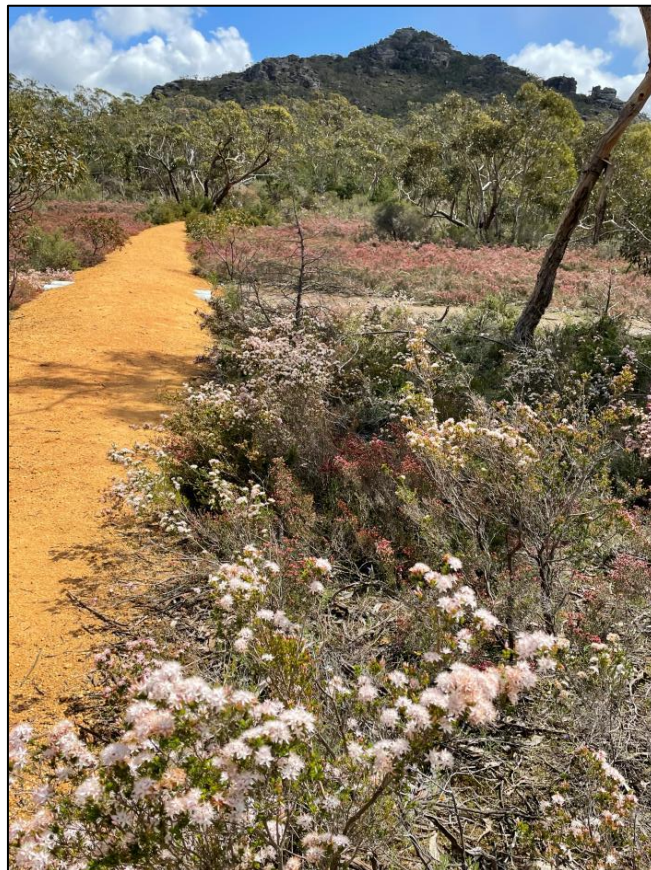




## NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2022

### **Petyan - Ballambar**

Seasons of tempestuous weather grading to the hot and dry  
September – November - January



*Mt Zero walk: Photo Neil and Wendy*

Quarterly Newsletter Friends of Grampians-Gariwerd Inc.

Editors: **Leigh and ben**

*Gariwerd (including the Grampians National Park) is on the lands of the  
Barengi Gadjin, Eastern Maar and Gunditj Mirring peoples  
and we acknowledge them as the Traditional Owners of the Greater Gariwerd landscape.*

## ***Dairy Dates***

10<sup>th</sup> December Saturday  
Christmas breakup  
12 noon, Saturday  
Red Rock Picnic Ground  
(If accessible??)  
Contact: ben

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## **2 PREZ SEZ NOV 2022**

As summer approaches rapidly, and the rain keeps falling and creeks are flooding .... well, this is different to the usual summer intro. I'm loving this wetness, the sound of rain on the roof, normally dry creeks running bankers and flooding; but then I'm not faced with flooded buildings, just beautiful wetlands, ponds and puddles. Frogs, insects (pity about the mozzies), bird life – fledglings appearing everywhere, swans floating with their cygnets over the paddocks ... happy Reed Warblers.

Gumboots. Bruce McInnes started the gumboot fashion with his Wetland Wander in September, when some gumboots were discovered, wetly, to be NOT waterproof after spending years stacked away in cupboards.

Now it's time for me to step down from position of president, having completed my two-year term.

Looking back on this time, I'm left with some very warm memories of activities, work and shared values with a great group of people (see President's report below). One of the best things about being President is the deeper level of involvement with FOGGs, a valued group of people with shared aims and shared love of nature.

The aims of FOGGs for the Grampians National Park (GNP) are to:

- Promote conservation, protection and restoration
- Increase the community's involvement, knowledge and enjoyment

- Assist with projects selected by FOGG and GNP
- Provide a community voice in support of the GNP

As a group we are dedicated to these aims, all having a great love for Grampians-Gariwerd.

Now it's my pleasure to welcome Strum – Geoff Stratford – as our incoming President. Welcome, Strum! Welcome also to our incoming Committee; it is similar to the previous one, but special welcome to Cindy Baulch-Brown, new faces are great to have.

