

## Mt. Buffalo Field Naturalist Group

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12 July 2004

Dear Member,

It is time for an update on the activities of the Group, firstly some good news.

We have just received notification that we have a grant of \$454 to purchase software to assist the production of a plant identification CD for Mt. Buffalo. This came from a Round 2 of a Volunteer Small Equipment Grant from the Dept. Family and Community Services. We can supply details of the application to members interested. We actually applied for \$1200 to cover the cost of two copies of the program called Lucid, which has been mentioned in previous newsletters. One copy will have to do. We are waiting for written confirmation and to see what conditions may apply. Let us know if you wish to be involved in this matter.

Since our last newsletter we have joined members of the Australian Native Orchid Society who came to look for *Prasophyllum suttonii* – which is probably extinct. It was a damp weekend, and the orchid was not found, although a related species, *Prasophyllum brevilabre* was found, and a new orchid for us – *Diuris monticola* (Mountain Golden Moths). Early this year a friend directed us to both white and yellow Austral Ladies' Tresses (*Spiranthes australis*), which is a new plant record for the park. So our photographic record is coming on slowly. There is a long way to go, and we still have to solve the grasses and trees identification and documentation. There are lots of other projects people can get involved in, depending on time and interests.

Attached to this newsletter is a questionnaire which will help us plan for the future of this group. Please do this soon rather than putting it aside for a later time. As this newsletter is being written, we are getting some reasonably heavy rain, and it seems like a normal winter at last. We need to start planning for our summer activities. We need ideas, suggestions and help. We will have a meeting probably in September to plan these, so let me know if you have suggestions or would like to attend so I can arrange the date.

Other activities were two flower walks in January. The first of these was disrupted by an inconsiderate lyre-bird who refused to shut up so we could interest the group in the plants on the Heritage Trail. The afternoon saw us looking in the Lake Catani area, and this time the Black Cockatoos were keen to impress as they tore strips of bark off snow gums near the camp grounds.

This year's quadrat survey near the Dixon's Falls Track showed some interesting differences, and had to be completed the following week as we were interrupted by

rain.

We have included some observations made by ourselves and also made at our last meeting as to changes since the fire. We would be interested to know what you have noticed. This will be posted on our web site and updated as other observations emerge.

There are a couple of items of interest in the next month, which may be of interest. Although not a club activity as such, we thought members may be interested that, on Sunday August 1 Meredith and Roger are presenting a series of audio-visuals on the fire – mainly on Mount Buffalo.

Details are as follows:

Time 2:00 pm

Cost \$6.00

Proceeds to Oxfam Community Aid Abroad

TAFE auditorium, Docker Street, Wangaratta.

We have also attached notice of a land care meeting which could be of interest to members.

### **Winter update from Mt Buffalo**

Staff at Mt Buffalo have been busy with fire recovery works and our usual activities. We have had great success with post-fire projects including the replacement of cross-country ski bridges and signs, and repair of walking tracks. Most of these projects are ongoing and will be a large part of our workload this financial year.

Mapping and spaying of weeds has been successful, with Himalayan Honeysuckle and Willow targeted in a number of catchments. Only a few more catchments to go!

Winter this year has also set us some new challenges with the Cresta Valley Ski resort returning to Parks Victoria's management. We are not ski resort experts so assistance was sought from the managers of Mt Hotham and Falls Creek – Australian Alpine Enterprises, (AAE). With 4 weeks notice, AAE and Parks got the Mt Buffalo ski resort up and running. Feedback from the public visiting the mountain has been fantastic, making the effort all worth while.

While staff are busy repairing assets and infrastructure the plant and animal communities have been quietly doing their thing – growing, repairing and reproducing. With the blanket of snow things have slowed and we are all looking forward to the profusion of growth that always accompanies spring. The wildflowers should be spectacular this year.

Post-fire monitoring of all our rare and threatened plants has been carried out, with a visit from Neville Walsh and also members of the Field Nats – thank you. *Babingtonia* and our other 5 threatened plant species are recovering really well.

Parks has decided to intervene in the recovery of sphagnum bogs in some areas of the Bogong High plains and Mt Buffalo. At Mt Buffalo Mt Macleod was the most severely burnt, with large areas of bog damaged. There are estimates of up to 100 years for bogs to recover fully from fire. Various techniques will be used to aid in bog reestablishment and recovery at Mt McLeod.

All park staff would like to thank the Field Nats and Friends of Mt Buffalo for the continued support and we would love to see you up here this winter. On Saturday afternoons we run a snowshoe shuffle – a short interpretative walk on snowshoes, you are all welcome to come along, (just ring the Entrance Station).

Mary Anderson, Ranger, Mt Buffalo.