
FRIENDS OF THE FITZGERALD RIVER NATIONAL PARK

NARPULUNGUP NEWS

www.fitzgeraldfriends.org.au

FRIENDS' AGM AT TWERTUP 9TH MARCH 2024

BY ANNIE LEITCH

The Fitzgerald River National Park has long been celebrated for its biodiversity and a wonder for nature enthusiasts. It is here that the Friends of the Fitzgerald River National Park recently convened for their Annual General Meeting at the Twertup Field Studies Centre. Positioned within the heart of the national park, Twertup stands as a testament for shared efforts and learning of the surrounding environment. As members of the Friends group gathered, they brought with them their like-minded interest for conservation and a commitment to preserving the natural aspects of the park for future generations.

The AGM served as an opportunity for reflection on past achievements and discussions on future initiatives. Members came together to discuss reviewing the Friends' accomplishments



over the past year, commenting on the listed maintenance tasks and research projects, whilst electing our committee for the next twelve months. We thank past and renewed Committee members

and welcome our newcomers. By fostering strong partnerships with allied organisations, the Friends of the Fitzgerald River National Park aim to leverage collective expertise and resources in support of conservation efforts to celebrate this unique part of the country and the world.

THE 2024 COMMITTEE

President: Gillian Craig

Vice President: Annie Leitch

Secretary: (position vacant)

Treasurer: Sheryn Prior

Committee members:

Liz Utting, Kate Brown

Erika Jacobson, Sue Leighton

Newsletter Editor: Vicky Bilney

Twertup Building Rep: Alan Hordacre



GUEST SPEAKER MALCOLM FRENCH: EUCALYPTS '24

BY ANNIE LEITCH

The Friends of the Fitzgerald River National Park recently welcomed a returning guest to their AGM at the Twertup Field Studies Centre. Malcolm French, a renowned specialist in eucalypts, brought with him a suite of knowledge and recent findings that shed light on the fascinating world of these iconic Australian trees.

“I COULDN’T THINK OF A
BETTER PLACE TO MEET YOU
ALL THAN TWERTUP”
MALCOLM FRENCH

Malcolm French’s expertise in eucalyptus species stems from years of dedicated research and fieldwork. His passion for these remarkable trees has taken him across the country, publishing and updating a series of field guides for budding amateurs and experts alike. During the gathering, we were treated to fantastic images that the botanically minded audience enjoyed and understood - honing in his adoration for the diversity and resilience of eucalyptus trees. What is stark to me, is the embodied joy, gratitude and sense of wonder Malcolm expresses a genuine gratitude for this genus of trees with each photo he flashes on the projector.

“...AREN’T WE SO LUCKY TO
BE HERE, WE TAKE IT FOR
GRANTED...”
MALCOLM FRENCH

We learned about the third recently published subspecies of Jarrah *Eucalyptus marginata* subsp. *spurgeana*, his thoughts on a tree suited for climate change in the *Eucalyptus urna* subsp. *xesta* and gave us pause when it comes to understanding our fire sensitive mallet species - 11 out of 90 in the country are within Fitzgerald River National Park - sharing common sentiment for Ravensthorpe species that are at risk and so precious to the bush identity we share in this region.

Thanks Malcolm, your visit served as a reminder of the invaluable contributions that passionate individuals can make to the conservation and shared stewardship of our unique and remarkable bush.



AGM EXCURSION TO CALYERUP ROCK

BY GERALDINE JANICKE

The recent Friends of the FRNP AGM weekend included a visit to Calyerup Rocks which not only hosts lizards but has cultural significance to Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike.

Gil Craig led a group of vehicles along the track to Calyerup Rock, south of the Jacup Ranger's Station. There were 12 adults and two children to explore the rock outcrop and the water in the rock pools that form part of Calyerup Creek.



Dotted about the southern half of WA are many granite domes that provide travellers with elevated views of what is mostly a gently undulating plateau. The domes provide us with a visible connection to the vast raft of very ancient rock which geologists refer to as the Yilgarn Craton.

The rocks seem to invite young and old to wander about on their grey lichen spotted surfaces looking for some unusual feature or perhaps nervous reptiles under a rock slab or a hardy plant eking out a frugal existence in a crevice.

Calyerup Creek runs across the middle of the outcrop and has carved exquisite miniature canyons and pools. About nine kilometres downstream to the west, the creek has its confluence with the Gairdner River.