Cheers, Leigh.

### **Our incoming President: Geoff Stratford**



G'day to you all.

As a member of FOGG's I am perhaps the least qualified member in terms of expertise and knowledge of the flora, fauna and natural history of the Grampians. I am however very respectful of the expertise and passion so many of the members show for our unique part of the State. I have taken the role of FOGG President to support FOGG in the achievement of the best outcomes for the Grampians National Park and our members.

As an introduction, I was brought up in suburban Melbourne before obtaining an Ag science qualification at Longerenong Agricultural College. Technically, I worked in cropping agronomy prior to accepting management roles, firstly at the Mallee Research Station at Walpeup, 28 years, and then at Grains Innovation Park in Horsham.

Sustainability and preservation of the environment were key underlying principles of our contribution to cropping systems. Research work at Walpeup, which contributed to the almost complete removal of cultivated fallows in cropping systems, is one of the successes in which I believe I played a role. Current systems are far less susceptible to soil erosion and far more productive compared to the 1970's when this research commenced. Along the way I led the Dept of Ag and Vic Farmers Federation sponsoring the establishment of the Mallee Tree Group (now part of Mallee Landcare) of which I was secretary. I've also been on school councils, including president, a cub master and formal roles in sporting clubs.

So, while I perhaps have a background in what might be seen as an exploitive industry, I can assure you agriculture and agricultural research is committed to the preservation and enhancement of the environment, just as I now hope to achieve for the Grampians and the Greater Gariwerd Landscape region.

I will, however, require considerable technical support in the role of President of FOGG and I am very confident that members will steer me in the right directions, and fill my magazine with the appropriate ammunition, to represent the best interests of the members, the Park and surrounds. I therefore invite all members to contact me if you wish to raise any issues. As required, I commit to representing you all and ensuring we

provide an interesting and informative syllabus of activities for 2023 and beyond. Wishing you all compliments of the coming festive season.

STRUM

Geoff Stratford

## LEIGH'S FINAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This past year has been difficult with the high number of changes to plans, due to illnesses, accidents, availability of leaders, and the weather. However, the events we have had have been sheer pleasure, learning about and experiencing the Grampians in differing ways; education about the park and its flora, fauna, Indigenous heritage, geology, assessing areas for work needing to be done .... along with learning about other conservation works in the area (Stawell Gold Mines).

A brief synopsis of activities for 2022:

**Feb 12:** Reptiles with David Steane – and yes! We saw 2 'reptiles' ... a snake and a skink's tail, still wriggling ...

**March 6:** Clean-up Day at Silverband carpark and walk.

**March 19:** Wartook Lookout Walk with ben.

**April 9:** Astronomy night with Gil Hopkins (cancelled due to cloudy skies – we should have made it a cloud-study night!))

**May 14:** Boorpeck Art Site with ben.

**June 17:** Presentation on Stawell Goldmines' Environmental Monitoring, Community and Revegetation work, with Cameron Hope.

**July 9:** Bird Spotting at Lake Lonsdale with Neil McCumber. Night Herons en masse roosting in huge old *Pinus radiata*; Darter feeding while emitting its eerie strange call ....

**August 13:** Invasive Species presentation by Daryl Panther (cancelled at last minute).

**Sept 10:** Wetlands Wander at 'Sheet of Water' with Bruce McInnes.

**October 8:** Prolific Plants walk at Mt Zero with Neil and Wendy Marriott

**Nov 12:** Bat education and fieldwork with Yvonne Ingeme. (No fieldwork unfortunately due to the rain, but a fascinating 2hr talk).

**Dec 10:** Christmas lunch at Red Rock Picnic Ground, near Glenisla Crossing. Then again, it might be raining, in which case Plan B is to have lunch in the shed at Zumsteins picnic ground.

With just two cancellations, despite the rain and Covid we've had a fun filled year.

In the past FOGG and Parks have been closely involved with each other, helping each other's aims of caring for the country. During the last few years, however, this has proved nearly impossible. The reasons for this seem to be:

- severe shortage of Parks staff;
- the huge increase in bureaucratic requirements for volunteers and subsequent attitude towards volunteer groups;
- a change in values by Parks Vic towards economics, away from conservation (especially of endemic species).

