

# Narpulungup News

February 2017 Volume 1

## 2017 AGM at Twertup

This year's Annual General Meeting is to be held at the Twertup Field Studies Centre - a momentous event!

Although the restoration project is not quite complete, it has got to a stage that makes it possible to hold our meeting on site. All members are encouraged to attend and share in the excitement of a 'restored Twertup'.

The organised events of the weekend will be held on the Saturday and members are also encouraged to camp the night at Twertup if they wish. We are anticipating that you will enjoy being at Twertup without requiring too much formal organisation apart from the AGM and the guest speaker's talk on the Saturday. As usual it is a BRING YOUR OWN EVERYTHING weekend - food and camping gear if required. There is plenty of water on site and a BBQ available for cooking. Some members will be able to sleep in the building and there is lots of space to camp near-by.

### How to get there

Twertup Field Studies Centre is in the north west of the park. It is at the end of Twertup Track (about 10 km long and 4WD), which comes off Pabelup Dve/Quiss Rd, about 25 km south of South Coast Hwy.

**Finally, remember to vote  
in the state election  
before you come!**



Photograph courtesy Gil Craig

The programme for the weekend is as follows:

### Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> March

**9:30 am** onwards - arrive Twertup FSC. Morning tea will be available.

### 11.00 am ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**1.00 pm** Lunch

**2:30 pm** Guest speaker - Peter Lane  
(author *Geology of WA's National Parks*)

**3:30 pm** Afternoon tea

Followed by free time, dinner and social evening.

### Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> March

Free time - activities influenced by the weather and individual inclination!

The short 'Nature Walk' and the 'Horrie and Dorrie Trail'  
will be open to walkers.

Vacate Twertup around lunch-time.

NOTE: If Twertup is closed due to wet weather, the AGM and Guest Speech will be held at the same times at Fitzgerald Hall on South Coast Hwy, 56 km east of Jerramungup. Overnight camping is available there.

For more information please contact: Rosemary Jasper ph. 0428 123 400  
or [admin@fitzgeraldfriends.org.au](mailto:admin@fitzgeraldfriends.org.au)

## Culham Inlet causeway re-opened

Visitors can again enter the eastern side of the park from Hopetoun via a bypass around the Culham Inlet causeway. The bypass was constructed by the Shire of Ravensthorpe in December and will remain in place until a new bridge is constructed.

The causeway was closed to traffic in spring last year following structural damage believed to have been caused by water undermining the spillway. Constant rain throughout 2016 resulted in the inlet flooding twice after having been dry for many years.

## Further progress at Twertup



Above: Russell Peterkin giving his approval of the toilet slab. Below: Ric and Andy trowelling the shower slab in January. Below right: Enlarging the slab for the 'universal' toilet last October. All photographs courtesy Gil Craig



By Gil Craig

A few jobs have been completed since the last major working bee in October. The floors were swept, scrubbed, mopped and sealed in the heat of November by a team (Rosey Jasper, Ron Richards, Bill and Jane Thompson and Simon Smale) that was harassed by midgies. The floors are now vastly improved and it is far easier to sweep them!

Also, last August a Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW) Remote Regions team did an outstanding job in tidying up the Twertup precinct and demarcating the parking area. In January the small shower pad, adjacent to the current toilet, was completed by Ric Pepper and Andy Chapman.

The framework for the toilets, fabricated by CPC Engineering (Ravensthorpe) was delivered. Roofing iron was donated by Chris Newton (Albany Allway Roofing) and DPaW has supplied some mortar sand so all necessary materials are now on-site. The construction of the toilets is being funded by a *State NRM 2015* grant.

While the blokes were concreting, I flagged the short Nature Trail that heads south of the building then leads back to the quarry along the base of the spongolite cliffs. The working bee in early February should see this walk trail cleared of fallen mallets and the two frames for the toilets erected.



## Geologist Peter Lane to be guest speaker at AGM

Most of us know that the South West of the state is an internationally recognised biodiversity hotspot, rich in flora and fauna. Our guest speaker at this year's AGM will delve into the underlying reasons why this is so. Geologist and environmentalist Peter Lane, the author of *Geology of Western Australia's National Parks*, will take us back 1.1 billion years to a time when a mountain range of 'alpine dimensions' dominated the landscape we know as the Fitzgerald

River National Park. Jumping forward a mere billion or so years, he will describe how the Bremer Basin formed 40 million years ago, how and why spongolite was created, and the role of climate change in the development of past and future landscapes. Peter (pictured right) worked as a geologist in the petroleum industry for much of his career, and will also talk about the exploration potential (or otherwise) of the Bremer Canyon.



