



Friends Group Network

Protecting the peninsula's biodiversity



Welcome

Mornington Peninsula Friends Group Network acknowledges and pays respect to the elders, families and ancestors of the Bunurong people, who have been the custodians of this land, sky and sea for many thousands of years.

We acknowledge that the land on which we volunteer is the place of age-old ceremonies, celebrations, initiation and renewal; and that the Bunurong peoples' living culture continues to have a unique role in the life of this region.

Hi Friends,

It was lovely to see so many familiar faces at the Friends Group Network Event in September to celebrate the amazing work you all undertake throughout the year.

Congratulations to the Friends Groups who received a Victorian Landcare Grant. An enormous amount of time goes into preparing these applications – good luck with your projects!

Since 18th November 2023, new incorporation association regulations have come into place. If you are an incorporated group, I suggest you take the time to familiarise yourself with these new changes. Further information can be found:

[Incorporated associations - Consumer Affairs Victoria](#)

As the weather starts to warm, a reminder to please bring along a water bottle, hat, wear a long sleeve shirt and be mindful of your body's capacity to undertake works outdoors. While we may slow down, insects (including ants) and reptiles are more active in the warmer months.

Many groups are starting to wind down for the year and are enjoying their end of year celebrations. Take the opportunity to reflect on the hard work your group has accomplished over the last 12 months and the great things you can achieve in the coming year.

Thank you for the energy and passion each of you bring to the Friends Group Network! Enjoy your well deserved summer break.

(Please note: any underlined text will take you to a linked webpage (press Control + Shift). If you have any comments or stories to share, please get in contact).

All the best,
Hannah

Registrations now online

A BIG thank you to volunteers who have completed the online Working Bee Volunteer Registration Form.

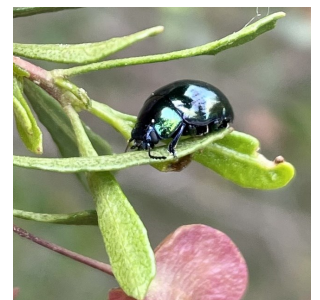
Over 340 people have registered since the form went live three months ago!

As you would have heard, we are taking on the large task of updating our database as our current database is now over 10 years old. We also took this opportunity to update the working bee terms and conditions, as well as finding ways to reduce our paper usage - the old paper registration form used three pieces of paper!

If you are yet to register online, don't worry, it can be undertaken either at home via the link below, or at your next working bee with your smart phone. The form will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

To register:

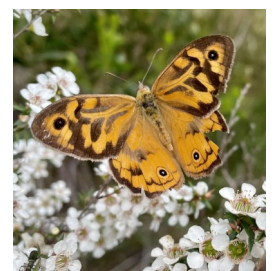
- follow the link: [Working Bee Volunteer Registration Form](#)
- scan the QR code found at your next working bee - your site coordinator will be able to assist if required.



Hop-bush Leaf Beetle



Southern Brown Tree Frog,
found hiding in a tree guard.



Common Brown Butterfly
(Heteronympha merope)



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Shire

Celebrating the 20th Friends Group Network Event

The sun was shining, birds were singing and the bugs were out and about for our 20th Friends Group Network Event.

70 volunteers met at Seawinds Gardens on Saturday 16 September. This event recognises and celebrates the achievements and efforts of our many Friends Group volunteers.

The event commenced with a moving Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony with a Bunurong Land Council representative. Volunteers were then introduced to Brian Bainbridge, a freelance naturalist who inspired us all to go on a "Habitat hunt/Bioblitz".

Attendees explored Seawinds Gardens and the indigenous garden display taking photos of all things interesting - including insects, scats and tracks.

The collection of photos was then turned into a mini-documentary, which was presented by Brian as he shared his knowledge, stories and observations.

A highlight was finding the Silky Hairstreak Butterfly (*Pseudalmenus chlorinda*), which is a very rare discovery on the Peninsula, and was only the second recording! Brian had always wanted to see this butterfly and could not believe his eyes when he saw the photo.

The find reinforces the importance of Bioblitz sessions for conservation, and how they can uncover some of the unique creatures here on our door step.

Finally, volunteers enjoyed the awards ceremony and delicious lunch.



Welcome to Country/Smoking ceremony with Bunurong Land Council



The moment the Silky Hairstreak Butterfly landed on Graeme's back! Natarsha quickly jumped in to take the photo.



Friends of Fairbairn smiling with their award at their working bee

Award recipients

It is always a pleasure at each Network Event to highlight and recognise the work of volunteers.

