



FriendsNET

Newsletter of the Victorian Environment Friends Network

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See our new web site at <http://friendsvic.org/>

VEFN 2018 Best Friend Awards

Nominations Open for 2018 Best Friend Award

The nominations for this year's Best Friend Award are now open and can be submitted up until **5 pm on Wednesday 27th June, 2018.**

The Best Friend Award is designed to acknowledge the outstanding contribution made to the environment by volunteer members of Friends groups, whether it be protecting a reserve, a waterway, a particular species, or part of our cultural heritage.

Individuals who have received this award often say that what they value most is being nominated by the other members of their own Friends group. It is these people who see on a regular basis the hard work and dedication of individual members of their group. They value it so highly that they put in the time and effort to nominate their candidate for an award.

The value of the Best Friend Award has been acknowledged by the Victorian Government with the Minister for Energy, Environment & Climate Change and a senior member of DELWP presenting the awards and providing a monetary tribute for the winners. This goes directly to benefit the nominating Friends group.

Based on feedback from last year, VEFN has brought forward the award process. The awards will now be presented in August rather than in November, thereby avoiding that busy end-of-year period.

Continued on next page.

VEFN AGM & NEW COMMITTEE
VEFN held its 2017 AGM on Saturday 24th February. The principal items of business were to elect a new committee and decide on a new Constitution for the organisation. VEFN will now progressively implement the new Constitution and it was agreed to charge an annual membership fee of \$20 per organisation commencing from 1 July 2018. Further details will be provided in the near future.

The new VEFN Committee comprises:

Convenor: Paul Strickland

Deputy Convenor: Laura Mumaw

Secretary: Margaret Hunter

Treasurer: Roger Parker

Committee members:

Merrin Butler

Bonnie Gelman

Andrew Kelly

Working with the new Committee on specific tasks will be:

Stephen Derrick

Judy Ingram

Andrew Lucas

In this edition: See what Best Friends are doing with the grant funds they received last year. Read about VEFN's Mentoring Forum to be held in conjunction with the Yarra Riverkeeper Association in March 2018. Get involved in Biodiversity Response Planning and apply for new grants, among other stories.

VEFN 2018 Best Friend Awards continued

By starting now, we are giving Friends groups at least 3 months to put together their nominations. These are all assessed by an independent judging panel, according to the following criteria:

The nominee will have made an outstanding contribution under some or all of the following criteria or equivalent activities:

- Form strong relationships and partnerships for the benefit of the reserve*
- Attract funding for the benefit of the reserve
- Show personal dedication – ‘the above and beyond’ factor
- Introduce young people to the reserve as a means of planning for succession
- Make a personal impact on the establishment of major improvements in the reserve

**Note: The term ‘reserve’ can also refer to species, waterway or cultural heritage. It is used generically to refer to the purpose of the group.*

Further details about the criteria for assessing the Best Friend Award and a nomination form can be found on the VEFN website [here](#) or email the Secretary at friendsvic@hotmail.com and ask for the criteria and nomination form to be sent to you.

VEFN will also have a **poster competition** again this year. Friends of Westgate Park won \$100 last year for their excellent [poster](#). Friends groups are encouraged to submit their posters for a prize to be awarded at the Best Friend Award ceremony to be held late August.

Tackling pests together

There is an exciting project underway around Victoria that is taking a unique approach to improving weed and rabbit control.

Rather than focusing on specific techniques like biological control or incentives schemes, it’s focusing on ‘people power’, with the goal of supporting the people and community groups who manage rabbits and weeds to work better together.

The project is led by Agriculture Victoria in partnership with Victoria’s four community pest management groups for rabbits, blackberries, serrated tussock and gorse.

The project team have met and talked with individuals and community groups across the state to identify gaps, problems and opportunities with weed and rabbit management. Based on what they learnt, the project has invested in a series of projects totalling \$860,000. These are being delivered by the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce, the Victorian Rabbit Action Network, the Victorian Gorse Taskforce and the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party. The investments are focused on making a real, lasting impact on the effectiveness of pest management by supporting community groups and organisations. They aim to boost participation, leadership, collaboration, capacity building and knowledge sharing across communities and government stakeholders.



Rabbit learning network participants visiting the Mount Rothwell Conservation and Research Centre west of Melbourne, to study their conservation and rabbit control efforts. The learning network is one of the project’s capacity building programs.