## Committee positions available: tempted to put your hand up?

**By Rosemary Jasper, President**

With the AGM approaching, we need people to take on official roles in the organisation. I would like to encourage members to seriously consider getting involved at this level.

'Friends of the Fitzgerald' is a long standing organisation which over the years has significant achievements to its credit. These include the original negotiations enabling us to develop Twertup as a Field Studies Centre (FSC), the FRNP Biological Study conducted in the 1980s, the regular publication of the high quality Narpulungup News, the numerous and memorable events that have been held over the

years, and now the magnificent restoration of the Twertup FSC building. This proud history together with the outstanding value of the FRNP provide a strong basis for the organisation and we have maintained a loyal and committed membership over the years.

The year ahead promises to be very exciting, as we finish off the restoration effort and organise the official re-opening of Twertup FSC and thereby usher in a new era for the organisation.

We really do need people to be office-bearers and committee members. Please consider getting involved. If you are at all interested, please contact one of existing committee and talk it through or email us: [admin@fitzgeraldfriends.org.au](mailto:admin@fitzgeraldfriends.org.au)

# Fitzgerald Biosphere renomination progress

By Nathan McQuoid

Fitzgerald River National Park was designated a Biosphere Reserve under the United Nations Environment Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Man and the Biosphere Programme in 1978, and is recognised for its relatively pristine state and high biological diversity, especially its flora.

Since 1978 the design of biosphere reserves has changed, with a requirement for formal buffer and transition zones, in line with the criteria adapted by UNESCO in 1996 and further adjusted in 2003. It is important to meet these new criteria as well as some other factors, as UNESCO will look to delist those older biosphere

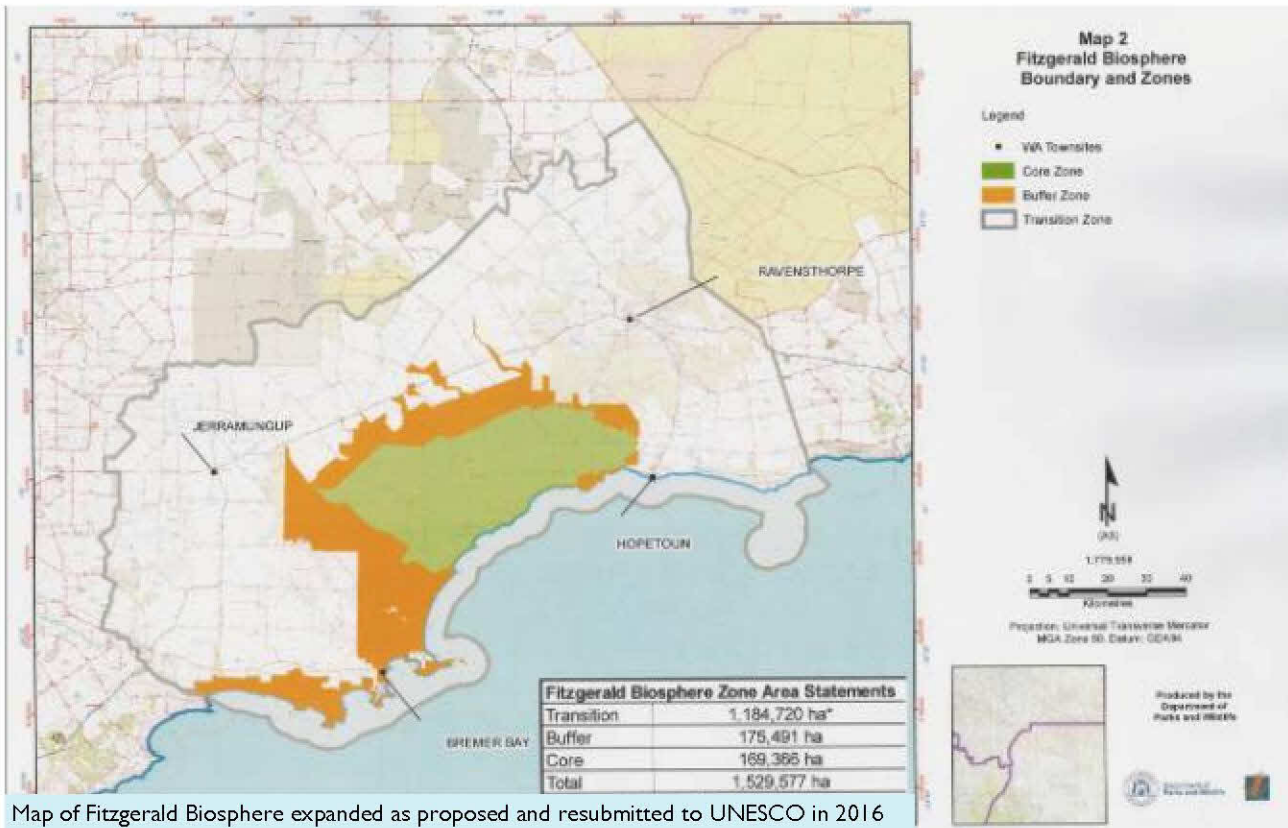
reserves that don't make the changes. If this occurred Fitzgerald Biosphere would lose an important international brand and could suffer reputational damage.

