



FRIENDS OF OCEAN GROVE NATURE RESERVE • JANUARY 2024 • EDITION 78

## Flying colours

*Chris Tsernjavski*

In late June 2023 a cluster of caterpillars were observed on a low-hanging mistletoe branch at the reserve.

The caterpillars were a reddish-brown colouration and were attached to a white silken web that they had spun on the mistletoe.

By late September the butterflies had started to emerge and were identified as Imperial Jezebel *Delias harpalyce*.



Image: Imperial Jezebel *Delias harpalyce*.



Above: Caterpillars and pupa attached to their web on a mistletoe plant.

### Biology of the Imperial Jezebel\*

Imperial Jezebel butterflies breed on mistletoe that often grows near the top of tall trees. Their caterpillars remain together in a silken web on the mistletoe. The butterflies are one of the first to emerge in spring and fly throughout the year. They have a graceful gliding flight. The striking black, yellow and red of their underwing contrasts with the subdued colouration on their upper wing.

**Scientific name:** *Delias harpalyce*

**Other names:** Imperial White, Imperial White Butterfly, Common Imperial White

\*Field, R, Phillips, K. and Bould, A. (2016) *Delias harpalyce* Imperial Jezebel Butterfly in Museums Victoria Collections <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/species/12255>

## Summer vegetation management at the reserve

*Barry Lingham*

The Friends of Ocean Grove Nature Reserve (FOGNR) continue to work closely with Forest Fire Management and Parks Victoria to assist planning of vegetation management within the reserve. Each summer season, all the walking tracks and vehicle tracks are slashed to keep them clear of excess grasses and intruding shrubs. The timing of slashing is important. Allowing the emerging new native grasses to set seeds before slashing ensures that the seed is viable and will grow into next year's plants. Normally, slashing is done sometime in December.

The other factor that influences the timing of slashing is the potential severity of the upcoming fire season. Advice from Forest Fire Management was that this coming season was potentially more hazardous due to expected dry weather after a good growing period during spring. This advice then triggered an earlier slashing date so the tracks were slashed in mid-November. An inspection of the tracks prior to slashing showed most grasses had already set seed. Sun Orchids (*Thelymitra* species) that emerged during spring on tracks in the eastern part of the reserve had also finished seeding. It seems that the slasher has been spreading the orchid seed over recent years – an unexpected benefit.

Over the summer, further work will be done to clear and mulch sections of dense Sheoak growth in the southern zone adjacent to Centre Track. Previous experience shows that this will open up the habitat and allow more grasses and wildflowers to grow.



## Presidents report

*Chris Pitfield*



I remember coming up to the nature reserve in the late 70s as a young boy with my parents to explore the reserve's labyrinth of trails. Most of the area's original vegetation had been cleared and it is where I first felt a real connection to nature.

Over the 80's and early 90's I would come up to the reserve with my mates and have many talks with Dave and Betty King, Ray Hodge, Graeme Tribe, and other volunteers who I learnt so much from. I loved volunteering at the Information Centre, talking to visitors to the reserve, many for the first time.

In the mid 90's, while at university, I undertook several studies at the reserve, the main one being a year-long small mammal survey.

For the past 20 years I have stayed connected to the reserve, often to reconnect to why I have now chosen a career in the environmental field. I have spent the last 20 years with the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority and have also set up my own business – Carbon Landscapes, where we purchase areas of threatened vegetation with the plan to reintroduce threatened species.

Over the past 40 odd years, much of the reserve has changed but the importance of the Friends Group has not. The Friends Group play such a vital role in the reserve. As president, I will be focusing on the following three areas over the next 12 months:

1. The reserve's natural values – the flora and fauna of the reserve are unique, and the Friends Group play a vital role in their protection. Priorities will include establishing a spatial mapping system to record onground works, ecological burn regimes and related flora and fauna data, research before and after planned ecological burns and a comprehensive floristic survey of the reserve.
2. The role of the reserve within a landscape context – while the natural values within the reserve are important, the role the reserve plays as a biolink for native species is also important. Working in partnership with neighbouring properties while understanding the current and future land use, including future development, will be a focus of the Friends Group this year.
3. Our relationship with Parks Victoria – the Friends Group has a long history of working in partnership with Parks Victoria, but this can always be improved and will also be a focus over the next 12 months.

**2024 is going to be a great year for the Friends Group. On behalf of the Committee, we welcome new and constructive input into the reserve's management. Please contact us, we would love to hear from you.**

## Birds of the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve

### Whistling Kite

*Jen Carr*

Whistling Kites are not commonly seen at the OGNR, but I do love seeing them there. These birds are raptors or birds of prey. They are medium to large birds of around 55 cms in length, and have a light brown head, light brown streaked underparts, and long, round, brown wings with paler undersides. The underwing pattern is distinctive in that there is a characteristic pale 'M' shape that can be seen when the birds are soaring. They have a long, rounded tail. Both sexes are similar, but the females are larger than males, like many raptor species. Whistling Kites are named after their distinctive high-pitched whistle call, and are often heard before they are seen.



