



Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula Inc

ABN 17 536 241 485

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ANNUAL REPORT 2018

We respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of these lands and waters, their spirits and ancestors.

Management Committee 2017-2018

President: vacant

Vice-President: vacant

Secretary: Lorraine Norden

Treasurer: Ian Mooney

Committee members: Mae Adams, Heather Shimmen, Will Norden, Debbie Birkett, Sue Flere, Kylie Laing, Linda Braddock, Ray Saunders.



Flame Robin Venus Bay Jetty Photo: Lorraine Norden

Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula inc gratefully acknowledge the support of our project partners:



Coastcare
Victoria




Australian Government



Our Mission

We are a volunteer conservation group that aims to:

1. Protect and enhance the natural environment of the Venus Bay peninsula
2. Provide information to all levels of government and the local community about indigenous flora and fauna of the Venus Bay peninsula and what has been introduced since white settlement
3. Conduct education programs that support the regeneration of private properties and public land
4. Create demonstration gardens of indigenous plants
5. Work together on weed eradication
6. Work in partnership with local, state and federal governments to generate policies and initiatives that will protect and enhance the natural environment of the Venus Bay peninsula
7. Seek funds that foster the protection and enhancement of the Venus Bay peninsula through research and practical initiatives
8. Increase the numbers and diversity of birds, insects, reptiles and animals throughout the Venus Bay peninsula

Our History

Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula was formed in 2006 in response to community concerns about the loss of indigenous vegetation on the Venus Bay peninsula and the impacts of this on wildlife and people. Since then the group has worked to achieve its aims of preserving and enhancing the local environment to provide habitat and shelter for our native birds and animals.

Past achievements and activities include:

- Grants for protection and revegetation projects at Venus Bay community Centre, Coast Banksia Woodland site, Beach 1 Car Park, Tarwin Lower Venus Bay bike path early plantings and Venus Bay jetty saltmarsh area.
- Construction of fencing, bird hide and signage at Venus Bay jetty.
- Fox Control program that has been running successfully since 2007 with over 400 foxes removed from the local area.
- Seal the Loop bins to collect fishing tackle have been placed at locations along the Tarwin River, Anderson Inlet and Venus Bay Beach 1.
- Plant of the Month featuring one of the local indigenous plants is included in Matter of Fact.
- Hooded Plover monitoring. 2
- Venus Bay Bridal Creeper control program.
- Field trips to view native vegetation at Tarwin Lower Cemetery and Tarwin Flora and Fauna Reserve.
- Flora audit of 31 Council Reserves at Venus Bay and work with other groups to stop the sale of this public open space.
- Updated website and Facebook page.

Projects and Activities 2017-2018

The past year was planned as one of consolidation and reflection. Without a President and Vice President we have limited activities to our ongoing projects and continued advocacy for our wildlife carers and our native flora and fauna. This has resulted in a slightly reduced workload for our Committee Members, while maintaining focus on our objective of protecting and enhancing the biodiversity of the Venus Bay peninsula. We greatly appreciate the ongoing support of our members.

We were fortunate to receive a Bald Hills Wind Farm grant of \$2000 to help support wildlife carer Sue Moore in her valuable work, as well as funding from South Gippsland Shire Council and Department of Land, Water and Planning to continue the Fox Control Program.

As you will see from the various reports, we have still managed a diverse range of activities. We hope you enjoy reading about them.