In September 2015, an expanded Fitzgerald Biosphere renomination was submitted to UNESCO via the State and Federal Governments. The expansion proposal treated Fitzgerald River National Park as the core zone, some surrounding reserves and unallocated Crown land as buffer zone, and the private lands and State marine waters as the transition zone. In early 2016, UNESCO deferred ratifying the extension proposal as submitted, due to the unsuitability of the proposed buffer zone. They recommended that the buffer be redesigned to contiguously surround the core. In response, the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPAW) and the Biosphere Implementation Group (which was formed to administer the governance of Fitzgerald Biosphere and the renomination program) redesigned the buffer and core

zones in line with the UNESCO recommendation, doing so by reducing the core to the conservation zone identified in the Fitzgerald River National Park Management Plan. The map below shows this redesign. This redesign of a contiguous buffer zone was resubmitted to UNESCO in late 2016 and a decision will be made on its suitability in early 2017.

The Biosphere Implementation Group (BIG) is a stakeholder group consisting of DPAW, the Shires of Jerramungup and Ravensthorpe, Fitzgerald Biosphere Group, Ravensthorpe Agricultural Initiative Network, Friends of Fitzgerald River National Park, South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, Great Southern Development Commission, Galaxy Resources and two community members.

Biosphere Reserves are areas of terrestrial and coastal/marine ecosystems or a combination thereof, which are internationally recognised within the framework of the Man and the Biosphere Programme in accordance with their Seville Strategy of 1996.



## Vale Professor Susan Moore



Sue at Roe's Pool in 1984. Photograph courtesy Gil Craig

**By Gil Craig with Judith Harvey**

A long-time conservation protagonist, Sue died, sadly, on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2016, aged 56 years, after a longish fight with cancer.

Sue will be remembered by Friends for the outstanding contribution she made in coordinating the *Fitzgerald River National Park Management Plan 1991-2001*. This was a mighty job given the number of people involved in the process of forging the plan. The plan prescriptions are still used today to guide management of the park.

An award-winning graduate from the University of New England, Sue joined the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) in 1985 where her role as Planning Officer brought her to the Fitz. This work motivated her to complete a PhD in 1994 in natural resource sociology at the University of Washington, Seattle. Her dissertation was titled "Interaction processes and the resolution of environmental disputes: Case studies from public land planning in the United States and Australia". She returned to CALM briefly to work as a nature-based tourism officer.

In 1995 Sue took up a position at Murdoch University where she led and won awards in teaching, student supervision and research during her 21 year career there. Sue and her colleagues at Murdoch joined forces with Friends in 2010 to fight Premier Colin Barnett's proposal to install a coastal walk trail through the Wilderness Zone of the park. Thankfully, after much lobbying, sensible decisions were made which left the wilderness in peace and the outstanding Mamang and Hakea walk trails were constructed in the Recreation Zone instead. Her web profile states: "My lifelong research interest is understanding people in nature. I've pursued this interest in national parks, marine parks and natural areas worldwide. Understanding people and their aspirations and needs is essential if the world's nature is to be protected and available for current and future generations to enjoy and appreciate". Sue's casket flowers featured *Hakea victoria* in recognition of her connection to the Fitz. Our condolences go to her husband Warren and their two children, Jess and Sam.

## Friends successful in dibbler grant application

In the week before Christmas the Minister for Environment announced that the 'Friends' were among 118 successful applicants for Community Action Grant funding provided by state NRM with funding from Royalties for Regions. Our allocation is for \$5,000 to continue monitoring dibbler numbers in Fitzgerald River National Park as part of our involvement with the Dibbler Recovery Team.