Various efforts to engage Parks in programmes with us that aren't already on their agenda have not been successful. We are hoping things improve in the near future, and that we can return to sharing working-bees and other FOGG activities with Parks staff (e.g. renovating our Red Gum Wheelchair walk)

A big thank you to all of our committee, all of our leaders and speakers throughout the year, indeed all of our members – FOGGs is a very supportive group, which is one of its pluses!

Now it's Goodbye from me, in this role of President, and a very warm hand-over to Geoff Stratford (Strum) Leigh Douglas.

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### *News from VNPA*

The Planning Minister, Lizzie Blandthorn, has finally made her decision on the proposed 'Warburton Mountain Bike Destination'.

#### **She has unequivocally rejected the majority of the tracks through the Yarra Ranges National Park!**

Why? Because the proposed tracks pose an “...unacceptable risk of significant effects particularly on Cool Temperate Rainforest and Cool Temperate Mixed Forest and the Mount Donna Buang Wingless Stonefly”.

Together with locals, scientists and ecologists we made submissions, presented at the hearings and pressured decision-makers through open letters.

So many of you called on the Victorian Government to protect the integrity of this natural wonder from unnecessary harm. And it paid off. 1 November 2022.

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### *A note from Noushka*

“With great enthusiasm I'm letting you know that we were successful for our Nature Fund Bid “Raising Rarity: Preventing the extinction of Victoria's threatened flora” which focuses on integrated conservation of 24 endangered plants across Victoria.

The RBGV collaborative application sought 1.35 million out of the total pool of 10 million. Friday before the long weekend the RBGV received advice that the application was successful. We managed to get Board approval enabling



the RBGV to execute the Agreement with the Department prior to caretaker period. So it has been hectic and I apologise for not letting everyone know sooner about this fantastic outcome, I have mostly been in the field in the interim.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you all for the enthusiastic way that you all contributed to and got behind this application, your support has made this application a success. The project starts on the 1/6/2023, however we will need to put forward a detailed project plan and timeline for the Nature Fund Team by the 12<sup>th</sup> of December.

I look forward to working with you all and will be in touch shortly regarding the project plan.

All the best, Noushka" (22/11/2022)

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### **MEMBERSHIP**

Membership fee of \$25 Family, \$20 Single was due on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2022.

If you are behind, or not yet a member, please make a payment now; see BSB details below.

**Make sure you have your name there clearly, so we know who it is from, and why (membership).** If you are giving cash or a cheque, make sure it's in an envelope with your name on it, plus reason for payment. If your name is not attached, your money will be treated as a donation.

### **Direct deposit (preferred method):**

BSB: 063 528

Account no: 10081737

Account Name: Friends of Grampians-Gariwerd Inc

Thank you to those who have paid!

## **OUR EVENTS**

### ***Wetland Wander with Bruce McInnes***

September 10<sup>th</sup>

On Friday night before the wander, Bruce and I cleaned up the equipment - we washed it with a bleach solution to remove any trace of plant and animal material which may have contained diseases and contaminants (e.g. weed seed) from other sites. Then we headed off in the morning to catch up with members of FOGG at Sheet of Water in the Victoria Valley. The heavy rains of the past months had provided the wetlands with a good cover of fast-flowing water.



*Bruce giving suitable directions  
(Photo: Leigh)*

The flood-out zones, or sheets of water, in the valley are important breeding areas and nurseries for some of our small bodied native fish. Emergent water plants grow to cover the surface, offering good cover and the shallow water heats up early in the Spring. This helps grow macro-invertebrates for food.

FOGG members were let loose with gumboots and nets to dredge the waters to collect what they could.

Although an overcast day, about 30 people turned up to enjoy Bruce's commentary and identification of all the water critters we dragged out of their slumbers.



*Netting Sheet of Water*  
(Photo: Leigh)



*Beanie fashions in the wetlands!*  
(Photo: ben)



*Not so sure about this: Allison, Judith and Cindy!*  
(Photo: Leigh)

#### A note about Bruce

Bruce's first interest in fish was in the early 1970's, finding small bodied native fish in the table drains in Victoria Valley, on walking home from the bus stop.