The Whistling Kite is widespread throughout mainland Australia but uncommon in Tasmania, and is also found in New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and New Caledonia. In southern states of Australia these birds have been observed to be migratory, but in the northern states they are resident. They can be seen in varied habitats, including tree-lined waterways and rivers, around farms, vineyards, and near rubbish dumps. They nest on high, so trees are required in the habitat to enable breeding. I have never seen them nest at the reserve but have seen nests at Curlewis. They are common in areas such as around the Murray River where there are high gum trees and available water. Whistling Kites fly around trees and waterways to search for prey such as carrion, roadkill, and small live animals such as mammals, birds, fish, and insects.

Light morph Little Eagles resemble Whistling Kites in flight, but Little Eagles in flight have distinctive black wingtips and a shorter barred tail. Little Eagles also have rusty upper wing colouration compared to the pale brown Whistling Kite.



*Underwing pattern of the Whistling Kite.*



*Comparison to underwing pattern of a Little Eagle- shows the barred tail, black wing-tips and rusty upper wing feathers.*

## Life membership awards

*Barry Lingham and Barbara Spiller*

At the AGM of the Friends of Ocean Grove Nature Reserve, three members were nominated to receive Life Membership awards for their long and distinguished service to the group. The nominations were accepted and the well-deserved awards were presented at the Christmas social gathering in early December to Pete Sullivan, Fiona Topolcsanyi and Lel Shipley. Their individual stories of connections and contributions to the reserve is outlined below.



*Life membership recipients from left to right: Lel Shipley, Fiona Topolcsanyi, Pete Sullivan*

### Pete's story

Pete's first contact with the reserve was through an assignment on 'Plants in the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve' as part of his horticulture course at Melbourne University. That was 30 years ago. He still has the assignment. He then assisted Graham Tribe with establishing grid reference points across the reserve. He eventually put down roots in the area, moving to nearby Woodlands Estate and joining the Friends Group and Committee in 2006.

Pete's main focus has been on revegetating the landscape within the reserve – in particular planting yellow gums and manna gums. His interest in birding has also developed during his time volunteering. Pete visits the reserve once or twice a week and keeps lists of birds he spots on each visit. His favourite part of the reserve is the western half, with the grass trees, being the oldest and most intact section.

Things have changed during his time with the Friends Group. Thirty years ago there were more volunteers involved in activities. The Friends Group also enjoyed a stronger working relationship with Parks Victoria. He would like to see Parks Vic receive more funding so they can be more involved in on-ground works.

On a positive note, Pete finds the social contact with like-minded people within the Friends Group to be as rewarding as ever and enjoys interacting with people who care about the environment.

Pete is currently liaising with Forest Fire Management, advising on the forest mulching of middle storey vegetation as well highlighting high value areas that need protection from mulching and burning. This collaborative working relationship helps to restore biodiversity as well as reducing fire fuel load.

In future Pete plans to continue improving the biodiversity of the reserve, bringing the weed growth under control. He has a big picture plan of better connecting the reserve to other green spaces on the Peninsula via green corridors.

### **Pete's contributions**

Pete joined the committee in 2006 and has given 17 years of dedicated service on the committee since then, including roles as:

- President for six years 2014, 2015, 2016; 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023
- Secretary for three years 2007, 2008, 2009
- Activities Coordinator for seven years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2017, 2018, 2019

Key projects that Pete has been involved with include:

- Coordination and the development of the OGNR strategic plan commissioned by the FOGNR.
- Successful application in 2019 for the Victorian Landcare Grant Application grant

to engage ecologist Guy Dutson to investigate and write the ecological report for the reserve. Peter also assisted in developing the extensive project brief and proof reading the documents.

- Planning and implementing revegetation of several areas of the reserve by tree propagation, planting, watering, protection and ongoing care of the seedlings.
- Coordination of working bees
- Working closely with Parks Victoria over many years to advise on the best management of the vegetation the OGNR
- Liaison with Forest Fire Management Victoria to assist planning the siting and extent and systems of vegetation grooming and ecological burning within the OGNR.

## **Lel's story**

Lel settled in Ocean Grove in 1988 as a new mother and immediately found like-minded people with a passion for the environment. As well as joining the FOGNR she was a founding member of NOW (Nurture Our World) with other young mothers she met at the Maternal and Child Health Centre, and she later became involved with the Scouts movement which has become a lifelong commitment.