The 'Friends' and Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW) in kind contribution was valued at \$13,000. In this project we will be partners with DPaW; Dr Tony Friend will be our contact and provide scientific advice and be the custodian of data derived. Andrew Chapman will coordinate 'Friends' participation. Field work will be for four consecutive days in both May and October 2017 at a monitoring grid near the

intersection of Hamersley Drive and Moir Track.

There will be opportunities for 'Friends' and others who are interested in participating. We will camp out at Hamersley Inlet to avoid difficulties associated with the Phillips River crossing on Moir Track and wet weather road closures.

Contact Andrew on 98381149 or fishymaster1@bigpond.com if you are interested.

## Brenda Newbey recalls first Western Ground Parrot sighting in 1978

The critically endangered Western Ground Parrot is an elusive bird and most people involved in its conservation have only ever seen it in captivity, if at all. Imagine then how it must feel to have the bird stroll out onto the road in front of you and wait patiently for you to identify it?

In April 1978 this is how Brenda Newbey, long time advocate of the Western Ground Parrot and founding member of both the South Coast Threatened Birds Recovery Team and the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot, saw her first wild Western Ground Parrot.

She described the circumstances leading up to that first sighting as follows:

"I was already interested in birds when I moved over to Ongerup to join Ken [Brenda's late husband] at the end of 1977. I was involved with the RAOU [Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union] Bird Atlas. Ken told me about a green parrot he had seen a few times when he was recording plants in the North Fitzgerald. He used to sit on the ground, writing quietly and the birds would walk up to have a look at him.

We thought they were most likely ground parrots or maybe night parrots and of course I wanted to see one. So one day as we were driving north along old Hamersley Drive, Ken said: 'This is near where I saw one of those birds'. We drove on slowly and within a minute a parrot walked onto the road from the east side. We stopped. It stopped.

"I opened the bird book (*Slater Vol. 1*) which shows a side-on painting of a ground parrot and a night parrot. We were able to compare the real bird with the illustration feature by feature – red band, long tail... and were absolutely certain that it was a ground parrot. In retrospect I think of that as a 'meant to be' experience."

Following that first sighting 39 years ago, Brenda and Ken developed an interest in the species.

"We thought that ground parrots must be rare in WA as there were very few records of them. We followed up most of the south coast records – you know going to the location.

"Ken asked John Bannister for a mudmap of where he and Alex Baynes [both of the Western Australian Museum] had seen them on the way to Cape Arid. We went there. It was now a farm.

Other sites near Walpole and Denmark were too. In the early eighties a push began to release the North Fitz which was vacant crown land then, not part of the park, for farming. We were both concerned about this – Ken for many reasons but I was particularly anxious about the ground parrots." Brenda said the size of the population was unknown at that time and a survey was urgently



The late Ken Newbey recording plant species: as he was when he first observed Western Ground Parrots. Photograph courtesy Brenda Newbey

needed. It was 1984 when the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife ultimately began one, lead by Doug Watkins. The land release was timed for 1983 and it was only a change of government – Liberal to Labor - that enabled a moratorium to be placed on the land release until the survey was done. Doug's findings including ground parrot sightings at the end of Short Road which was built for the new farms helped enormously in a permanent deferment of the new farms. Brenda said it's really sad that the well-established population in the Fitz has disappeared. And Waychinicup. "However I was there for the rediscovery of birds in Cape Arid NP from where they had been missing (or not recorded despite searches) for 11 years. That was in 2003." She said back when the recovery work was starting "there was very little knowledge of these birds in WA bird circles – no-one seemed to know enough to be worried about protecting them." "Well [its profile] has been raised quite a lot now. The risk that these birds would be lost with not a ripple of concern has now gone largely thanks to Friends of the Western Ground Parrot and the work and publications like articles in 'Landscape' of Department of Parks and Wildlife, and many volunteers over the years. More profile but fewer birds..."

# Dietary habits of a Western Ground Parrot

By Brenda Newbey

The Fitzgerald River National Park used to be a stronghold for Western Ground Parrots. Sadly there have been none recorded there since April 2012.

However, back in 2006, Brent Barrett and Mike Barth, research scientists under contract to the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW), managed to film one wild ground parrot in the park in spring 2006 over several days between 20<sup>th</sup> September and 28<sup>th</sup> October, a remarkable achievement. More recently, I was able to use some of their videos to learn more about the bird's diet.

