we re-visited Picnic and Squeaky beaches over 2 days to hand-weed Sea Spurge in our efforts to restore Hooded Plover habitat at Picnic and Squeaky Beaches.

The **Nursery** volunteers have had a big year, with a visit to Narkabundah Wildflower Nursery in Sandy Point in **January**. Rob and Jess showed the group around the nursery and gave them some extremely valuable tips to get the highest success rates when propagating indigenous plants from seed and cuttings. In **April** four staff from the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne visited to meet and greet the nursery crew and to discuss a collaboration between our respective groups. They are designing a new Gippsland themed habitat area to sit alongside their existing “living collections of plants”. The South Gippsland collection will focus on plants found at the Prom because of the park’s

iconic status in the region. FOTP’s application for a 2025 Coastcare grant to replace the hardening-off shed at the Tidal River nursery was successful and the new structure is almost finished.

**May** and **October** saw activities at the former airbase to restore Koala habitat, removing our steel tree guards from trees we had planted between 4 and 7 years ago and reusing them to protect new eucalypt seedlings planted, which were raised by our volunteers in the Tidal River nursery.

The dung flingers became “dung flungers” and are now known as the “Sou’ Westers”. In June the stakes marking the old quadrants were removed and the group was introduced to the new rehabilitation area. The group met in **September**, **November** and **December** (soon) at the new sites and enjoyed the varied tasks assigned by coordinating ranger Brooke Love.

In **June** Parks Traditional Owner Country and Sea Country Partnerships Advisor Clinton Morton explained the background and heritage of the Prom in a fascinating day for Friends of the Prom.

In **July** we had a tree planting day at Tidal River campsite – our contribution to the annual National Tree Day, with 330 plants prepared by the nursery volunteers planted at the 33rd Avenue campground. Also in July, our AGM was held at the Sandy Point Community Centre, with very interesting presentations from rangers Tara Ellard and Brooke Love. The new venue was very popular.

In **September** for Threatened Species Day, Keith and Brooke led a Rare Species Survey along Five Mile Road to see if they could improve knowledge about one of the Park’s threatened species. Results were uploaded to the iNaturalist website.

## Committee Matters

**Y**our committee has also been working their brains on some other issues, with a new website for FOTP being created and a response to the recent restructure of Parks Victoria being considered. Victorian National Parks Association’s (VNPA) Parks and Nature Conservation Campaigner joined us via video link to tell us about some of the changes and of the situation in other Victorian National Parks. Cuts to staff and programs at the Prom affect volunteer opportunities and satisfaction as well as nature conservation. The government’s substantial funding cuts to Parks Victoria, leading to reduced staffing levels at the Prom, has already led to curtailment of its school education program.

FOTP does not have the skills, resources or desire to replicate Parks Vic’s now defunct education programs, formerly run out of Tidal River Education Centre. However, rather than refuse all requests, which sadly have been reducing over time, the committee has developed a standard presentation for school groups. Keith and Bill kicked off the new program in March, meeting 12 students from Drouin Secondary College.

Olga and Keith and I meet with our Prom liaison ranger



**FRIENDS**  
— OF THE —  
**PROM**

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**NEWSLETTER**  
**#242**  
**NOVEMBER**  
**2025**

## The year in review cont...

and ranger Cam from the Nursery every 3 months. With staff changes, our liaison ranger has also changed, so we have met twice with Tara Ellard this year and will meet with Maggie Brown in December.

We are lucky to have an intern student from Monash University for almost 2 months. Amy (*See photo right*) is now working enthusiastically on a program of tasks, from writing activity notice articles for the local press and social media and creating two brochures to attending activities and writing reports. Sunday evenings see a regular video catch up with her mentors.

We were approached by Co-Exist Australia, whose motto is "Inspiring generations to co-exist with wildlife and wildplaces, for the wellbeing of people and planet." Keith and I had a video conversation with two staff members

but could not find a suitable date for a group from Melbourne to join us this year. We hope to do so next year.

Don't forget our social weekend coming up on February 6 and 7, 2026. It is for financial members only as a thank you for supporting us during the year. There will be a talk about the marine park, possibly a geology walk,



and plenty of time for relaxing on the beach. We will also have an informal session over drinks on how the Friends is run: what we are doing ok, what could be done better, what additional activities you would like to do, and how we can get more people to help in running the organisation. It is not too late to join. A membership form can be found at: <https://friendsoftheprom.org.au/membership/>

2025 has seen a truly impressive contribution to caring for the Prom by our hard-working volunteers. I have really enjoyed working with you this year and I wish everyone a safe and happy festive season.