To the south lies an abandoned minesite which sits on the southern margin of the Yilgarn. This saw a mini gold rush in the period 1950 to 1968 producing only several hundred ounces of gold, so no millionaires. More recently a drilling project to probe the gold mineralisation has sparked further enthusiasm for developing the show.



The shallow rock pools along the creek had retained fresh water over the dry summer months. In the past this would have provided a useful resource for prospectors as well as hunters and gathers. Some of the holes may have been deepened by the local Noongar people who used fire to fracture the granite so that it could be excavated to produce small reservoirs. There is also evidence that explosives had been used by miners to deepen a large pool at the lower end of the rock.

We then walked to a second granite outcrop, that overlooks the old mine site.

These excursions are made especially interesting as the various scientific experts present are willing to share their passion, identifying various flora and fauna encountered or explaining the landforms observed.

ELUSIVE SHAGGY-SPINED BEE SIGHTED NEAR RAVENSTHORPE

BY KATE BROWN

The last known sighting of Ravensthorpe's beautiful Shaggy-spined Bee was back in 2013.

The first known specimen had turned up in an insect collection donated to the Western Australian Museum and the specimen label indicated the collection had been made from a flowering mallee near Ravensthorpe in February.

When Western Australian Museum staff went searching for the species in February 2013, they successfully located both male and female bees visiting white-flowering mallees on the northern and eastern fringes of Fitzgerald River National Park. Since then, many of us have been spending time around the summer-flowering mallees at the eastern end of the park in February hoping to catch sight of this elusive bee. This year Ron Richards and Rosemary Jasper were in luck, spotting several Shaggy-spined bees, laden with pollen, on *Eucalyptus uncinata* one afternoon in mid-February. By the time I arrived with my camera, a week later, only females could be found, collecting nectar from the last of the flowers. It is great news to know these bees are still out there and hopefully they will be back again next year so we can capture images of the males.

The mallee woodlands south of Ravensthorpe are currently the only known location of the Shaggy-spined Bee, (*Leioproctus (Lamprocolletes)* sp. unnamed) otherwise known as the Ravensthorpe Bee, and the species is yet to be scientifically named and described. Before this can happen Terry Houston from the WA Museum and Australian expert on native bees, would like to re-locate a closely related species, the Lesser-spined Bee, also undescribed. This species is known only from a collection of a few males in February 1954 from a white flowering eucalypt near Cranbrook. Once he has seen males and females of the Lesser-spined Bee, both species will be able to be formally described and named. So, we will have to keep looking!

Thanks to Terry Houston, WA Museum

Photo: Shaggy-spined Bee on *Eucalyptus uncinata*. Credit: Kate Brown

Description of the Shaggy-spined Bee (from the WA Museum fact sheet)*:

"This bee is a little larger than the honeybee and is remarkable in a number of ways. Males are clothed in dense, straw-coloured pubescence ('hair') which is particularly long on the legs, hence the term 'shaggy' in the working name given to this species. Females, by contrast, have a mostly bare body, although there is a band of rust-coloured pubescence across the front part of the thorax. Both sexes have two pairs of spines on the rear of the thorax. The function of these spines is unknown but they may deter predators".

*<https://museum.wa.gov.au/research/collections/terrestrial-zoology/entomology-insect-collection/entomology-factsheets/shaggy-spined-bee>



EXPLORING NOONGAR BOODJA AND BIODIVERSITY: A BIOSPHERE PRIMARY SCHOOL CAMP EXPERIENCE

BY ANNIE LEITCH

The last week of Term 1 saw students from Gairdner and Jerdacuttup Primary Schools across the UNESCO Fitzgerald Biosphere, embarking on a journey of discovery and learning about Noongar culture and the area's remarkable biodiversity.

Our day began with picking up Gairdner students on route to Jerdacuttup Primary. On our way, Chris Biddulph, local farmer and member of the Ravensthorpe Herbarium and Cocanarup Conservation Alliance, invited us to stop at his front gate for an exciting find: earlier that morning, he had noticed an Australian Owlet Nightjar flush from his letter box and perch close by, whilst his regular letter-box resident pygmy possum was also at reach!