To do this I selected 50 thirty-second samples from six different days. It was necessary to select samples which showed mostly feeding and in which most of the food items could be seen. Food items were sorted into categories: **sedge seeds**, **green fruit** which included pods of peas and small fruit, **flowers** including entire flowers, flower parts and buds, **other** including leaves, stems and dry fruit of flowering plants and **obscured** where feeding motion was visible but the food type was not.

## Feeding Rate

In the 1500 seconds of video, 555 food items were swallowed, averaging 2.7 seconds per swallow. The rate varied from three to 40 items in the thirty seconds. Radio-tracking in 1988 showed that Western Ground Parrots were very active for 4.5 hours per day.

So in this active period they could consume 6000 food items. The videos showed that they also fed from time to time in the less active period.

## Components of food intake

The total numbers of identifiable food items swallowed was 514. Of these, flowers made up 38%, sedge seeds 35%, green fruit 22% and other 5%.

## Varying food choice

In total, 27 species from nine plant families were eaten in the 25 minutes, spread over at least five days. Plant families that were most commonly recorded were Cyperaceae (sedges), Ericaceae (heaths), Fabaceae (peas) and Proteaceae (especially grevilleas and synphea). Favoured species

were *Mesomelaena stygia* subsp. *stygia* (sedge seeds) and *Lysinema cilata* (flowers). Feeding on six species of *Daviesia* (green fruit) was recorded.

## Varying food choice on one day

Twenty four of the samples were filmed on 2<sup>nd</sup> October and the pattern of food choice was very similar to the overall pattern.

## Varying food choice within a 30-second sample

One food category for the entire 30 seconds (19); two food categories (24), three food categories (6), four food categories (1). Additionally, the bird quite often changed food choice within categories i.e. from one species of flower to another.

It could be seen from the video frames that the bird rarely finished all that was available of one food type before moving on to another.

The results of this study, although relating to one individual bird in one location in Fitzgerald River National Park, and in one season, correlate with other observations and suggest that a diet diverse in both plant species and plant parts is selected by wild Western Ground Parrots. The high use of flowers and also the importance of green fruit is of interest as previously it had been considered that sedge seeds were the mainstay of the Western Ground Parrot diet.

More detail can be found in 'Diet of one wild Western Ground Parrot *Pezoporos wallicus*' published in *Australian Field Ornithology* 2016, 33, 102-110.



Western Ground Parrot consuming the base of a *Grevillea tripartita* flower. During one minute the bird travelled about 0.7m and fed on *Lysinema ciliatum* (curry flowers), an isopogon, grevillea flowers, a sedge, more grevillea flowers from the same flower head, another sedge. When the bird moved on, three grevillea flowers of the original flowerhead were untouched. Video frame: Brent Barrett/DPaW

## Friends stall at Hopetoun Paddy's Market



The Friends stand at the Hopetoun Market, with the McGuire family and Andrew Chapman (right). Photograph courtesy Louise Lodge.

Four 'Friends' represented the group with a stall at McCulloch Park on the foreshore at Hopetoun on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> January.

Displayed was a wide range of 'Friends' merchandise and information, the Twertup restoration photographic display as well as a competition inviting people to match displayed feathers against a list of bird names.

Sales and attendance were limited somewhat perhaps by our marquee being a little off centre from the main area of activities. In spite of that it was a good day with the message that 'Friends' are still around and doing things in our community.

Winners of the feathers competition were Chris Biddulph (open) and Tania and Scott Atkinson (family). The winner of the Junior section was Josiah Barrett-Lennard of Holt Rock. Thanks are due to Tracey Ross and Louise Lodge for organising our stall.

### Narpulungup News

is the newsletter of the Friends of the Fitzgerald River National Park. It is produced quarterly (every February, May, August and November). For further information contact Leonie McMahon. Phone: 98366021 Email: southernedits@inet.net.au

### Western Ground Parrot volunteers wanted

Friends of the Western Ground Parrot is calling for volunteers to take part in the annual autumn surveys run by DPaW in Cape Arid National Park.

Dates are:

**27<sup>th</sup> February—3<sup>rd</sup> March**

**20<sup>th</sup> March—24<sup>th</sup> March**

Previous experience welcome but not essential.

Good hearing required

Participants need to be prepared for off-track walking and remote bush camping with very limited facilities.

Food provided. Camping gear made available on request.

If you are interested please email: [wgparrot@gmail.com](mailto:wgparrot@gmail.com)

Post Print approved 100002092 Surface Mail

**Postage Paid**

*If undelivered please return to:  
The Editor  
Narpulungup News  
8197 Bremer Bay Rd  
Bremer Bay  
WA 6338*