There will be new opportunities in 2018 for community members to undertake leadership training, participate in mentor programs, join learning networks, and apply for funding to support local pest control efforts. If you’d like to be part of this, subscribe to the Weeds and Rabbits Project e-newsletter by emailing pestanimalsandweeds@ecodev.vic.gov.au. We’ll let you know when each of these programs open.

You can read the latest newsletter [online](#).

The Weeds and Rabbits Project is funded through the Federal Government’s Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper.



**VICTORIAN ENVIRONMENT FRIENDS NETWORK
IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE YARRA RIVERKEEPER ASSOCIATION INVITE YOU TO:**

***BUILDING PARTNERSHIP CAPACITY WITH FRIENDS GROUPS: STORIES FROM THE YARRA
CATCHMENT***

**SATURDAY 17 MARCH 2018 10 AM -4:30 PM (registration from 9:30)
LILYDALE SENIOR CITIZENS CENTRE (7 Hardy St, Lilydale VIC, 3140)**

This Forum provides opportunities for Friends Groups and public agencies to build relationships, network, better understand each other's needs and resources, and hear how to secure funding. Examples will be provided from the Yarra Catchment, but will be useful for any Friends group or agency staff working with Friends groups. The seminar will feature:

- Case studies of Friends Groups, including getting started, resourcing and partnering
- Agencies discussing resource opportunities and how to obtain them
- A panel of Funding Organisations
- Opportunities to network with agencies and Friends group members

We encourage members of Friends groups from throughout Victoria and Agency staff who work with Friends groups to attend. Together, we can better care for our environment.

Morning tea, lunch, and afternoon tea will be provided. The cost is free. Download the full [program](#).

REGISTRATION IS ESSENTIAL AT Eventbrite: <https://partnershipwithfriends.eventbrite.com.au>

For further information email parker.roger@bigpond.com, or mumawlaura@gmail.com



**THIS EVENT IS SPONSORED BY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, LAND, WATER AND PLANNING VICTORIA
AND IS SUPPORTED BY YARRA RANGES COUNCIL**

VORG's Short-tailed Shearwater Geolocator Survey

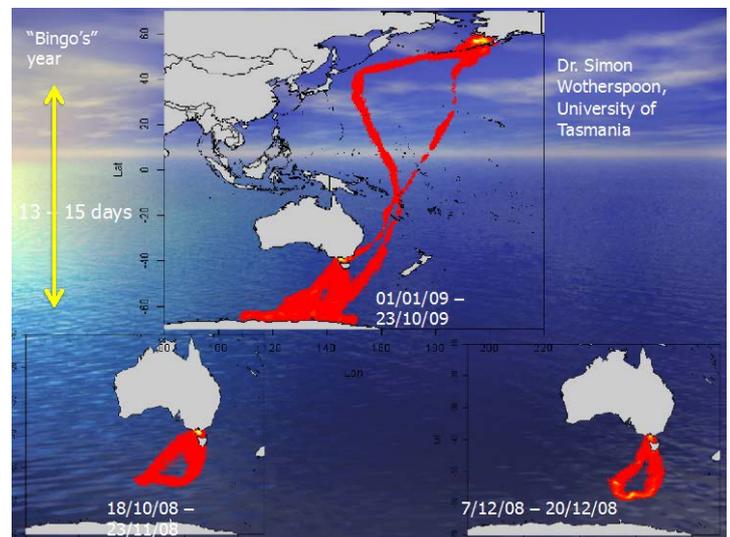
Spencer Unthank of the Victorian Ornithological Research Group (VORG) was highly commended in the VEFN 2017 Best Friend Awards. VEFN provided a grant of \$750 to VORG courtesy of the funding support provided by DELWP. VORG will put the funds towards continuing the geolocator study of Short-tailed Shearwaters at Phillip Island, Victoria. Spencer Unthank, who is Secretary of VORG, provided a brief outline of the study.

The often complete disappearance of some bird species after their breeding season has been an enduring mystery now partly explained by banding studies that have, through recovered bands, shown where migratory birds spend their non-breeding season. However, this does not show where the birds spent their time between banding and the band recoveries.

Light level geolocators, ranging in weight from 1.5 grams to 3.6 grams, with a battery life from two to ten years, record the times of first light (sunrise) and last light (sunset) from which longitude and latitude to be calculated. The small size and weight allows the logger to be attached to a band that can be fitted to a birds leg.

In October 2008, VORG volunteers started attaching light level geolocators, purchased from the British Antarctic Survey, to Short-tailed Shearwaters (*Ardenna tenuirostris*) at Cape Woolamai, Phillip Island, Victoria. Each year Short-tailed Shearwaters usually return to the same, or a nearby, burrow. This facilitates the recovery of the geolocators as the bird must be recaptured to retrieve the geolocator so that the recorded data can be downloaded and longitude and latitude calculated.