Lel's main interest has been in introducing children to the wonders of nature and teaching them to respect the bush. But she has also enjoyed involvement in environmental causes too. She remembers a successful campaign to save Ocean Grove Park from being converted into housing development, culminating in a win at a VCAT hearing. Her favourite memories of volunteering for the Friends Group are of weekends spent at the Information Centre, welcoming visitors and encouraging the public to become involved with the reserve and the bush generally. She loved explaining the treasure trove of displays that were housed in the Centre – birds' nests, feathers, books etc. She would guide visitors around the reserve and advise people where to walk to see the best examples of wildlife depending on the season. She enjoyed making craft activities for the children on wet days.

Lel was confident and comfortable in this role and felt she had a useful role to play, interacting with the general public. Her biggest regret is the loss of the Information Centre and consequent loss of relationship with the public. Lel's favourite part of the reserve is the north-west corner with the grass trees. She loves its wildness and she remembers the koala that used to live there. She can imagine him there still.

### Lel's contributions

- Lel volunteered at working bees and staffing the Information Centre when the reserve was run by a committee of management. In 1994, she was elected to the FOGNR committee and has been a committee member for many years, with a few breaks along the way. She was Activities Coordinator during 2000, 2001.
- Lel always been active at the OGNR in various capacities. For many decades, Lel volunteered on weekends as the public face of the FOGNR at the Information Centre. Thousands of visitors have had their experience enhanced by Lel's stories, information and passion for the Nature Reserve.
- She has been a regular attender at working bees and also volunteered to show many visiting groups around the OGNR.
- In her other role as a Leader in the Scouting movement, Lel has led untold numbers of groups of youngsters on walks around the OGNR, instilling a respect and love of nature by introducing them to the local flora and fauna.
- For over 30 years, Lel has always been willing to lend a hand. In recent times she has assisted in the review and enhancement of the Discovery Trail, development of the Nature Tails project, and is a member of the Information Centre subgroup investigating future options for the building.

### Fiona's story

Fiona first heard of the Friends group 18 years ago when she read in the local newspaper that the group would fold if new members could not be recruited on to the Committee. Fiona, already a nature lover, with a Master of Environmental Education, an ambition to become a marine biologist, and years of volunteer work with Friends of Swan Bay and Marine Discovery Centre, responded to the call and went along to the Special FOGNR meeting. She went home that night as a member of the Committee and has been on the Committee ever since.

Fiona has most enjoyed the social connection with the people in the Friends group and the longstanding friendships she has made. She has felt able to initiate creative projects and ideas and found the group supportive of her particular interests. For example Fiona has great memories of organising a midwinter feast where the Friends gathered around a fire pit, listening to Col playing guitar and singing along while cooking on the coals. She remembers her own children having great fun that night making marshmallow stuffed damper.

The Friends group and the reserve became part of her own family's development, her children volunteering as guides as they grew up. She appreciates that the group has allowed her to 'put in' to a greater or lesser extent over the years as the demands of her home life has varied.

Fiona's favourite place in the reserve is the old gum tree by the lake, in front of the park bench that sometimes goes under water. She has many photos of her children climbing in and sitting in that tree. She doesn't walk in the reserve very often – maybe every couple of months.

In future she would like to see the reserve survive in and for itself, not as part a justification for some other purpose. She would like to continue serving on the Committee but probably not in an office-bearing position.

## Fiona's contributions

- Fiona joined the committee in 2005 and has been continually active during the 18 years of her service including roles as:
- President for six years 2011, 2012, 2013, 2017, 2018, 2019
- Vice-President 2020, 2021, 2022
- Activities Coordinator for three years 2014, 2015, 2016
- Secretary 2010
- Fiona has been inspired to develop ideas and projects that connect the local community, and especially children, with nature by informing them about the environment of the reserve.

She has led the following projects:

