



VICTORIAN ENVIRONMENT FRIENDS NETWORK

BRIMBANK WORKSHOP SEPTEMBER 2018

WHAT'S ~~LOVE~~ BIODIVERSITY GOT TO DO WITH IT?

The workshop was attended by 21 people and there were presentations from three Friends groups; the Werribee Riverkeeper; Brimbank Council and DELWP. The presentations addressed the theme of biodiversity and the focus of the workshop was to explore ideas about what Friends groups can do to improve biodiversity.



Cathy Powers, Friends of Brisbane Ranges

The workshop commenced with Wurundjeri Elder, Aunty Diane Kerr reminding participants of the long history of Aboriginal stewardship of the land and their connectedness across time and landscapes. Aunty Dianne finished her talk with a “Welcome you from the tops of the trees to the roots in the ground.”

Each of the three Friends groups spoke about the history of their group and their experiences of working on their area. These presentations were complemented by talks from the Werribee Riverkeeper; Brimbank City Council; DELWP about its programs and grants that support biodiversity and a special presentation about bats. VEFN is grateful for the involvement of all of the speakers who contributed to a successful day.

The workshop benefitted from the extensive experience of the three Friends groups and their interesting and informative presentations. The Friends of Organ Pipes National Park is the longest serving Friends group in Victoria and was established in 1972. Friends of Brisbane Ranges was established in 1982 and Friends of Maribyrnong Valley in 1986. This combined wealth of experience provided many good examples of things that had worked and things that had not.



Workshop in progress

Lindy Lumsden's presentation about bats in western Victoria gave the workshop a fascinating perspective on how these creatures contribute to biodiversity, for example, as pollinators and as consumers of large quantities of insects. Lindy brought there live microbats to the workshop, so participants were able to observe them at close quarters.

Presentations by Rod Taylor about DELWP's biodiversity related programs; Martha Ragg and Brimbank City Councils environment strategies and John Forrester about the history and context of the Werribee River all provided important perspectives for the discussions about Friends groups and what they are doing and can do to improve biodiversity.



Eastern Free-tailed microbat exhibited at the Workshop by Lindy Lumsden

The final discussion and wrap up sessions focused on ideas that would assist VEFN and Friends groups to do more to improve biodiversity. The following ideas are only a selection of those put forward and discussed, but are practical suggestions that both VEFN and Friends groups can act on:

- Enhance and improve record keeping and verification and work on improving ways of sharing this information.
- Greater effort to be devoted to showcasing what work has been done by Friends groups and what has been achieved. Important that this is undertaken as a collective voice of Friends groups and is used to advocate for more support for their work.
- A focus on pollution could be useful way of highlighting issues, particularly with respect to run-off from roads and industry and its impacts of parks, reserves and waterways.
- Devote greater effort to engagement with young people, particularly school age and how they can be involved in and benefit from Friends group activities.
- Consider whether the Victorian landcare model, with a network of statewide facilitators might be a useful way for VEFN and Friends groups to develop.

VEFN will consider these suggestions, including through further consultation with more Friends groups at forthcoming workshops.

VEFN conducted a survey of attendees, which 13 people completed. Highlights of the survey responses are:

All respondents (100%) said the Workshop met their expectations.

- The morning Friends panel and the presentation about bats received the highest positive rating with all 13 respondents giving it a rating of very good. Some attendees felt the afternoon panel did not focus enough on biodiversity, but nevertheless 10 out of 13 respondents gave it very good rating. The discussions and wrap-up sessions were well regarded but many respondents remarked that not enough time had been allowed for either general discussion or questions to speakers.
- The physical features of the forum were rated as follows:

Feature	Rating % (Good + Very good)	Respondents
Location	84.6	11
Screen/visibility	100.0	13
Audio	69.2	9
Catering	100.0	13

Notable comments in relation to audio were that a speaker mike would have been helpful. Some respondents felt that the temperature control in the room was poor, but the natural light, aspect and view were very good.

- Key outcomes for attendees were:
 - Almost 85% valued the opportunities to network and learn about other groups' experiences (n=11).
 - Almost 77% valued the opportunity to network (n = 11).
 - 69% valued the opportunity to meet friends and colleagues (n = 9).

- All respondents agreed that VEFN should continue to host similar Workshop days (n = 13).
Topics for future Workshops were rated as follows

Possible topic	No. respondents who said yes/no
Health, wellbeing and community engagement benefits of environmental volunteering	10/0
Grant application processes and opportunities	4/3
Contractual/legal issues	2/4
Developing a strategic plan	6/2
Victorian government environmental plans and strategies	5/3

Other possible topics that were mentioned include: Working with/encouraging participation of people from CALD backgrounds; use of pesticides and weedicides; use of project planning tools to track and manage projects successfully.

Overall, the Workshop was a success. Key issues noted for improvement were that there were too many sessions for one day and that more time be allowed for discussion and questions. The full program of the Workshop is attached



Victorian Environment Friends Network



Friends of Organ Pipes NP checking a Sugar Glider box with a pole camera
Photo courtesy Friends of Organ Pipes

WHAT'S LOVE BIODIVERSITY GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Victorian Environment Friends Network invites you to a workshop for Friends groups of greater western Melbourne on September 15th at Brimbank Park.

At this workshop, **Friends groups and biodiversity** is the theme - what Friends are doing about it, what Friends plan to do about it in future and what Friends would like to see the Victorian Government, agencies and local councils are doing.

Friends groups based west of Melbourne will present, along with Dr Lindy Lumsden, Section Leader, Wildlife Ecology - Arthur Rylah Institute and others.

The workshop will run from 10am to 3pm at the Brimbank Visitor Centre, Brimbank Park. Workshop attendance will be limited to 35 people and preference will be given to members of Friends Groups. If you would like to attend, please email as below. A maximum of two people per group can be accommodated.

DELWP has provided grant funds to VEFN through its Community Skills Development program to assist with running this workshop. Lunch will be provided.

We hope to finalise a program for the day in the near future and look forward to your involvement.

Warm regards,

Bonnie Gelman and Stephen Derrick

(organising committee for VEFN)

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Victorian Environment Friends Network



Taylor's Creek (a tributary of Maribyrnong River) in flood
November 2015

Photo courtesy Stephen Derrick

WHAT'S LOVE BIODIVERSITY GOT TO DO WITH IT?

PROGRAMME

10.00 am	Welcome to Country	Wurundjeri Elder, Aunty Diane Kerr
10.15 am	Workshop introduction	Bonnie Gelman, VEFN Rod Taylor, DELWP
10.30 am	Friends groups presentations	Cathy Powers, Friends of Brisbane Ranges Neil Duncan, Friends of Organ Pipes National Park
11.30 am	Biodiversity in the west	Dr Lindy Lumsden, Section Leader, Wildlife Ecology, Arthur Rylah Institute, DELWP
12.15 pm	Lunch	
1.00 pm	Friends groups presentations	Martha Ragg, Conservation Community Liaison Officer, Brimbank City Council Judy Ingram, Friends of Maribyrnong Valley John Forrester, Werribee River Keeper
2.00 pm	Discussion	What should Friends groups do to improve biodiversity?
2.45 pm	Wrap up	Key messages from the workshop