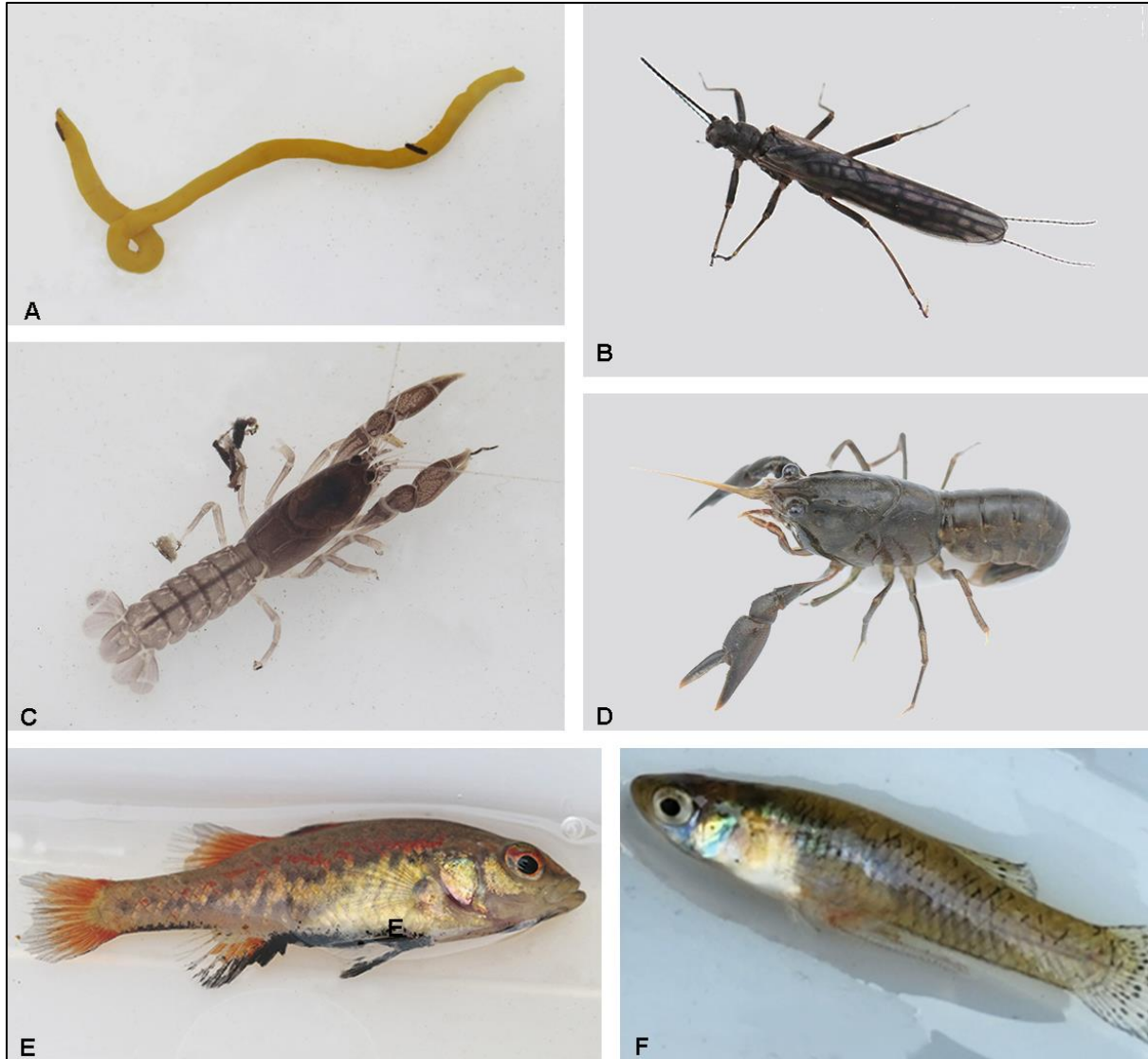
In high school he kept the fish in aquariums to understand feeding habits and behaviour. For work experience he worked on the Native Fish Farm at Violet Town.