Current Projects

Co-operative Fox Control Program
Venus Bay Indigenous Garden, Coast Banksia Woodland site
Bridal Creeper Control Program
Seal the Loop
FVBP website and Facebook
Plant of the month
Saltmarsh revegetation site, the bird hide Anderson Inlet
Wombat Mange Management
Koala Tree Project with Venus Bay Community Centre

Activities and involvement

Clean Up Australia Day working bee 4 March 2018.
Combined FVBP, VBCC and Native Plant Group Koala Tree Project stall at Tour de Tarwin, Easter Saturday 31 March 2018.
Presentation on history and projects of FVBP at Coastcare Coastal Ecology and Management workshop held at Kilcunda 7/8 April.
Planting and working bee at Saltmarsh revegetation site, the bird hide Anderson Inlet 20 May.
Successful BHWF Grant Application for Wildlife Care and Rescue support.
Participation in Community Infrastructure Plan for Van Cleef Reserve.
Website training sessions.
Participation in SGSC Community Engagement Conference held on 30th June at Leongatha.
Participation in Tarwin Landcare walk along Tarwin River to discuss future management of Tarwin River Precinct.
Installation of new and replacement Seal the Loop bins along Tarwin River.
Talk on environmental weeds to Tarwin Lower Garden Club on 28 August.

Co-operative Fox Control Program 2017–18

The Venus Bay Co-operative Fox Control Program was initiated in 2007 by Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula with the support of private landholders, public land managers, South Gippsland Landcare Network and the community. Its purpose is to reduce the devastating impact of fox predation on native wildlife.

The fox control program has continued this year with three trapping pulses conducted at Venus Bay in November, March and June in co-operation with 3rd Estate landowners and Parks Victoria. The three pulses yielded a catch of nineteen foxes.

Since the program began, a total of 417 foxes have been humanely removed from the Venus Bay peninsula.



Photo: Peter Wright

Ongoing control has been effective in disrupting the fox breeding cycle and keeping the population on the peninsula at a low level. This has reduced the risk of predation on threatened Hooded Plover nests and small native mammals such as possum, rodent and antechinus species.

Community reporting of fox sightings or signs via our FoxWatch program has helped to target remaining animals and new ones that move in to claim territory after each pulse.

Peter Wright continues as our trapping contractor and the success of the program is largely due to his skills and experience. We thank Peter for his professionalism and dedication. the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and Parks Victoria.

We gratefully acknowledge funding support for this year's program from South Gippsland Shire Council,

Janet Carey

Venus Bay Indigenous Gardens, Coast Banksia Woodland

Indigenous vegetation on the site continues to regenerate, with several species, including orchids reappearing. Native Swamp Rats have established a colony in the unmown grass area on the corner of the site. Sadly, there has been some recent wilful damage to the Coast Banksia next to the seat, which has been deliberately broken in half and stripped of its lower branches. It was planted to provide shade for the seat.

Swamp Rat colony at Coast Banksia Woodland site



Damage to Coast Banksia

Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula website and Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com.friendsofvenusbaypeninsula/>

<http://www.friendsofvenusbaypeninsula.org.au/>

WordPress training for FVBP committee volunteers was undertaken this year with funding support from Coastcare Victoria. Several committee members are now able to manage basic updates to the website. Further training to increase skills within the committee could be considered in future.

The website is proving to be a useful communication tool, especially for new landowners seeking information. Google analytic reports show that the most visited pages are Home page, Flora, Wildlife Care and Rescue, closely followed by Birds. Visitors spend on average more than one and a half minutes on the site, a quite good retention rate.

The FVBP Facebook page is linked to the website and is useful to promote events and for sharing information.

Weed Control - Bridal Creeper *Asparagus asparagoides*

The potentially destructive Weed of National Significance **Bridal Creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*)** is still present in bushland areas on the Venus Bay Peninsula. The ongoing control program commenced by FVBP volunteers in 2004 is continuing, however this tenacious weed can now be considered *under control* across most of the peninsula.

The main months for Bridal Creeper control work are from March through to November. Bridal Creeper is not visible above ground during the summer months however the matting rhizomes continue to grow underground waiting to re-shoot with the onset of autumn rains. Over 80% of the plant mass of Bridal Creeper can be underground, making it difficult to control in bushland areas like Venus Bay Peninsula where indigenous understorey conservation is desired.

This year few small seedlings emerged, and many areas previously infested now appear to be weed free. This is testament to the continuing efforts of volunteers surveying and removing plants, and the effectiveness of the Rust Fungus biological controls released in 2007 and again in 2009. Spore water spraying combined with satellite releases of Rust Fungus quickly sped up the spread of the biological control, and it is now well established across the peninsula.