*Karin Ruff, President*

*Left: our intern Amy Stubbington on her family's hobby farm at Fish Creek*

## Nursery crew fitted out in FOTP t-shirts!



*Above l-r: Berty, Michelle, Mary and Henri  
Right l-r: Henri, Michelle, Olga, Katrine and Mary  
Photos: Chris Beckingsale*



## Profile of Jim Whelan

**A**fter 54 years at the Prom, Jim Whelan is now formally on long service leave until the end of September 2026. However, his devotion to the Prom continues, as it has since his first visit as a child in the early 1950s.

Jim's mother Betty said he declared his career choice of Prom ranger when aged five, on one of the Ringwood-based family's frequent holidays at the Prom. Jim loved "the lifestyle, the freedom of the place, the river, the ocean – it was safe." His interest in conservation came later and the Prom answered that call too. "It was a microcosm of all the ecosystems around the State, from the near-Alpine country to forests, heathlands, grasslands, swamps and mangroves. It had only one road in and out of the place and is surrounded by marine national park. It's almost an island." Jim says that for Melbournians, the attraction of the Prom is that it is close and very different, offering plenty for everyone from day beach trippers to research scientists. His favourite part of the Prom "depends on what day you ask, but probably Whisky Bay and its self-contained beautiful scenery."

Jim has worked in various roles in national park management since 1971, after starting his career in the 1970s as a trackman, one of three at the Prom, Jim then moved on to being agistment manager, taking control of the cattle on the northern end of the Prom. His job was to collect the agistment fees, tag the cattle and muster them on horseback.

As long-time Prom Ranger-In-Charge, politics, staff management, relations with First Nations people and decisions about projects and Parks management were integral to his work. During peak summer weeks, there were up to 60 staff working in shifts 24 hours a day in sometimes remote areas, where they had to play the role of police, fire and ambulance officers looking after up to 6,000 visitors a day. The ever-modest Jim said that as manager, "I always tried to hire people who were smarter than me and then learn from them." He was lucky enough to spend most of his career at the Prom, but rangers were sometimes moved around to different parks, which meant training new staff from the ground up. He acknowledges that his own longevity at the Prom was "a real privilege."

His more than five decades of working at Wilson's Prom has been a process of adaptive management, working through options with no easy answers. "We don't have the answers for a lot of what we are doing and there is no-one to ask," he says about this process

of continuous learning by doing things. Jim's success suggests that he has often landed on the right answer.

There is a touch of irony about Jim's present work, helping to undo past practices when 2,000 cattle roamed the Isthmus until 1992. Cattle were run on the Prom since the 1850s, after which deer, rabbits and kangaroos were also introduced.

The loss of natural predators such as dingos, quolls and traditional hunting practices, enabled the build-up of native grazers. This, combined with the introduction of cattle, rabbits and kangaroos lead to the destruction of the grasslands. The resulting bare hearth was left ripe for invasion of the unpalatable tea tree, which subsequently invaded the whole area. Fire plays a key role in the management of tea tree but for many years was seen as detrimental. Jim took a keen interest in the role of fire in the landscape and in understanding the history of fire on the Prom. Since 1992 Jim supported Victoria's aerial fire response program, including two trips to America to work on large fires in Montana & Oregon.

Jim was awarded an International Union for Conservation of Nature International Ranger Award in 2021, in part because of his "use of adaptive management within the Wilsons Promontory

National Park landscape to halt the decline of many of the park's other ecosystems at a landscape-scale." It was noted that, "This required courage, facilitating action with less than perfect knowledge, while providing a research process than can quickly fill knowledge gaps and deliver increasingly improved on-ground outcomes. This has included his ongoing advocacy and expert knowledge of the use of fire as an ecological restoration tool." The award included a sum of \$3000 USD which Jim donated to the FOTP research grants program which supports young researchers to undertake relevant research on the Prom.

While not having any formal academic qualifications, the nomination noted that, "Jim has meticulously collated and digitised over 850 research papers, 4000 photographs and historical documents, from as far back as the late 1800s. The Wilson's Promontory Research Library now documents and preserves the Prom's extensive research history and changes to its ecosystems from land use change."

In 2023 Jim was awarded a Public Service Medal for "Outstanding public service to policy and program delivery, particularly in the area of conservation". His latest position is Ecological Restoration Project officer

## Profile of Jim Whelan

and his sights are set firmly on doing what he can to restore the grasslands on the Yanakie Isthmus, a project now run by colleague Brooke Love.