- 2007-2010. Parks Vic Community Group Grant. \$3825.00. Led the project and researched, designed and organised the production of four large detailed information panels that chart the aboriginal history of the Ocean Grove area, the formation of the OGNR, key aspects of the habitat management plus details of the avifauna and mammals of the OGNR. These panels are mounted in the Information Centre.
- 2010-2011. Designed and organised the construction of cabinets in the Information Centre to house a range of "tactile" objects, such as feathers, seed pods, leaves and bones from the OGNR that could be used by youngsters visiting the Information Centre.
- 2013. Organised the renovation of the Information Centre kitchen area including installation of a new gas stovetop.
- 2014. Organised the delivery of an information bag to all residents of a new subdivision near the OGNR. The bag contained a range of items including information about the wildlife and tracks within OGNR.
- 2015-2017. Local History Grants Program. \$2500. In conjunction with the Bellarine Historical Society, researched and documented the history of the OGNR and produced a booklet detailing the history of the OGNR with information about the reserve and the people who have been involved in helping to protect it.
- 2015-2018. Facilitated the establishment of Bush Kindergarten groups using the reserve by providing risk benefit analysis, running Professional Development workshops on nature play and forums linking Early Childhood Teachers, Parks Victoria and the Friends Group.
- 2020-2022. City of Greater Geelong's Healthy & Connected Communities Grant \$8600. Nature Tails from the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve is a resource kit aimed at local families and early childhood settings that encourages children to explore key flora and fauna within the reserve based on a nature hunt. The kit has a postcard page of clues (prints, photos, hints) and on the reverse information about the species, where they can be found and what you can do to look after them. The cards link to further information such as stories, map, digital recordings, sensory items and opportunities to engage in activities in the reserve using mobile phone QR codes.
- In 2018, Fiona received a Best Friend Award from the Victorian Environmental Friends Network. This state award recognised persons who had shown a strong dedication "above and beyond" in working to improve the conditions at the reserve and in connecting community members to the reserve.



# Information Centre update - Jan 2024

## *Information Centre sub-committee*

The FOGNR Sub-committee finally obtained a copy from Parks Vic of the 2021 OGNR Info Centre closure. This enabled us to see details for the first time of their technical assessment of the structure and proposed 'Action Plan'.

In summary Parks Vic technical assessment of the building and action plan follows:

- Condition: Poor (roof wooden structures are exposed and in average condition and wall, floor and roof cover's structural condition as average. Not suitable/compliant under current building category of 6 for the sale of goods. Asbestos present in situ)
- Consequences: Major (HSE contacted and managing cast-in situ asbestos; does not meet 2018 building regulations as a place of public entertainment to which permit relates not provide safe working place for Parks Vic employees, occupants and visitor health and therefore recommended immediate closure of the building if upgrade works not completed and recommended to disconnect water, gas and electricity connections and to remain closed at current stage unless further decision made)
- Risk rating: Significant

The FOGNR sub-committee held an initial on-site meeting (with Parks Vic approval) in late November 2023 with a structural engineer commissioned by FOGNR (having extensive experience working on public and community buildings) to independently assess condition of the current building and any structural work needed to retain it or repurpose it into a pavilion. Outcome: building found to be structurally sound externally/internally including roof structure, floor and walls with in situ sealed asbestos not presenting any safety risks as long as not disturbed.

In summary the current building as assessed by the structural engineer was found to be in a structurally sound state for FOGNR to consider repurposing. Design proposals are subject to additional structural support requirements that may be required to meet building regulations.

Flowing from this initial assessment by the structural engineer an update was provided by the Information Centre sub-committee to the FOGNR full committee meeting 21st November and it was agreed for the sub-committee to come up with design ideas/proposals to repurpose the existing building to be put to FOGNR committee for consideration and approval. Subsequently an on-site meeting was arranged with a local design company in December (with Parks Vic approval). The company is currently working on the sub-committee brief to produce design options for a repurposed building which will be better placed to serve all users and visitors to OGNR.

## Nature reserve visitors

*Barbara Spiller*

I came across Mark and his daughter Maxie walking in the reserve a couple of days after Christmas around 5 o'clock in the afternoon. It was their first time ever in the reserve. They had learnt about the reserve from a book about walks on the Bellarine. Each time they come down from Melbourne to stay in their holiday house at St Leonards they try out a different walk from the book.



*Mark and Maxie*

Today they parked at the new carpark at Grubb Rd entrance and walked down to the Lake Track where they walked the loop around the lake. They were hoping to see more wildlife, such as wallabies, but remarked on some of the things they did enjoy - the beautiful butterflies, nature views and cubbies (Maxie) and a green-plumed bird (Mark).

## Activities

The Friends Group are currently planning the program of activities for 2024. Activities are planned to run on weekends as well as mid-week in order to suit a greater range of volunteers. Working bees are scheduled to start in February.

For further updates go to our facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/34794023030/>

For activity details go to ParkConnect: <https://www.parkconnect.vic.gov.au>

## Networking and connections

[Friends of the Barwon December 2023](#)

## Contacts

**Email:** [friends.oceangrove.naturereserve@gmail.com](mailto:friends.oceangrove.naturereserve@gmail.com)

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/34794023030/>

**Web:** <https://fognr.wordpress.com/friends>

**Mail:** Friends of Ocean Grove Nature Reserve, PO Box 313, Ocean Grove 3226

This newsletter is produced by the Friends of Ocean Grove Nature Reserve and co-edited by Barbara Spiller and Chris Tsernjavski.

We acknowledge the traditional owners of Wadawurrung country and pay our respects to their elders and people, past and present, as we do to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people everywhere.