We thank South Gippsland Landcare Network, the National Asparagus Weeds Committee (WoNS), Coastcare Victoria, South Gippsland Shire Council and the Venus Bay landowners and FVBP members who have worked together over the years to effectively manage this invasive weed.



2005 Bridal Creeper invading coastal bushland at Venus Bay.

Seal the Loop

This year Zoos Victoria have partnered with Coastcare Victoria to manage the *Seal the Loop* program: installing specially designed fishing bins in fishing locations to help reduce the rates of marine entanglements. Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula volunteers initially installed one bin at the Venus Bay jetty and this was followed by four more; Beach 1 and three along the Tarwin River; at Fishermen's Bend, Tarwin Lower jetty and at one of the fishing platforms along the river.

Earlier this year it was noticed that the base had been removed from the *Seal the Loop* bin at Venus Bay jetty and the bin at Tarwin Lower jetty had been removed altogether. After receiving approval from the Land Managers FVBP applied for two replacement bins, as well as four more to go along other fishing platforms on the Tarwin River. We are grateful to Imogen from Coastcare for delivering the six new bins to Venus Bay and to South Gippsland Shire Council's Bush Reserves team for installing the bins. As well as facilitating the disposal of fishing waste the bins raise awareness of the threats that waste poses to marine life and encourage positive recycling behaviour.

Currently FVBP are participating in a data collection period for 3 months, from 1 August to 31 October, to measure the amount and type of rubbish collected over that period.

Membership Report

Membership fees for ongoing members were complimentary last year due to our year of consolidation. Membership for 2018 stands at 61, including 43 Household memberships with at least 2 members, so that member numbers are at least 104. Membership will be decided at the coming AGM but are expected to remain stable: - \$20 for family, \$10 per individual and \$5 concession. Fees are then due, and reminders will be sent to most members electronically following the AGM. Postal renewal notices will be sent to those without email addresses.

We were pleased to welcome 3 new families this year and their membership will be complimentary for 2018-19.

Please note our constitution requires that member details are available for perusal if required, by any member of FVBP.

Saltmarsh revegetation of bird hide and jetty area, Anderson Inlet

Report on revegetation of Saltmarsh 2018

The overriding aim of this projects was to revegetate a car park, and this has been ongoing for 6 years. Coastcare provided the original funding for this project and revegetation of the site has continued during this year with the help of all the hard-working volunteers.

Despite the difficult nature of the site which has included inundation in winter, hot dry summers, strong windy periods, human traffic and browsing feral and native animals, the site is flourishing and is beginning to meld with the surrounding environment. Walking through this beautiful place you may see winter visitor Flame Robins flitting around whilst White-fronted Chats move about elusively as do many others small birds. A quiet approach to the bird hide might be rewarded with the sight of numerous water birds including Royal Spoonbills, Ducks, Dotterels and with luck perhaps a Common Greenshank, recorded there this year. Looking up in the sky there are often raptors like Wedge-tailed Eagles and Swamp Harriers circling.

This is an important site (where The Tarwin river flows into Anderson Inlet tidal estuary) providing habitat for many animals and birds. It is rewarding to see this naturalising landscape in stark contrast to the barren car park it once was. The Swamp Paperbarks (*Melaleuca ericifolia*) are now spreading naturally and the Coast Wattle (*Acacia longifolia*) provides shade and protection for the local creatures and nitrogen for the soil. Amongst these are many native species both planted and some colonising the area. This is not the end of the revegetation and maintenance of the site, with an intention for this work to continue into the future.

This year we have ventured into other sections previously not planted within the site, crucially where there has been degradation along the river bank. There needs to be some strategic planting to mitigate erosion (however, until the plans for the new jetty are available this will be held over).

I would like to thank all the volunteers who come along to help on the planting days and all those who might visit and pick up rubbish or put a plant cage back in its place.

