



ANNUAL REPORT 2019

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

Management Committee 2018-2019

President: Mae Adams

Vice-President: Debbie Birkett

Secretary: Lorraine Norden

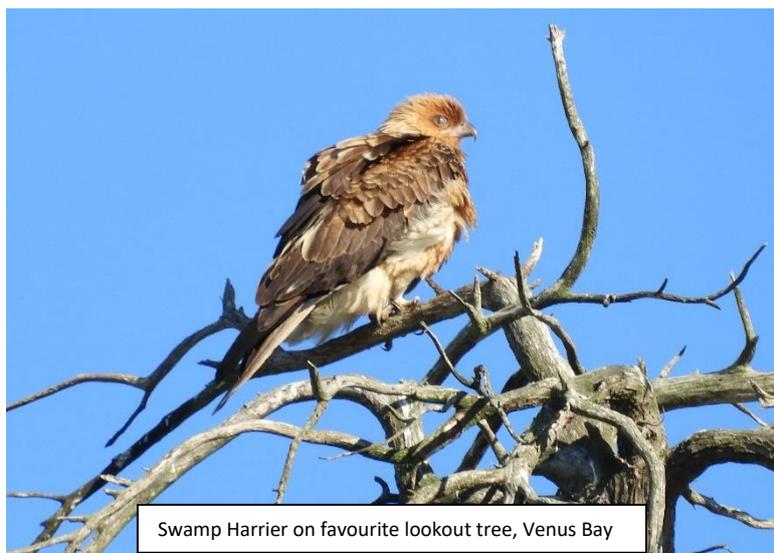
Treasurer: Ian Mooney

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

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



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



Coastcare
Victoria



Australian Government



President's Report 2018-2019

It is an honour to continue in the role of President for the Friends, an accomplished group of dedicated people who continue to work to improve biodiversity on Venus Bay Peninsula. I especially thank the committee and executive for their hard work and passion over the past year. We have enjoyed another productive year with ongoing projects coming to the final stages of fruition and new projects emerging, and seeing firsthand the benefits of protecting and improving habitat for our precious wildlife and birds.

Projects that stand out this year are the revegetation of Anderson Inlet foreshore at Fisherman's Jetty, led by committee member Heather Shimmen. This previously denuded site has been restored to a haven for birds and wildlife, and in the process provides shelter and shade for people. Sightings of Flame Robin and Striated Fieldwren at this site are testament to its importance for birds, and we look forward to seeing the vegetation establish further in future years under Heather's guidance.

Another stand out is the Wildlife Expo led by the passion and energy of Debbie Birkett, complimented by support from the Friends committee and other community members who wish to foster understanding and knowledge to improve conditions for wildlife. We look forward to supporting another Expo at Easter 2020, and thank Debbie and her team for their initiative.

Ongoing projects such as the Plant of the Month information sheets by Lorraine Norden, the Fox Control program by Janet Carey, community advocacy on our roadsides and our website and Facebook page all add to the efforts to improve biodiversity protection. Wombats in our region are treated for sarcoptic mange under the direction of committee member Sue Flere. It is heartening to know that wombats can be assisted and, in many cases, recovered from this devastating disease.

We are grateful for the work of Ian Mooney as our treasurer, Lorraine as secretary, Debbie taking the minutes and the collective professional management and sound decision making shown by our committee. With the human population of Venus Bay steadily increasing and growing tourism interest, the challenge to retain our wildlife and natural landscapes has never been greater. My heartfelt thanks to you all, I look forward to another year of working together.

Mae Adams

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 (VBCC)

Activities and involvement

Wildlife & Habitat Expo with Tarwin Landcare, Tarwin Lower Mechanics Institute Hall 18-19 January 2019.

Clean Up Australia Day working bee 3 March 2019.

Combined Native Plant Group, VBCC, and FVBP Koala Tree Project stall at VBCC, Easter Saturday 20th April.

Continued rehabilitation Saltmarsh revegetation site, the bird hide Anderson Inlet.

Successful BHWF Grant Application for Wildlife and Habitat Expo 2020.

Ongoing participation in Community Infrastructure Plan for Van Cleef Reserve.

Participation in development of Tarwin River Precinct plan.

Campaign to reduce speed limit throughout the Venus Bay Estate to protect wildlife.

Red crosses to designate roadkill and raise awareness of reducing speed to protect wildlife.