After leaving school, he moved up to Queensland and worked on native fish farms there. He moved back to Wartook in the early 1990's and with his parents, set up a native fish farm, selling fish fingerlings. He ran the farms for 10 years before closing the farm with the Millennium Drought.

He now works at the Wimmera catchment Management Authority as a facilitator. He is also involved with Native Fish Australia Wimmera Branch improving the number and range of small bodied native fish in the Wimmera Catchment.

*From Ross Simpson*

Some of the wet wanderers we found:



**A:** Land Planarian like. species uncertain

**B:** Stone fly adult, species uncertain

**C:** Western Swamp Cray, *Gramastacus insolitus*

**D:** Western Swamp Cray, *Gramastacus insolitus*

**E:** Southern Pygmy Perch, *Nannoperca australis*

**F:** Mosquito Fish Eastern Mosquitofish (*Gambusia holbrooki*) (Ross found this introduced noxious pest at the Forest Lodge dam)

*(Photos: various)*



## **Mt Zero Walk**

8<sup>th</sup> October 2022

Neil and Wendy Marriott

Having spent the previous several months dodging regular rain events, we were lucky to choose a relatively fine day without a drop falling!

We met up at the Flat Rock/ Mt Zero carpark and headed off along the Mt Zero track, knowing we would find many native orchids and other spring wildflowers as we went. It was not long before we started to assemble a good list of plants seen. Wendy was busy recording and photographing everything we saw in flower, and finished the day with a list of 14 orchid species and a host of other wonderful species.

The track crosses the road then passes a broad drainage line covered in shallow water, and it was amazing to see the entire area of winter-wet ground in flood and colonised by an almost monoculture of Heath Myrtle *Micromyrtus ciliata*. Clearly this is a species that is highly tolerant of wet, waterlogged soils!! Growing amongst the *Micromyrtus* were hundreds of Rabbit Ears *Thelymitra antennifera* and Yellow Stars *Pauridia vaginata* (formerly *Hypoxis vaginata*).

**See photo of the massed wildflowers at the start of the Mt Zero walk on the cover**

The track soon begins to rise, and the vegetation turned to tall heathy woodland, with lots of orchids, particularly masses of Fringed Hare-orchids *Leporella fimbriata* that had mostly finished flowering. Not much further on, was the amazing Mt Zero tall form of *Grevillea alpina* that can easily grow to over 2m in height! In this area, we found our first Grampians endemic plants, with Grampians or Thyme Beard-Heath *Leucopogon thymifolius* as a low shrub over which grew Grampians Thryptomene *Thryptomene calycina*. A bit

further up the track we came across Beaked Hakea *Hakea rostrata* with its amazingly shaped woody fruits and masses of sweetly perfumed flowers that are great for attracting native bees and wasps.



*Hakea rostrata*

(Photo: Neil & Wendy)

Nearby we saw Grey Grasstrees in flower *Xanthorrhoea glauca ssp angustifolia*. This is a species that grows on hungry gravelly or stony soils, and unlike Austral Grass tree *X. australis* that only flowers in response to bushfires, Grey Grass tree will flower in response to the good seasons. Nearby we entered an area of deeper sands, and here we found Desert Banksias *Banksia ornata* as well as a number of attractive pea flowers including Rusty Bush-pea *Pultenaea hispida* and Leafless Bitter-pea *Daviesia brevifolia*. There is still abundant evidence of the last 20 or so years of severe drought brought on by climate change, with even the tough Desert Banksias dying due to the lack of rainfall.

Once we reached the first of the rocky areas the flora changed markedly, with spectacular displays of massed deep purple flowers of the Grampians form of Round-leaf Mintbush *Prostanthera rotundifolia* growing in the moist cracks of the numerous gullies and outcrops. Also found on the rocky shallow soils is the rare Flat Ruddyhood *Pterostylis planulata*. This species is very uncommon in the Grampians with most plants in this Mt Zero area.