The Yanakie Isthmus Restoration Project is now enabling work to control tea trees. The burns are hard to control, requiring hot and windy conditions, but along the way Jim has learned a lot about fire management ecology. What happens next is to some extent outside

his control. Undeterred, he continues as a keen volunteer member of Friends of the Prom, helping to see the project produce visible results. We look forward to continuing to learn more about the Prom from this special FOTP member.

*Report by John Durie  
Photo by Brooke Love*



### NEW MEMBERS

We extend a very warm welcome to the following new members:

Pam and Paul Odgers

Peter and Michelle McDonald

John Fuller and Karen Cooper

# Threatened Species Day

Saturday September 6 was Threatened Species Day, and 19 volunteers set out along Five Mile Road to see if they could improve knowledge about one of the Park's threatened species. According to the *Atlas of Living Australia*, there are 161 threatened species recorded in Wilsons Promontory National Park (i.e. listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act): 4 fish, 1 mushroom, 2 frogs, 32 birds, 2 mussels, 5 mosses, 1 shark, 93 plants, 5 insects, 2 liverworts, 4 crayfish, 7 mammals, and 3 reptiles. That is a huge significance and responsibility for a relatively small area. One threatened species not yet confirmed for the park is the Strzelecki Gum (*Eucalyptus strzeleckii*). It was recorded in the Five Mile Road area back in the 1980s but is easily confused with the very similar and common Swamp Gum (*Eucalyptus ovata*). The intrepid group of Friends of the Prom volunteers, led by Parks Victoria grassland ecologist Brooke Love, set out to see if we could find it. We also aimed to record anything else we found using the phone app iNaturalist.

The Strzelecki Gum and Swamp Gum differ from other eucalypts in the park by the shape of their gum nuts. Brooke was able to show us a collection of gum nuts emphasising the large variation in shape and size; the ones we were after have distinctive cone-shaped nuts. At the Five Mile Road carpark, we learnt how to identify eucalypts.

The gum tree there is Messmate (*Eucalyptus obliqua*), the first eucalypt ever described, in 1788 (from collections made in Tasmania during Captain Cook's voyage to Australia).

We made three stops along Five Mile Road in perfect spring weather, in heathland overlooking Corner Inlet, a rainforest gully and a recently burnt area. At the rainforest gully, the group split into two with one party heading upstream and the other downstream towards a gum barked eucalypt that Brooke thought might be our elusive Strzelecki Gum. The intrepid downstream party battled through dense scrub and climbed over giant fallen trees until our target was in sight. Alas, it proved impossible to get to without waders. However, all was not lost because Chris Beckingsale discovered *Philaemon pungens*, a species of leech, although it is probably more accurate to say that they discovered her – lots of them.

We didn't find the Strzelecki Gum but it is probably out there somewhere. However, we did make a decent contribution of records to the *Atlas of Living Australia (ALA)*, through the phone app iNaturalist. The way that works is that you take photos of plants and animals using the app and they are uploaded to the iNaturalist website. Various experts then check them and provide a species name if they can. If three experts agree, the record is considered to be 'research grade' and is

immediately uploaded to ALA. Overall, the group made 113 observations of 51 species with 37 of the records were research grade. *Fergymac* was the 'winner' on number of observations but *Jackie\_cant* was the 'winner' on number of records accepted for the *Atlas of Living Australia*. But it's not all about getting the most records. One of the records made by *Chesther* was the green cockchafer beetle, the first record of that insect in Wilsons Prom NP!!

The Threatened Species Day volunteers had a very enjoyable and productive day. A big thanks to Brooke for helping to organise the day, providing her expertise, and taking us to places behind a locked gate that few people get to experience.

If you would like to collect biodiversity information for the park (or anywhere), download the free iNaturalist app on your phone and check out the guides to using it at <https://www.inaturalist.org/>. The app is getting better at identifying species from photos so it is also a good way of learning about plants and animals.



**We plan to have another Threatened Species Day activity in 2026 (September 5); put it in your diaries.**

Username	Observations	Research grade
Fergymac	26	7
Jackie_cant	24	10
Abigail_c8903	16	3
Chesther	11	3
Gerry23121952	11	6
Balove	8	
Valerie_2	6	2
Kirwoodj	4	2
Quentin_mattiske	4	1
Klm56	3	2
Mudslinger66	1	1

## Threatened Species Day cont...



Above: Volunteers with Brooke's collection of gum nuts (Photo: Bill Hansen)



Above: A successful day of collecting biodiversity data at the Prom (Photo: Bill Hansen)

## Grassland Restoration #1

Since the last newsletter, there have been two grassland restoration days, well attended by enthusiastic Sou'westers (aka ex-dung-flingers). On both occasions, we visited the grazing exclusion plots where native grass seed was sown in July. Baby plants are starting to appear and this part of the project can be considered a success. At the July activity, volunteers constructed cubby houses out of burnt tea tree to offer protection for the Kangaroo Grass seedlings they planted out, as they are very tasty to herbivores (including kangaroos). The seedlings were growing well and so volunteers built more cubby houses for plants in September. Some are quite elaborate – with a little wattle and daub, they would make a cosy dwelling.