South Gippsland Landcare Network new fox and rabbit control program is building on FVBP fox control program.

Participation in development and implementation of Van Cleef Reserve Master Plan.

Membership Report

Membership for 2019 stands at 55, including 40 Household memberships with at least 2 members, so that member numbers are at least 95. Membership subscriptions will be decided at the coming AGM but are expected to remain stable: - \$20 for family, \$10 per individual. 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.

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

Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula website and Facebook

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

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

Our website went live in 2017 and has proven to be a useful tool for sharing information within and beyond the local area. The September 2019 Google Analytics report for the website shows 17.7% returning visitors, this is a high return visit rate. The average length of time spent per visit is 2.04 minutes, indicating that the content is interesting enough to keep visitors engaged for up to two minutes. In a fast-paced online environment this is considered a healthy retention rate.

Most website visits are from Melbourne which is a good result as this is the main population group we need to be reaching, as so many of our visitors and absentee landowners live in Melbourne. We also have people from Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, Geelong, Warragul, Dubbo and Chicago USA visiting the site.

The most popular pages are the Home page or landing page, followed by the Flora page, then the Wildlife Care & Rescue page and then Birds.

In September 2019 we had 136 visitors access the website by desktop with 269-page views, and 107 by mobile or tablet with 160 page views. Total visits 243 and total page views 429. This represents 243 people we have been able to reach with information about wildlife care and biodiversity protection in a single month, in addition to our community based and on ground activities. Thanks to Coastcare Victoria for supporting the development of the website and volunteer training.

Our Facebook page is active and a useful platform to share events, expand our local profile, and to share information from likeminded users.

Co-operative Fox Control Program 2018-19

The Venus Bay Co-operative Fox Control Program has operated successfully for 12 years. It was initiated in 2007 by Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula with the support of private land holders, South Gippsland Land Care Network and the community. The trapping is conducted mainly on 3rd Estate properties and Cape Liptrap Coastal Park.



The purpose of the program is to keep the population of foxes at a low level so as to reduce the impact of predation on native wildlife. An average fox lives for approximately four years and takes around 250 small mammals per year. Over the years more than 440 foxes have been removed from Venus Bay.

The Fox Control Program has continued in 2019 with Peter Wright being the trapping contractor.

The results of this year's trapping pulses include March, 6 foxes, July, 12 foxes and September, 5 foxes. To date 23 foxes have been trapped and removed from the peninsula.

We thank Peter Wright for his professionalism and dedication.

We gratefully acknowledge funding support from South Gippsland Shire Council and Department of Land Water and Planning.

Linda Braddock

Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula wish to express their thanks and gratitude to Janet Carey for her management of this program since its inception. Janet is stepping down after many years and we hope to continue with the valuable work of protecting our vulnerable species through this ongoing program.

A new fox and rabbit control program is underway between Venus Bay and Waratah Bay.

The South Gippsland Landcare Network (SGLN) has commenced work on a new fox and rabbit control program. Covering 16,000 Ha of coast and farmland, project planning and some works have been underway for six months, with another two years of onground work to come.

Fox control will be undertaken through baiting on farmland and public land, with fox trapping in areas around Venus Bay and Tarwin Lower. Rabbit control will be achieved via the release of a new strain of calicivirus at multiple locations across the area.

The project area runs from Venus Bay to Walkerville, between the Walkerville road and the coast.

SGLN will work with private landholders, community groups and public land managers to reduce the effects of both rabbits and foxes on local flora and fauna. This will build on existing pest animal projects carried out in the area, including the fox control program the Friends of Venus Bay have been undertaking over the last 10 years.

Read more about the program here [SGLN press release fox and rabbit project](#)

Weed Control - Bridal Creeper *Asparagus asparagoides*

Friends' members continue to survey bush land areas on Venus Bay Peninsula, and we are pleased to report that the biological control rust fungus is effectively depleting the above ground mass of Bridal Creeper plants.

It is important to remain vigilant against this invasive weed, as it may take up to twenty years before the underground rhizomes are finally depleted by biological controls. Each year volunteers remove any healthy above ground plant material to prevent seed set and monitor the spread and density of the rust fungus.

We can confidently report that Bridal Creeper is no longer a threat to the health of the bush land areas at Venus Bay. This is a wonderful result as many coastal landscapes are smothered by this pervasive and difficult to control environmental weed.