This year we presented three awards:

- **'Magical Moonah'** - presented to the Friends of Moonah Warren Bushland Reserve, Rye
- **'Powerful Owl'** - presented to the friends of Olivers Creek Bushland Reserve, Tyabb
- **'Sun-orchid'** - Presented to the Friends of Fairbairn Bushland Reserve, Mount Martha

Congratulations to these groups, and we thank you for your ongoing work and commitment to protecting and enhancing the biodiversity values of your bushland reserve.



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Introducing the Friends of Ferguson Drive

Article by Sally H – Bushland Management Crew Leader

October marked the first month for the newly formed, Balnarring based, 'Friends of Ferguson Drive' inaugural working bee.

The group carried out works in the Campbell Court Reserve corridor with five passionate volunteers taking time out to help protect, preserve and enhance the natural environment. In doing so, the group managed to clear a good number of invasive weed species throughout the site.

The Friends of Ferguson Drive all share a passion for the preservation of the beautiful and unique environment that is present on the Mornington Peninsula with a desire to ensure the natural bushland provides a safe and secure haven for the local indigenous flora and fauna to flourish.

The Friends are aiming to control, reduce or eradicate weed infestations, restore indigenous vegetation and improve the biodiversity and habitat for the native wildlife including the resident koalas that frequent the reserve– they are well known by the volunteers and have all been affectionately named!



Volunteers at their first working bee for Ferguson Drive

The enthusiastic group of new friends and keen environmentalists will start back on site in December. If you know someone who might like to get involved, reach out.

They will undertake working bees on the Second Sunday of each month (bi-monthly) meeting at the end of Campbell court in Balnarring.

Working bees are a proven booster for your mental health, a great way to be involved in your local community and to connect with the beauty of the natural environment.

Opportunity to join the Nature Stewards program

We are excited to be hosting the second [Nature Stewards program](#) on the Mornington Peninsula, commencing March 2024.

Applications to participate are now OPEN!

The Nature Stewards program is a 10-week program directly supporting participants to gain knowledge, learn practical conservation land management skills and to meet like-minded others in the community.

During this time participants learn about the Victorian and local environment, on topics spanning geology, soils, climate, fungi, plants, animals, volunteering and citizen science, and environmental interpretation.

This introductory short course is designed for people who have very little to no subject knowledge, and to existing volunteers who would like to expand their knowledge of the Peninsula's environment.

Visit the website to find out further information or how to join:

[Nature Stewards - Victorian National Parks Association](#)
[Victorian National Parks Association \(vnpa.org.au\)](#)



Anthony Fennel presenting to the Nature Steward participants in 2023



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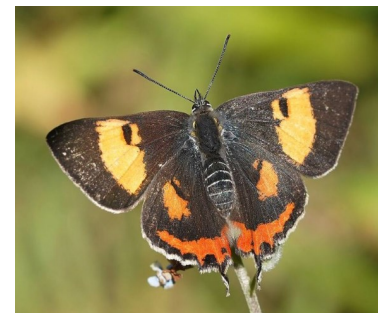
Celebrating biodiversity month

In celebration of Biodiversity Month during September, the Shire once again participated in the [Melbourne Biodiversity Blitz](#). Ten councils took part in a friendly competition to record the most species on [iNaturalist](#).

On the Peninsula a total of 278 community members contributed their observations of flora, fauna and fungi, recording 6011 records of 1484 species, with Mornington Peninsula finishing **top of the leader board**, closely followed by the Yarra Ranges Council. The total number of participants and species recorded were the highest since this event started 4 years ago, so thank you to all who took part.

Highlights include only the second ever record on the Peninsula of the Silky Hairstreak (*Pseudalmenus chlorinda*), a butterfly whose caterpillars feed on various *Acacia* species and depend on the presence of a specific ant species.

The most observed species was the Common Sea Dragon, with spring flowering plants making up most of the top ten, a great illustration of the variety of habitat types we are lucky to encounter across the Peninsula.



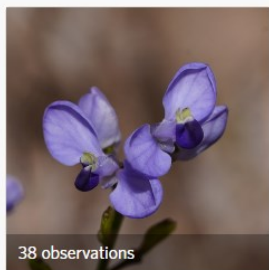
Silky Hairstreak.
Photo by Reiner Ritchie,
iNaturalist