The focus of the last two activities has been on transplanting Blady Grass rhizomes (underground stems) from the Yanakie end of the Park. Blady Grass (*Imperata cylindrica*) is regarded as the 7th worst weed in the world but fortunately for us it is native in eastern Australia (and south-east Asia). Plants are generally unpalatable to grazing animals and so there is a good chance that the transplanting will be successful. Indeed, on October 17 activity, the first green shoots were appearing on plants that were relocated in September.

Volunteers also helped collect Billy Button seed from a grassland on Soup Track, named, according to Jim Whelan, after the consistency of the dam water after an animal drowned in it. Billy Buttons (*Craspedia variabilis*) is a daisy

that would have once been common throughout the isthmus.

While seed was being collected, some of us wandered through the burnt landscape seeing what was coming up after the fire. Most of the understorey is now occupied by tall, fast growing opportunists like Coast Bitter Bush (*Adriana quadripartita*), Kangaroo Apple (*Solanum spp*) and White Elderberry (*Sambucus gaudichaudiana*) but we found some curious small species in the severely burnt spaces. Notable amongst those was Tiny Cudweed (*Gnaphalium indutum*, rarely collected at the Prom), *Triglochin nana* (Dwarf Arrowgrass, also rare at the Prom and more usually found on saline flats), and *Podotheca angustifolia* (Sticky Long-heads, a daisy occurring from western Victoria to Western Australia, and at the Prom and Bass Strait islands).

What our gallant leader Brooke finds for us to do at the next grassland restoration day on December 12 is anyone's guess but you can sure it will be fun and we will be contributing to reshaping the vegetation of the Isthmus. However, it will be our last activity for 2025, and very close to Christmas, so feel free to bring some Christmas fare to share, and dress appropriately – who knows, despite the lack of chimneys in the grassland, a chubby guy in a red suit may make an appearance.

Report by Keith McDougall



Above: Digging out Blady Grass at Yanakie, and separating it from weeds we don't want to spread to the Park;

Right: Blady Grass planted in September and starting to put out new shoots in October.



## Grassland Restoration #1 cont.



Above: Intrepid Sou-westers amongst the burnt tea tree, still smiling after a gruelling day collecting seed, planting blady grass and eating lunch.



Above: Sticky Long-heads (*Podotheca angustifolia*), found on a burnt hilltop on the Isthmus during the grassland restoration activity. Despite the past density of tea tree in this area, there is plenty of new diversity appearing.

## Grassland Restoration #2

On Friday September 5 our volunteers returned to the Sou'West track burn site, six weeks after the last visit. This is an area of steep east-west trending sand dunes that was infested with Tea Tree before a management burn in November 2024. The burn killed the Tea Tree leaving only black and silver dead Tea Tree and bare ground. Our task is to establish small strategic pockets of indigenous vegetation which will spread out over time.

19 volunteers turned up to work under the supervision of rangers Brooke, Lauren and Matt on a beautiful spring day.

We began by digging out some native Blady Grass (*Imperata cylindrica*)

from the Yanakie works yard for transplanting out at the burn site. We then drove out to the Sou'West Track to inspect the site of our last visit. We found the first signs of germination of the grasses which had been direct seeded inside the enclosures and no sign of predation of any of the transplanted grasses by grazing animals.

We then drove to a new site which Brooke and Lauren had prepared by lopping hazardous dead Tea Tree limbs and erecting about 5 small steel mesh enclosures.

We transplanted Blady grass and direct seeded, Wallaby, Kangaroo and Wheat grass variously in the prepared enclosures but also in the makeshift

enclosures built by volunteers, making good use of the plentiful supply of dead Tea Tree branches. Building Tea tree branch enclosures was great fun, taking many of us back to our childhood of building cubby houses.

We also tried planting grasses and direct seeding over larger open areas without the protection of an enclosure.

This is a long-term project with a strategy of trialling different restoration methods to see which ones are the most cost-effective. The volunteers are looking forward to returning in six weeks' time to monitor these trial plots and continue the restoration work.

