

2018-03-HFNC-activities-events

Hello everyone

It has been a hectic couple of weeks, with the main event being the Southern Grampians Planning Scheme Amendment C36 (Harmans Valley permanent Significant Landscape Overlay). We made a submission to Planning Panels Victoria and were ably represented at the hearing by Janeen Grimes and Diane Luhrs. Janeen was able to present maps constructed by Ken Grimes in 2004, showing the precise bounds of the lava flow, and pointed out deficiencies in the draft amendment in relation to protection of the rocks that form the landscape. Diane discussed the educational and tourism values of the sites and HFNC interest in the area from the 1960s. The ‘hearing’ included an informative visit to Harmans Valley and 2 properties that have land on that flow – one site had quite a large lava cave in the centre of a rock-crushed flat. The locals pointed out that a stone-crusher operated from around 1900 to 1970 on the flatter parts of the Harmans Valley lava flow, Hamilton City Council removed stone to face the Lake Hamilton dam wall, and the farmers also removed stones, so much rock has been lost. Time to call a halt before the landscape is lost. The adjacent extensive Louth Swamp was drained before 1900. That swamp was the reason for the existence of many Aborigine camps in the area.

We were very fortunate that Professor Raymond Cas (a world authority on volcanics) agreed to our request to attend as an expert witness at the hearing, to give an authoritative account of the national and international significance of the lava landscape in Harmans Valley and the Wallacedale Tumuli. Ray Cas also volunteered to present a public lecture whilst in Hamilton and we facilitated that. It drew an audience of over 70 people and the HIRL bandicoot room was crowded! Those present were not disappointed with Ray’s masterful delivery and content, bringing us up to date with all manner of matters volcanic. Two things, among many, that we learned was that the date of eruption of Mt Napier now stands at 46,000 years and that the SW Volcanic Province is officially ‘still active’!

Next Speaker – Thursday 15 March , 7.30 pm at HIRL – **David Pitts (PV)** will address the topic of **Orchids of SW Victoria**.

David was brought up in a rural setting in western Victoria and has had a keen interest in ecology from a young age. Following secondary education, David briefly opted for a life on the high seas before returning to land to pursue his interests in ecology, botany and conservation. To that end he studied Conservation and Land Management and then had several years working in various roles within the public and private sector. One work area was a threatened flora recovery program with DELWP in Heywood in 2008, working with dozens of rare and threatened orchids. More recently David joined Parks Victoria as a ranger based in Portland where he is implementing weed control programs and other environmental and visitor-based programs.

South-west Victoria boasts a diverse range of natural environments from the relatively dry woodlands of the southern Wimmera, to the windswept rocky shrublands of the Grampians, the grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plain and the wet sclerophyll forests of the Otways. It’s of little surprise that this vast landscape supports a significant diversity of native orchid flora, with over 230 recorded taxa from a remarkable 30 genera. Sadly, almost half of these species are considered threatened from a range of pressures including habitat clearing and modification, weed invasion and climate change. David will present an overview of these orchids and some of the current management efforts aiming to improve their chances of survival. There are many challenges in conserving these flagship species for future generations to see and enjoy.

Next Excursion – Saturday 17 March, leaving the Hamilton Visitor Centre at 9 am. Our destination will be the **Drajurk Forest** area west from Casterton. Maybe we will see some Red-tailed Black-cockatoos. The precise route and other objectives has yet to be worked out. As usual, bring your lunch and drinks.

Excursion to Beachport Friday 18-Sunday 20 May – our organisers (Glenys & Janeen) for this ‘coastal campout’ weekend need to know who will be going (and any preference for cabins), so that they can finalise the bookings. We will be based at Southern Ocean Tourist Park on Somerville St, Beachport.

We have booked 3 cabins: 2 have 1 room with a double bed and 1 room with 4 bunks (2 top, 2 bottom) – those cabins would each best take 4 people. The other cabin has 2 rooms each with double beds – so that would accommodate up to 4 people

Costs – \$160 per cabin per night (so, \$80 per person total for the 2 nights). We provide our own food on the weekend.

Glenys will have to know before 18 April whether you would like to go. Please contact her (55723737 or cayley3@bigpond.com). She can then either book another cabin or cancel one, for which a deposit has been paid.

Attachments

- Program – I sent you a Program last month but an error was pointed out – Oct Sunday 14 (not Saturday) should be the date for the working B at Nigretta Flora Reserve.
- Membership form – it is that time of the year again for subscriptions (\$20 for single and \$25 for family membership). The options for paying are given in the attachment. New members this year include Damian & Sophie Magner and family, who own land at Harmans Valley but live in Melbourne. We will have an excursion to their block near the Tumuli in August.
- Report of Feb. 2018 excursion to Lake Linlithgow .

Regards

Rod Bird

Secretary
Hamilton Field Naturalists Club