Our top 10 Observations in September 2023



57 observations

Common Sea Dragon
Phyllopteryx taeniolatus



38 observations

Love Creeper
Comesperma volubile



38 observations

Carpet Sea Star
Meridiastra calcar



35 observations

Milkmaids
Burchardia umbellata



31 observations

Running Postman
Kennedia prostrata



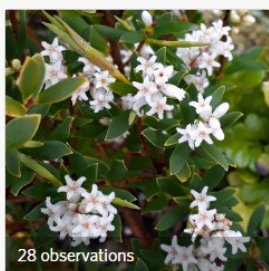
29 observations

Grass Triggerplant
Stylidium graminifolium



28 observations

Hop Bitter-Pea
Daviesia latifolia



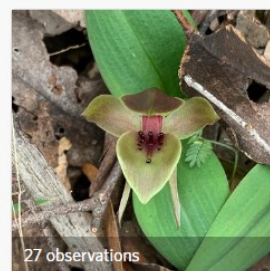
28 observations

Coastal Beard-Heath
Leucopogon parviflorus



28 observations

Tall Sundew
Drosera auriculata



27 observations

Common Bird-Orchid
Chiloglottis valida

Highly commended



Berg
Mt Martha

Congratulations to Balcombe Estuary Reserves Group, Mount Martha for being **highly commended** at this years Best Friends Award Ceremony recently held on 18 November 2023. BERG MM were nominated in the 'Outstanding Friends Group' category.

It is always a pleasure to work with BERG MM and their committee members - they display professionalism, passion and commitment to biodiversity conservation. The Shire is very thankful for the work BERG MM invest into the Balcombe Creek Catchment and are very pleased to see their efforts recognised through this award.



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Do you have a tower of old pots at home?

In an effort to reduce othe contribution to the ongoing war with plastic waste, The Briars Nursery has signed on as a 'Pot Collection Point' for an industry led plastic pot recycling program.

Plastic pots are made up of PP5 Plastic, which can repeatedly be recycled and reused. Through this program pre-loved pots can be collected, recycled and re-used to create new pots and plant labels by Norwood Printers and Garden City Plastics.

Any member of our community who has a pile of old pots stacked up in their garden shed can now bring these into the Briars Nursery to give them a second purpose.

For more information visit:

[Responsible & Sustainable, plastic pot recycling \(gardencityplastics.com\).](https://gardencityplastics.com)



Talking about weeds

In Mount Martha, the Sunshine Reserve Conservation Group and Balcombe Estuary Reserves Group (BERG MM) have been spreading the word about the need to control weeds across the community.

The groups set up a Saturday morning stall at Mount Martha shops with samples of common environmental weeds and to chat to passersby about the threats they can pose to the peninsula's bushland areas.

Volunteer Angie, from Sunshine Reserve said people unknowingly planted encroaching or environmental weeds in their gardens, not realising the impact on nearby bushland. The weeds spread into reserves and took over, stymying growth of the remnant vegetation and impacting the ecosystem.

Well done to the groups for this initiative helping to further educate and empower our community!

Flora of Victoria

Ever wondered where to look up a plant species?

Can't decide whether you're looking at a Coast or Sallow Wattle?

VicFlora is a comprehensive and current guide to the wild plants of Victoria.

The website has species profiles and identification tools that make up this richly illustrated resource which is provided by the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria for use by land managers, scientists, students and anyone else with an interest in the Victorian flora!

[VicFlora – Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria \(rbg.vic.gov.au\)](https://rbg.vic.gov.au)



Volunteers set up in Mount Martha with many weed samples, along with free indigenous tube stock to give away.

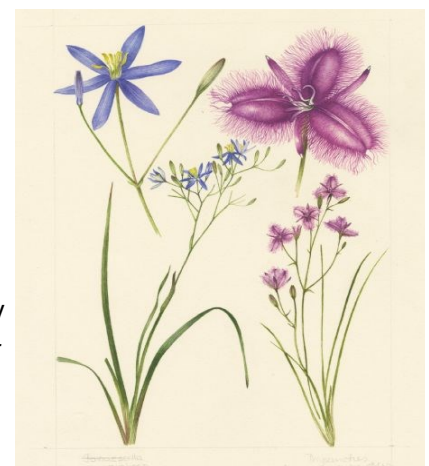


Illustration by Anita Barley, extracted from VicFlora website.



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Did you know...

There is a Victorian Friends Network (VEFN)?

The Network was created to help represent the common interests of all Friends Groups in Victoria.

Their vision is to protect, restore and enhance the Victorian natural environment through community volunteer groups, working for their special places and native species.

There mission:

- empower Friends Groups to achieve their objectives
- promote the value of Friends Groups to the community
- support Friends Groups to connect to their communities and get them involved.

The group has a fantastic '[Friends Finder](#)' to help interested community members get in touch with their local group. (I also noticed, there is VERY outdated information for a number of our Peninsula groups. Please check out the website and confirm your groups details).