Flat Ruddyhood *Pterostylis planulata*  
(Photo: Neil & Wendy)



Showy Parrot-pea *Dillwynia sericea*

(Photo: Neil & Wendy)

A bit further up the mountain where the path becomes looser and rocky, we came upon a lovely show of another Grampians endemic plant, Shiny Tea-tree

*Leptospermum turbinatum* with its huge big white showy flowers. It has in fact the largest flowers of all Victorian tea-trees. Growing almost at its base were the spectacular low shrubs of yet another endemic, the Grampians Waxflower *Philotheca angustifolia* ssp. *montana* smothered in masses of bright pink-red buds and pure white waxy flowers, and making the climb so worthwhile.

Once we reached high enough to appreciate the spectacular views, we agreed that it was time to make our way back down, this time via the long narrow gorge that only slim souls, like us FOGG-types, could fit through!! Arriving back at the carpark we grabbed tables and all settled in for a hearty lunch and discussions on the wonders that we had just appreciated in this beautiful, yet rugged part of the Grampians.



Neil, Wendy and Strum contemplating  
(Photo: Leigh)

From Neil and Wendy

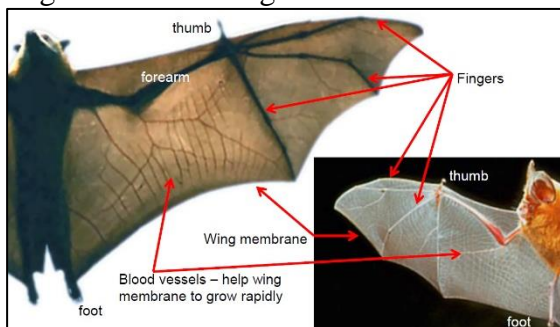
***Bat Night with  
Yvonne Ingeme***  
12<sup>th</sup> November 2022

On a chill and wet evening, a small group of us met in the Halls Gap Neighbourhood House for an extremely enthralling presentation on bats by Yvonne (and Reto on the audio visuals). Her talk was a PowerPoint presentation of

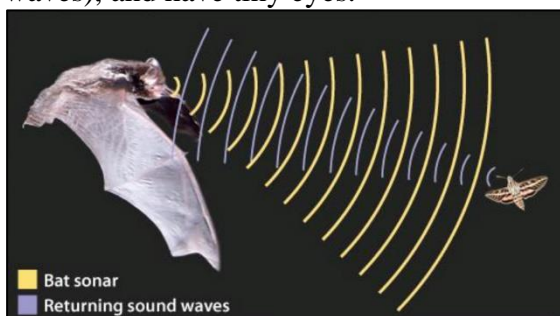
**Bats –  
Fascinating Creatures of the Night  
or  
Out of sight Out of mind!**

Did you know:

The ends of their wings are just their fingers with webbing.



Microbats hunt and navigate in total darkness using sonar (reflect sound waves), and have tiny eyes.



Australian microbats include Horseshoe and Long-eared bats



Megabats navigate by sight and small (not sonar), have large eyes, feed largely on nectar, and are not closely related to microbats.



- Microbats and flying foxes live and feed in many types of habitats from deserts to tropical rainforest
- There are more species in the tropics than in cooler areas and many of species that live this far south head north in winter where its warmer
- Flying foxes need trees to roost and feed in so are usually only found between the mountains and the coast
- Some microbats live in forests and roost in trees but others roost in caves and hunt where there is no forests
- Flying foxes will often travel up to 30km in one night searching for food
- During the year they can travel hundreds or even thousands of kilometres in search of food
- This means they can pollinate plants and spread seeds over large distances.
- **This makes bats very important to our native forests**



### Threats to bat species include:

- Loss of habitat from widespread clearing and draining of wetlands
- Destruction of caves
- Disturbance by humans
- Infrastructure developments, collision with **wind turbines**
- Climate change, and drying climate
- Decreasing invertebrate populations
- Potential disease risks
- Pesticides

### Bat conservation:

- Plant native food trees
- Create wetland habitat to attract invertebrates
- Ask your local council to conserve old trees with hollows
- Use the right kind of “bird netting” on your fruit trees
- Ask the local power company to use insulated powerlines
- Keep your cat in at night and put 2 bells on its collar
- And or -
- Join a conservation group like the **Australian Bat Society** or make a donation.