Heather Shimmen



Plant of the month

Since November 2013 Lorraine has been writing a 'Plant of the Month' segment on behalf of FVBP about one of the indigenous plants of Venus Bay, for inclusion in *Matter of Fact*, the monthly community newsletter. A description of the species, its uses in the landscape, habitat value, requirements and propagation method are included, along with Aboriginal uses if relevant and other details on how the species was named. The article is then sent to members and added to the FVBP website.

Koala Tree Project

Although the Tour de Tarwin was not run this year, for the fifth year VBCC and FVBP held a joint stall at the Venus Bay shopping precinct on Easter Saturday to promote the Koala Tree Project and distribute Gippsland Manna Gums and local indigenous plants to local residents for a gold coin donation. We were once again joined by the Native Plant Group at VBCC and they provided some of the plants; others were from Wonthaggi Seedbank and Nursery. It was again very well received. A map was provided so that residents could mark where the trees were to be planted. The project is planned to be ongoing. Future aim is to create corridors and include public land. Reports were received of the excellent growth of trees from previous Easter stalls, including koala sightings in planted trees.

Wombat Mange Management

There have been sightings of Mange infected wombats by residents, which is very heartening as people become aware of this hideous disease resulting in painful death. Residents have expressed interest in treating these animals, which is greatly appreciated. Reports of mange infected wombats appear to come largely from areas close to Cape Liptrap Coastal Park.

1st Estate vicinity of Paris Crescent and Jupiter Boulevard.

2nd Estate vicinity of Atherton Drive and McIndoe Crescent.

As we are all aware, it is difficult and tricky to treat these animals as their range is usually large.

Persistence plays a major role!

Two treatment methods are used.

Firstly, when the animal is badly infected, they are out during the daylight hours feeding. They need to eat constantly as they lose condition, and to avoid encounters with healthy wombats.

The pole and scoop method by applying 10 mls of Cydectin along the spine of the animal once weekly. This treatment needs to continue for at least 6-8 weeks, so the mange cycle is stopped.

Once the wombat is not approachable a burrow flap may be set up on a burrow or well-worn track.

Currently treatment by pole and scoop method is in progress in McIndoe Crescent, a roaming wombat, and Webster Street. This is a young animal which I have just dosed once, sick, and Kylie to check.

Have twice dosed the wombat which feeds near the fire dam, between 1st. and 2nd Estates, with pole and scoop, Kylie has set up flaps on wombat tracks.

Two good news stories!

A wombat at 15 Jupiter Boulevard received a pole and scoop initial dose 14/8/18, then frequent flap doses. The home owners reported a great improvement in the animal's condition. (let's hope it's the same one!)



Sam when rescued July 2018

I was able to pick up an orphaned young wombat from Walkerville roadside, which I took to Kylie Laing. Kylie described "Sam", as severely dehydrated, in shock and malnourished. He had been attacked by other wombats, and not lived in a burrow for some time. Kylie had Sam to the vet several times, he had an Ultrasound and was found to have severe kidney problems, also an eye infection, along with his attack wounds. With Kylie's expert care and patience, dosing with antibiotics, instilling eye drops and

ointment, feeding wombat milk formula and dry food, Sam is now happily sharing a pen with two other young wombats and learning trust and social skills. Kylie, we all appreciate, so much, your devotion and passion in caring for our orphaned, ill and injured wildlife, thank you, many times over. May we have more "good news" stories.

Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula and Wombat Mange Management welcome reports of wombats needing treatment. Please remember, approaching the kitten season, I have a cat trap, should anyone wish to borrow same.

Wombat Mange Management	0431 600 125
Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula	0415 197 313
Sue Flere	



Sam as a fine young male wombat 4/9/18.

Many thanks to South Gippsland Shire Council, Department of Land Water and Planning, Coastcare, Parks Victoria, Venus Bay Community Centre, Tarwin Landcare, and all our dedicated volunteers and supporters.