We continued through to Cocanarup Timber Reserve, walking amongst tall, slow growing Salmon gums and learned the importance of preserving habitats like these for the survival of species like Carnaby's Black-cockatoos. We enjoyed lunch and were then led to a monitored malleefowl mound.

Chris then invited us to the Ravensthorpe Regional Herbarium. Its collection of over 1500 species of local flora is one of the most important collections within the state! We enjoyed the opportunity to admire the work of a multitude of volunteers who present the Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show every year.

Rolling up to Jerdacuttup Primary School, energy levels didn't waiver for the Easter egg hunt and delicious P&C prepared meals. Thank you to the Jerdacuttup families that donated these!

The following day, our learning journey continued as we met up with Uncle Eugene Eades, who guided us through significant Noongar historical sites for our day.



EXPLORING NOONGAR BOODJA AND BIODIVERSITY: A BIOSPHERE PRIMARY SCHOOL CAMP EXPERIENCE – CTD.

We began at Kukenarup Memorial west of Ravensthorpe, and listened to important conversations about the heritage of Noongar people, the significance of the area and reconciliation within the region.

Students were quick to dig for bush tucker Uncle Euy had pointed out before we journeyed west to Jerramungup Noongar memorial site, a piece of history that Noongar and Whadjula alike respect and appreciate, offering students a firsthand glimpse into the deep-rooted history and spiritual significance of these locations.

Bush Heritage Australia's Red Moort Field Station became our base for the evening, a fantastic venue with rooms, beds, cooking facilities and hot showers! Reserve Manager Heather Barnes joined us after her busy day and became Head Chef at the BBQ to serve us all our sausage sizzle dinner.

We rose early to pack up and head over to Nowanup. Reunited with our favourite Uncle Euy we learned more about cultural eco-restoration and asked more questions as we sit in our yarning circles. We shared thoughts and reflections within the Mia-Mias built onsite and listened to the life flowing through York gums up on top of the breakaway country.

We still didn't come up with a crafty name for this camp but I suppose that doesn't matter. The schools undertook a 'Journey of learning Noongar heritage and conservation' within their UNESCO listed Fitzgerald Biosphere and I hope this experience ignited curiosity, fostered cultural understanding, and instilled a sense of environmental stewardship with its walks and yarns through the bush and chance encounters with iconic species.

What excited me most is the community that got around to giving the students a glimpse into the extraordinary world beyond the gates of their farms/blocks/homes. We would like to extend a big THANK YOU to Chris Biddulph, Gairdner and Jerdacuttup Primary School Staff and P&C members, Heather Barnes from Bush Heritage Australia, Uncle Eugene Eades from Nowanup Enterprises and Ravensthorpe District High School for the community bus.

This event was made possible by generous support from Lotterywest



CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION MENTORING IN THE UNESCO FITZGERALD BIOSPHERE

BY ANNIE LEITCH

Blending education, culture, training and conservation, Albany TAFE students undertaking Conservation and Ecosystem Management certification immersed themselves into ground truthing their eco-restoration theory within the Fitz-Stirling region during March.

The Fitzgerald Biosphere Community Collective (FBCC) has been eager to use funding from Lotterywest to give our future generations a relevant exposure to the industry, including the ways in which Indigenous cultural involvement holds mutually value-adding benefits to contemporary land management.

We began by meeting Goreng Elder Uncle Eugene Eades at the Karda Geoglyph. He explained the integration of Noongar cultural practices with modern western eco-restoration methods. Collaborations such as this and at Nowanup reserve have provided over 400 hectares of protection and restoration in the region.

We continued on to Bush Heritage Australia's (BHA) Red Moort Field Studies Centre. Four of BHA's Fitz-Stirling properties are located within the Fitzgerald Biosphere, and BHA is an active member of the FBCC. With a focus on landscape connectivity, BHA align with Gondwana Link's vision to connect the forests of the South West Capes across to the Great Western Woodlands over a 1000 km band.