On 23 October 2009, at Cape Woolamai, the first recovery of a shearwater with a data logger attached was recovered in a burrow and promptly nick-named "Bingo". Examination of the data recorded by the geolocator revealed that in mid to late November it spent time south west of Tasmania, incubating the single egg from 24 November to 7 December when, presumably with its mate now incubating the egg, it took a foraging trip of 13 days into the Southern Ocean followed by another incubation period of 12 days. There were more long distance flights to the Southern Ocean with brief visits to Phillip Island probably to feed the single chick.



In late April this shearwater from near the Antarctic ice self, flew northwards and in 15 days arrived to the south-east of Japan, staying there for a few days from then flying to the Bering Sea where he stayed until early September. It then headed south and arrived at Phillip Island in late September having covered over 60,000 nautical miles, carrying the geolocator then whole way.

Other geolocator carrying shearwaters have shown similar results when breeding and migrating and there is some indication that birds which fail to breed may fly westward to the ocean south of South Africa before returning to Bass Strait to join the migration to the North Pacific Ocean. The result revealed by the geolocators show extensive flights near to the coast of Antarctica with periods of days to weeks spent there before returning to Phillip Island.

As in most pioneering studies, problems arose that were unforeseen at the beginning. Burrows at Cape Woolamai, while marked with pegs and flags, could not always be easily found after the winter becoming obliterated by growing vegetation and moving sand. After discussions with the management of the Phillip Island Nature Parks, an area adjacent to the penguin reserve was designated for the shearwater geolocator study and 30 artificial nest boxes were constructed and placed there. These have been very successful, adopted without any apparent concern by the shearwaters, and they allow easier access with less impact to the birds. In the early part of the study some geolocators, after recovery, were found to have failed to record data and others required special technology to extract the data. Improvements in the geolocators have reduced these problems.

Continued on next page.

VORG's Short-tailed Shearwater Geolocator Survey continued

Shearwaters that carried geolocators early in the study still return to the study area and have been found breeding successfully.

Where possible both birds of a breeding pair are now being fitted with geolocators to determine if there are differences in foraging ranges or periods between the sexes.

Recent reports of large numbers of seabirds dying in the North Pacific Ocean, apparently of starvation, among them many Short-tailed Shearwaters, lend urgency to the geolocator study of the shearwaters to assist in finding answers to this problem. Possibly young birds are more affected because adults may be better at finding food and return to the Bass Strait region to breed but there may be low recruitment to the breeding population which, in this long lived species, will not be immediately apparent. Also geolocators may show that shearwaters spend less time in some areas of ocean indicating little food is available or fly to areas outside the usual range searching for food.

VORG thanks the volunteers who participated in the shearwater geolocator survey, the management and research staff of Phillip Island Nature Parks and the sponsors to the VORG Environment Fund that have all assisted and helped with this research project.

Friends of Tyers Park to upgrade Wirilda Walking Track

Jim Stranger won the VEFN Best Friend Award for 2017 and Friends of Tyers Park (FoTP) were awarded a grant of \$1,500 by VEFN courtesy of the funding support provided by DELWP.

FoTP has decided to use the funds to purchase and install 300 walking track markers as shown here. FoTP has ordered the signs from a local disability enterprise called Latrobe Valley Enterprises.



FriendsNET will show some photos of the new signs when they are installed on the Wirilda track.

Helen Macpherson Smith Trust Grants

The Helen Macpherson Smith Trust (HMST) has a number of grants available that may be suitable for Friends groups. Groups must be registered as charity with Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission in order to apply. Individuals are not eligible to apply.

HMST will only fund:

- a charity based in Victoria and operating solely within Victoria; or
- a charity operating both inside and outside Victoria, if its head office is in Victoria.

Applications will **only** be considered for projects that:

- are undertaken solely in Victoria for the benefit of Victoria;
- have a 'Charitable purpose' as defined in the Charities Act 2013;
- match to one of our Programs and at least one of that Program's focus areas; and
- have a strong match to HMST's funding criteria.

HMST funds many projects in the environment area and the focus for this area includes:

- **Conserving and restoring biodiversity**
Projects that benefit at-risk habitats and species indigenous to Victoria.
- **Protecting natural systems**
Projects that protect and improve land and water systems to meet the environmental and economic needs of current and future generations.
- **Nurturing sustainable landscapes**
Initiatives that encourage sustainable land practices and improve connectivity across landscapes.