You can find out more information by visiting their website:

[Victorian Environment Friends Network – Friends Care \(vefn.org.au\)](http://vefn.org.au)



Victorian Environment
FRIENDS NETWORK

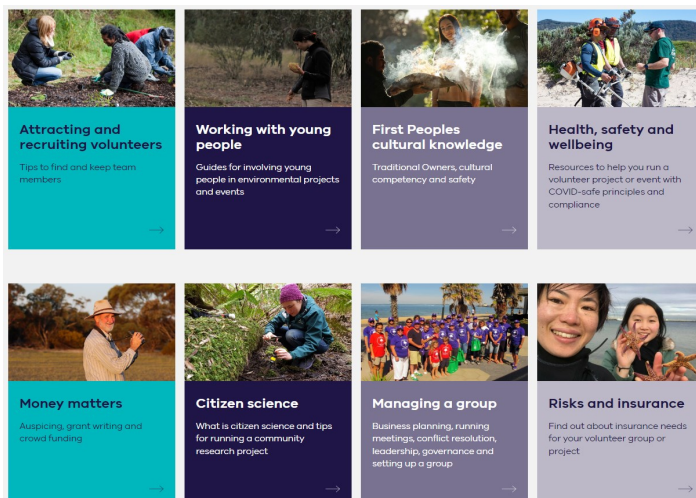
Resource hub for volunteers

The Department of Environment (DECCA) have released a resource hub for environmental volunteers. The resource is designed for all groups, big or small, and includes information on:

- attracting and recruiting volunteers
- working and inspiring young people
- communication tools and tips to promote your projects to reach new audiences, and
- citizen science.

To view the hub please visit:

[Resources hub for environmental volunteers](#)



Can't miss them now!



Left: President Len receiving the new vests from Rob who donated the printing.

The McCrae Coastal Group Inc. recently spruced up their safety vests.

They organised for their logo consisting of a Coast Banksia illustration and their name to be printed on the front and back of each vest.

Members of the public walking along the busy Bay Trail will now be able to easily recognise the volunteers working away.

The group did not waste time, and put the vests to use as they moved a massive pile of mulch!



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Drop in session to talk about weeds

The Natural Systems Team (Clayton and Cam) hosted a community information session to residents in Hastings, introducing them to the Shire's Early Invader Weed Program (EIW).

The purpose of the EIW program is to stop the establishment of high-threat weeds on Shire-managed land across the Mornington Peninsula.

One of the EIW species on the program - Chilean Needle Grass - was positively identified by Ventia's bushland team within Warringine Bushland Reserve and presents a serious threat to the biodiversity values.

To minimise the spread of Chilean Needle Grass, mowing works have been temporarily paused to allow for treatment and removal of the population.

This location was impacted by the 2015 Warringine fire, so it was anticipated neighbours may have concerns regarding grass length and associated fire risk. Meeting provided us an opportunity to explain the decision making behind pausing mowing at this site.

It was an extremely positive session. The neighbours asked engaging questions and welcomed the opportunity to discuss the delicate balance required when managing EIW's.

A couple of attendees also enthusiastically brought plant samples to be identified - that really tested the Friday afternoon plant ID skills!



Cam chatting to neighbours



Chilean Needle Grass

Know your look-a-likes!

Become an ID whiz and learn the difference between Common Apple-berry and Bluebell Creeper.

	Common Apple-berry (<i>Billardiera scandens</i> and <i>B. mutabilis</i>)	Bluebell Creeper (<i>Billardiera fusiformis</i>)
Form	Soft climbers , forming dense shrub once established	Vigorous climber forming dense shrub once established
Foliage	Dull green and undulating (curvy) along the edges	Glossy green on the upper surface
Flowers	1-3 greenish-yellow and bell shaped	2-5 blue or white and bell shaped
Fruit	<i>B. scandens</i> - a berry densely covered in long soft hairs, green or yellowish <i>B. mutabilis</i> - berry, smooth, green or yellow	Fleshy, green cylindrical berries that darken with age
Interesting facts	Both are widely distributed across the Mornington Peninsula and found in a range of vegetation types.	Seeds are eaten by birds and foxes and spread in their droppings. It can smother native ground covers and shrubs and can invade adjoining bushland.



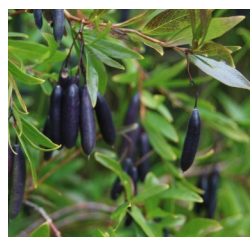
Leaves



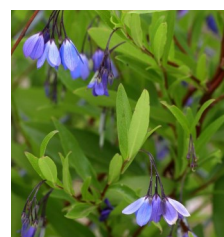
Flowers



Fruit



Leaves and fruit



Flowers