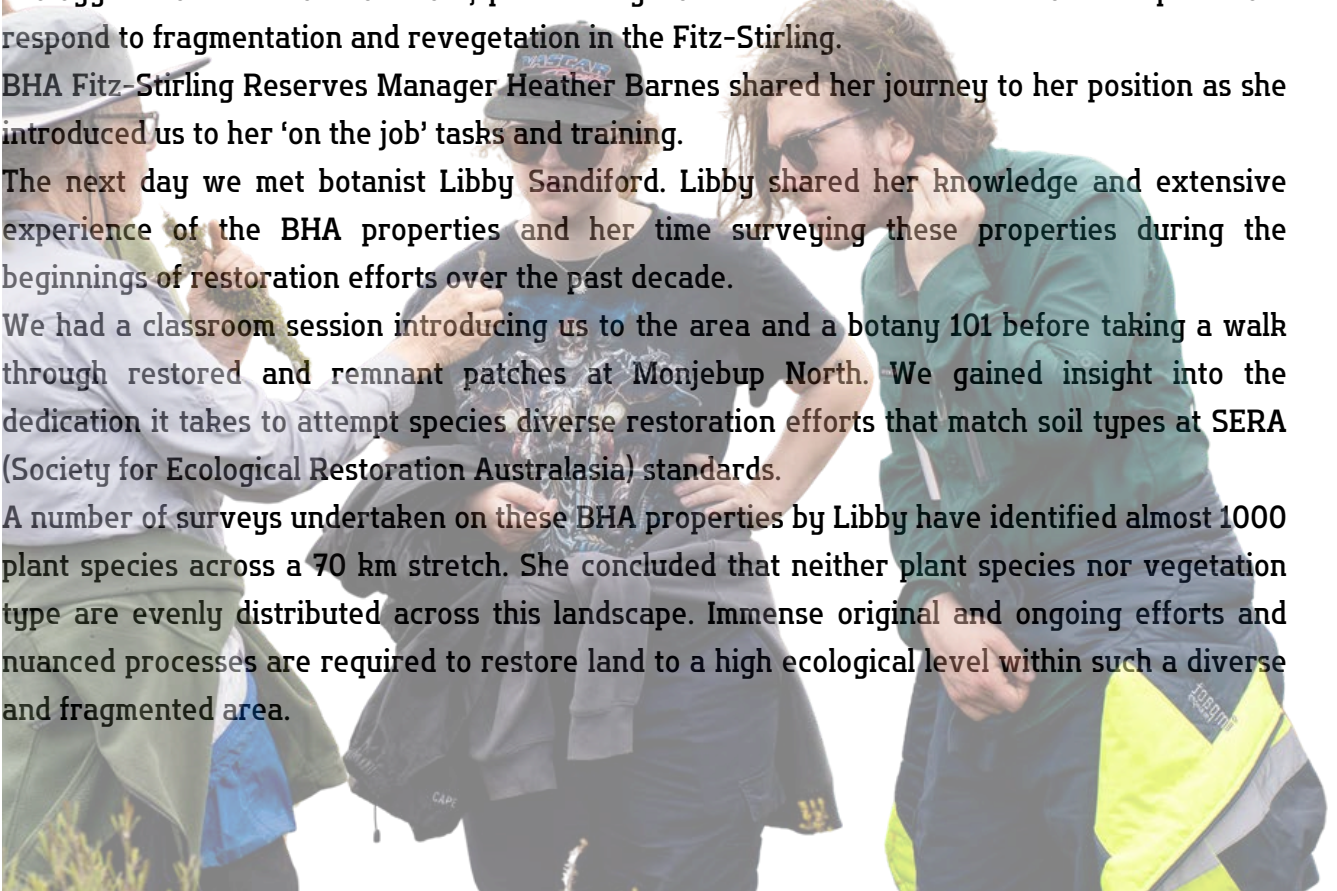
The field station was also hosting a few others for the evening. Biosecurity teams were engaged in bait deployments and PhD candidate with Murdoch University, BHA and DBCA, Natalie Grassi, was in the field and shared with us parts of her research investigating wildlife ecology at conservation corridors, particularly how native wildlife and introduced predators respond to fragmentation and revegetation in the Fitz-Stirling.

BHA Fitz-Stirling Reserves Manager Heather Barnes shared her journey to her position as she introduced us to her 'on the job' tasks and training.

The next day we met botanist Libby Sandiford. Libby shared her knowledge and extensive experience of the BHA properties and her time surveying these properties during the beginnings of restoration efforts over the past decade.

We had a classroom session introducing us to the area and a botany 101 before taking a walk through restored and remnant patches at Monjebup North. We gained insight into the dedication it takes to attempt species diverse restoration efforts that match soil types at SERA (Society for Ecological Restoration Australasia) standards.