For more information about HMST, their key objectives and focus areas please visit their web site <https://hmstrust.org.au/grantseekers/our-grants-matrix/>.

Have your say in how biodiversity conservation is approached in your area

The latest Victorian Biodiversity strategy, [Biodiversity 2037](#), states that “Victoria’s approach to biodiversity conservation needs to be modernised, with more inclusive collaboration between stakeholders to drive alignment, accountability and measurable improvement”. This includes supporting and enabling community groups to participate in biodiversity response planning. Biodiversity Response Planning (BRP) is intended, with participation by government and nongovernment agencies, Traditional owners, and the community, to identify priority on ground actions that contribute to the targets of Biodiversity 2037.

To determine how BRP should work in practice, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) held a series of workshops over October and November 2017 with stakeholders and partners with an interest in biodiversity planning and management. VEFN Committee members participated in these workshops. A description of the process and outcomes is set out in [Biodiversity Response Planning: Co-design Overview Report – February 2018](#).

Friends groups were identified as primary stakeholders, that is, they should be involved in BRP Working Groups or other processes. We note with disappointment that in the report their role has been restricted to “On-ground project delivery and coordination” (page 26) without reference to planning and identification of priorities. Planning and coordination of the process has been divided into areas, and [Area Leads](#) have been assigned to coordinate the process (See p2 of the document). Please contact the relevant Area Lead directly to get involved. Area Leads have begun to establish the Working Groups for each area. If you want to know more about who is on the Working Group for your area, please contact your Area Lead. The first Working Group meetings will begin in late February and early March.

Area Leads are required to engage with stakeholders and interested community, particularly in the development of strategic projects within priority landscapes or themes determined by Working Groups. If you want to be involved in contributing to strategic project development, let your Area Lead know and they should keep you up to date about ways to participate.

VEFN STRONGLY ENCOURAGES FRIENDS GROUPS TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROCESS IN YOUR AREA. WE WANT TO HEAR OF YOUR EXPERIENCES (please email to friendsvic@hotmail.com) SO THAT WE CAN COORDINATE A NETWORK RESPONSE (INCLUDING POSSIBLE DISCUSSION FORUMS) TO TELL DELWP ABOUT ACHIEVEMENTS, ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

New round of Biodiversity & On-ground Action grants

Lily D’Ambrosio, Minister for Energy, Environment & Climate Change recently announced a new round of Biodiversity and On-ground Action grants – 2018 Community and Volunteer Action grants. The announcement can be found here <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/helping-communities-protect-victorias-biodiversity/> and details of how to apply here <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/grants/community-action>

Grants of up to \$50,000 are available and applications are due by 3 April.

Funding of \$2 million is available for the **Biodiversity On-ground Action - 2018 Community & Volunteer Action grants**.

The 2018 Community & Volunteer Action grants:

- offer funding for projects between \$5,000 and \$50,000;
- include the option of single or multi-year projects and
- have a broad biodiversity focus.

Community groups and not-for-profit organisations primarily focused on environmental projects such as biodiversity conservation or habitat protection and restoration projects are encouraged to apply.

Example groups include:

- Urban and rural Friends of, Landcare and Coastcare groups and networks.
- Environmental, naturalist groups or volunteer associations.
- Urban environment groups.
- Not-for-profit conservation organisations.
- Conservation Management Networks.
- Public land committees of management.
- Traditional Owner groups and associations.

- Schools and educational groups.
- Youth and senior citizens clubs.
- Local service and recreational groups.
- Other types of groups may also be considered if they are proposing to work with volunteers to undertake local conservation projects that support biodiversity or threatened species.

Minister D’Ambrosio also announced that \$116,000 is available for Crowdfunding for Threatened Species and Biodiversity Action.

Crowdfunding will offer community groups and organisations a unique opportunity to raise funds for threatened species and biodiversity action, while having their fundraising efforts matched by government, with funding up to \$25,000 per successful campaign. Workshops will be available for interested groups to learn more about running successful crowdfunding campaigns.

To register your interest in developing a crowdfunding campaign in 2018, you must apply online before 5pm **Friday 16 March 2018**

For more information see <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/grants/crowdfunding>.

Articles for FriendsNET

Suggestions for articles for FriendsNET are welcome. Please email to friendvic@hotmail.com. If you want to include photos, please send separately as high resolution jpeg images, preferably in landscape format if possible.