<http://ausbats.org.au/>

*Photos courtesy of Yvonne and the Australian Bat Society.*

*From Yvonne*

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

November 12<sup>th</sup>

### Main points

Along with the election of Office bearers, the only major points to come up during the AGM were a report from the Park Advisory Group and a tentative programme for next year’s FOGG meetings.

### The New Committee

President: Geoff Stratford  
Vice president: Rodney Thompson  
Secretary: Alison Bainbridge  
Treasurer: Wendy Bedgood

### Committee Ordinary Members:

Margo Sietsma  
David Steane  
Neil Macumber  
Andrew Cunningham  
Cindy Baulch-Brown  
Newsletter Editors Leigh Douglas & ben Gunn  
Signatories for bank account: President, Treasurer, and Secretary

### At the recent meeting of the Park

**Advisory Group**, concerns were raised by Margo regarding the leadership of Parks Vic in the Grampians, which stimulated some discussion. Margo was also able to report she had been able to raise the issue of difficulties with Park Connect and reported that Parks Management were aware and sympathetic towards concerns. Margo advised that the Grampians advisory committee current term concludes in December and while a new committee will be appointed, she will not be renominating. Margo recommended that a FOGG member should nominate.

### FOGG Programme suggestions for 2023

Some things to look forward to!

(– Dates yet to be decided)

Threatened Species Talk  
WAMA Update/visit  
Reptile Walk (David Steane)  
Deakin Uni Small Mammal Survey  
Fabian Douglas Moths and butterflies  
Forrest Garden  
Wail Nursery Visit  
Clean Up Australia Day  
Astronomy – (revisit with Gil Hopkins)  
Feral animals  
Christmas break-up



## NATURE NOTES

by Neil Macumber

### The Brolga – *Grus rubicunda*

The Brolga is a member of the Crane family with approximately 15 species occurring worldwide. In Australia we have two species – the Brolga and the Sarus Crane (which only occurs in Queensland around the bottom of the Gulf of Carpentaria and up into Cape York Peninsula) are very similar in size and appearance.

Size: - 1mtr to 1.3mtrs tall. Weight: -

6.25kg to 8.25kg Wingspan: - 2mtrs.

Description: - Plumage entirely smoke grey or silvery grey with bustle of long secondary wing-feathers which are slightly darker grey. Skin of head pale grey on forehead and crown, head and nape dull red to fairly bright red, with a blackish dewlap (“Adams Apple”) under the chin, eye yellow, bill grey green, feet and legs dark grey to black. Sexes are similar. (The Sarus Crane has pink legs and the red extends for 12 to 15 cm down the neck and has a small blackish dewlap that is not very visible)

Distribution: - Northern WA from about Onslow on the coast, NT North of Alice Springs, all of QLD, most of NSW, the Western half of Victoria and just makes it into the Eastern side of SA.

Habits: - Nomadic. Diurnal. Territories formed when breeding, and vigorously defended by both members of the pair, otherwise strongly gregarious. Generally in small parties, occasionally in flocks of hundreds (usually outside the breeding season) Forages over grass or cultivated land, or wades in shallow swamps. Flies strongly, often in V formations at great height. Complex, vigorous and spectacular mutual courtship displays, involving wild leaps, prancing, wing-flapping and tossing of objects into the air.

Voice: - Usually in chorus, a far-carrying clarion trumpeting - in duet with the female, uttered in flight, while dancing or

at the nest. Other hoarse croaks, also a low guttural “graaaw”

Food: - Mainly vegetarian, especially sedge tubers, also large terrestrial insects, molluscs, crustaceans and amphibians.

Notes: - These large and beautiful birds have formed gregarious flocks at the moment. Look for them South of here in shallow swamps around Willaura, Glen Thompson, Lake Bolac, Dunkeld, Peshurst, Hamilton and West towards the SA border. Three of us saw a flock of 220+ in a shallow swamp last week near Glen Thompson.



(Photo: Neil)



(Photo: Neil)



*(Photo: Neil)*