A number of surveys undertaken on these BHA properties by Libby have identified almost 1000 plant species across a 70 km stretch. She concluded that neither plant species nor vegetation type are evenly distributed across this landscape. Immense original and ongoing efforts and nuanced processes are required to restore land to a high ecological level within such a diverse and fragmented area.



CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION MENTORING – CTD.

New seedlings have been steadily introduced and the presence of species like Malleefowl, Tammar Wallaby and Carnaby's Black Cockatoo confirmed. Nest boxes support Pygmy Possums. Ongoing efforts focus on feral animal control and further landscape restoration to enhance continued recovery of these species.

This experiential learning approach fosters a new generation of environmental leaders, lending to the melding of science, culture, and community engagement whilst strengthening partnerships between educational institutions, conservation organisations and Noongar custodians. The impact of this initiative extends far beyond the classroom. By empowering students with the tools to engage in meaningful conservation work, the program contributes to the long-term sustainability of the Fitz-Stirling and Fitzgerald Biosphere regions and surrounding ecosystems.

This event was made possible by funding from Lotterywest.



TWERTUP ART RETREAT

BY LOUISE LODGE

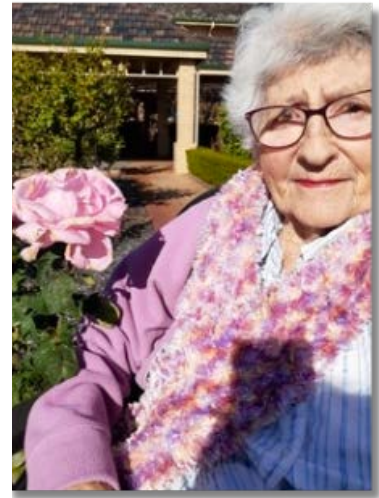
On the weekend 27-28 April, nine artists and supporters spent two days at the Twertup Field Studies Centre for an Artist Retreat. The majority of these people were from Hopetoun and Ravensthorpe and had not been to Twetrup before. They were blown away by the venue and its facilities. Everyone found it a great place to gather, share and be creative. All agreed that the environment of Twertup is inspiring and has so much to offer and they will come again if the event is offered. We are therefore considering running another Art Retreat later in year, maybe October or November. The event was organised by Windspray Arts and supported by the Friends of the FRNP.



Photos: Left: The group with some finished work - Mark Oltsman, Sue Dee, Kate Martin, Cathy Taylor, Charlene O'Brien. Centre: Sue Dee's art. Right: Louise out painting.

VALE MRS RODNEY VAN PROCTOR

On 7th March 2024 Mrs Rodney van Proctor died at age 99. She gave generously to individuals in need and to good causes, mainly related to habitat and wildlife conservation. The Friends were one of these beneficiaries with her generous donation during the rebuild of the Twertup Field Studies Centre. She also donated her collection of specialist botanical and bird books to Friends when she moved into aged care. Some of these are now in the Twertup library and the remainder sold to raise funds for the Friends. Rodney led a remarkable life with an enquiring mind embracing many varied activities, including but not restricted to volunteer work, wildlife warrior, supporter of environmental and conservation causes, artist, builder of exotic and native gardens, craft maker, chef, with the gift of making friends from all walks of life. She never stopped learning and being curious about the world – birds, flora, fauna, ecosystems, history, the arts and ecology.



VALE JOHN MCDONALD TUCKER 1ST JULY 1949 – MARCH 2024

John was found deceased in his home in Hopetoun on 18th March. A wake was held in April for John in the Cocanarup Timber Reserve under the salmon gums and nesting sites of the Carnaby's cockatoos which he so loved. John was a quiet achiever and happiest when out in the bush watching birds or searching for orchids. Over the years he has led walks in the park and participated in Friends' events - helping at market days and passing on his extensive knowledge about animals, plants and nature in general. He was incredibly observant and would spot birds from afar that no-one else perceived. John was a committee member in 2008 and 2009. In 2012 he assisted in erecting the framework for the new Twertup Field Studies Centre. His wry comments and quiet presence will be missed at our gatherings.





UPCOMING EVENTS

SPRING CLEAN AT TWERTUP - SATURDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER



We respectfully acknowledge the Noongar People as Traditional Owners of Country.
We recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, culture and community and
pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

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