A big thanks to Coastcare Victoria, Parks Victoria, South Gippsland Shire Council and the National Asparagus Weeds Committee for their help over the years, and thanks also to the amazing community volunteers who put in hours of work in the early years to hand remove bridal creeper plants from Venus Bay bushland. The FVBP Bridal Creeper control program started in 2004 with community volunteers and was managed by FVBP from 2006 when we incorporated as a volunteer group.



Image: Bridal Creeper with rust fungus biological control photographed by our fox control manager Peter Wright, spring 2019. Location: between second and third estates at Venus Bay.

Seal the Loop

Seal the Loop bins are made by Zoos Victoria from recycled plastic. The state-wide program is managed by Coastcare Victoria and Zoos Victoria, assisted in the field by other volunteer groups and individuals. This project aims to reduce the damaging and often fatal impacts of used fishing line and hooks on wildlife, especially seals and birds that become entangled in the fishing line.

Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula volunteers have installed, maintain and monitor nine Seal the Loop bins at popular recreational fishing locations including the platforms on the Tarwin Riverbank at Tarwin Lower, Anderson Inlet boat ramp at Fisherman's Jetty Venus Bay, and Venus Bay beach 1. We also participated in a data collection survey to report on the contents of the bins over a 3-month period from March to May. This year we have been ably assisted by Jean Jones from Tarwin Lower who has offered to maintain the bins along the Tarwin River.

Koala Tree Project

This was the 6th year that VBCC and FVBP have held a joint stall on Easter Saturday to promote the Koala Tree Project and distribute Gippsland Manna Gums *Eucalyptus viminalis* subsp. *pyroriana* and local indigenous plants to local homeowners for a gold coin donation. This year it was held at the Venus Bay Community Centre, coordinated by the Native Plant Group and they provided most of the plants; different species were from Wonthaggi Seed Bank 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 with the aim 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.

Saltmarsh revegetation of bird hide and jetty area, Anderson Inlet 2019

The Salt Marsh Revegetation at the Bird Hide site in Venus Bay continues seven years after Coast Care provided a grant. The aim was to plant and provide habitat for birds and animals on this once desolate area on the banks of river Tarwin. It is a special place in Venus Bay for both human visitors and the creatures that inhabit this fragile environment. It is where you might catch a glimpse of one of a multitude of species of birds viewed from the bird hide or flitting through the flourishing vegetation. It is now home to many species including Swamp rats: *Rattus*

Luttreolus, White fronted Chats: *Epthianura albifrons*, Flame robins: *Petroica Phoenicia*, Yellow- rumped Thornbills: *Acanthiza chrysorhoa*, Royal Spoonbills: *Platalea Regia* and a myriad of other species. (some rare and endangered).



Unfortunately during the year whilst works were underway to install a new floating pontoon replacing the old timber jetty, damage was done to some plants in the revegetation site. As recompense South Gippsland Shire (Thanks to Chris Rankin for helping with this) provided a load

of clean mulch and also some funds for new plants. This contributed to the purchase of grasses cultivated at the Venus Bay Community Centre hothouse and garden centre (thank you Sue Peterson) and now are planted at the site. Other plants and trees were included and now enhance the pathway to the pontoon. There are other areas extending the vegetation helping to define pathways and providing protection for small birds and animals. There is still much to do and this project will continue slowly but steadily into the future.



Historically it has been a difficult site to revegetate and has taken years to establish plants and some trees. The focus next year will be on the river bank which is desperately in need of more vegetation to mitigate erosion and potentially help with the effects of tidal and rainfall inundation.



Thank you to all the volunteers who came along to the recent planting day. It was a great success and has been transformative for this unique 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, where all previous species are available for download.

Wombat Mange Management 2019

Due, perhaps to warmer weather, several new cases of mange have been reported.

With the assistance of a resident in Outlook Drive, one who resides under a house is being treated.

A land owner in Buffalo, via contact with Sue Moore and myself, has been given Mange Managements contact number. As a result they will forward the required kits to the land owner directly.

This is wonderful, as there are many burrows and mangey wombats, and the land owners want to act quickly.

A new, once only treatment was discussed at the Canberra Mange Management meeting, Provecto mixed with Cydectin. It is early stages, however good results have been reported.

The larger doses of Cydectin have raised some issues, mainly the longer term effects on the wombats reproductive health. Tests are being carried out, in the meantime, we need to save as many wombats as possible.

We look forward to more involvement as the public are becoming more aware of the wombats' plight.

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