*Report by Bill Hansen*

*Photos: Ben Johnson Strike*



*Left: Jim Whelan digging up clumps of Blady Grass at the Yanakie Works Yard for Karin, Sue and Olga to tease out the hardy rhizomatous roots, taking care not to let any weeds (especially the pesky onion grass) to get through.*



*Right: Concentrating to ensure no weeds are transported to new areas, especially that pesky onion weed!*

## Grassland Restoration #2 cont.

*Right: It will be interesting to see if the tea tree cubbies prove as effective as the steel mesh plots in protecting the new grasses from grazers. The plentiful supply of tea tree means there's no cost, no need to transport the steel mesh in and out again once the grasslands have established.*



*Left: Lorraine Nordern direct seeding native Wheat Grass in one of the steel mesh plots.*

*Right: Success...inspection 6 weeks after the first Sou'West burn site activities and plantings shows that the Kangaroo tube stock from the Nursery is safe from grazing predators and still alive!! Also seed in the plots, both cubbies and steel mesh, are showing signs of germination.*



# Restoring koala habitat and tree guard removal

Over the past 10 years, targeted koala habitat restoration has been undertaken at the historic airfield landing site. The initial eucalyptus plantings by Friends of the Prom, some way back to 2015, have now matured significantly and no longer require protective guards.

The weather proved kind on Friday November 7 when we were out there, with heavy rain on the days before and after.

Rangers Brooke and Lauren and eight volunteers attended. With over 60 tree guards to be removed across an expansive work site, volunteers split into dedicated teams of snippers and guard removers. Our initial approach was to lift them over the tops of the eucalyptus plants. However, many of the trees had grown too large for this method so we detached the wiring to release the guards from around the trunks. The collected guards were cleaned and stacked ready to be transferred by truck for reuse in next year's planting projects in newly mulched areas.

Once each section was signed off using the GPS tracker of planted trees, we progressed systematically through the site. By the end of the day, we had made significant progress, collecting most of the guards targeted. There is probably another day's work needed at the site and a survey around the entire site will help plan the next activity. Last years failed planting, where close on half the trees died, could be revisited, particularly in the areas beside the new wheelchair access track.

Ultimately, these conservation efforts aim to restore and rejuvenate the once-thriving eucalypt forests that existed in this area prior to European settlement. By re-establishing this natural ecosystem, the hope is that koalas will continue to return and thrive here, supported by an abundant food supply and ideal habitat conditions.

*Report by Amy Stubbington and Peter Wilson*



*Clockwise from top left: This method of removing tree-guards needs tall volunteers (Photo: Geoff Mee); remaining guards; Abigail, Thomas, Jackie and Geoff extracting a tree guard from the undergrowth (Photo: Amy Stubbington); Peter Wilson leads the way.*

## DONATIONS

*Friends of the Prom* has benefited from generous donations by well-wishers over the past few years. We have been using these donations to encourage scientific research at the Prom through our program of an annual grant to a tertiary student 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.



## MEMBERSHIP FEES

You don't have to be a financial member to participate in our activities. But if you have been to some activities and want to continue volunteering with us, we urge you to become a financial member.

Your membership fees keep us afloat, as without them we cease to exist. The fees we levy are set as low as we can make them, and they only just cover our basic running costs, such as public liability insurance and unavoidable IT expenses.

To renew your membership, please contact our Treasurer, Peter McDowell 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,  
Couples and families : \$20,

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

## FEEDBACK FROM YOU

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

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

***Photos: Please note that all effort has been made to attribute photos throughout***

## EVENTS CALENDAR Nov to Dec 2025 WEEKEND ACTIVITIES

November: Fri 28, Sat 29, Sun 30	Sea Spurge removal (See Activity Notice 28)
December: Friday 12	Grassland Restoration on the Isthmus, Christmas gathering

*Except for the nursery, a reminder with more detail about these weekend and weekday activities will be emailed to members closer to the date.*

## EVENTS CALENDAR Feb to June 2026 WEEKEND ACTIVITIES

February: Fri 7, Sat 8	Financial Members Only Weekend, Tidal bioblitz, talk by Marine Ranger
March: Fri 20	Grassland Restoration
March: Sat 21	Beach Clean
April (multiple dates TBC)	Planting at Tidal River
April: Fri 17, Sat 18	Sea Spurge removal
May: Fri 1	Grassland Restoration
May: Sat 2	Tree Guard recycling at airbase
May: Fri 15	Tree Planting at Airbase
June: Fri 12	Grassland Restoration
June: Sat 13	Cultural Heritage Workshop

## WEEKDAY ACTIVITIES

Every second Thursday, rain, hail or shine – meet 9:30 am at the nursery compound in Tidal River – check website for dates

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

## CONTACTS

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