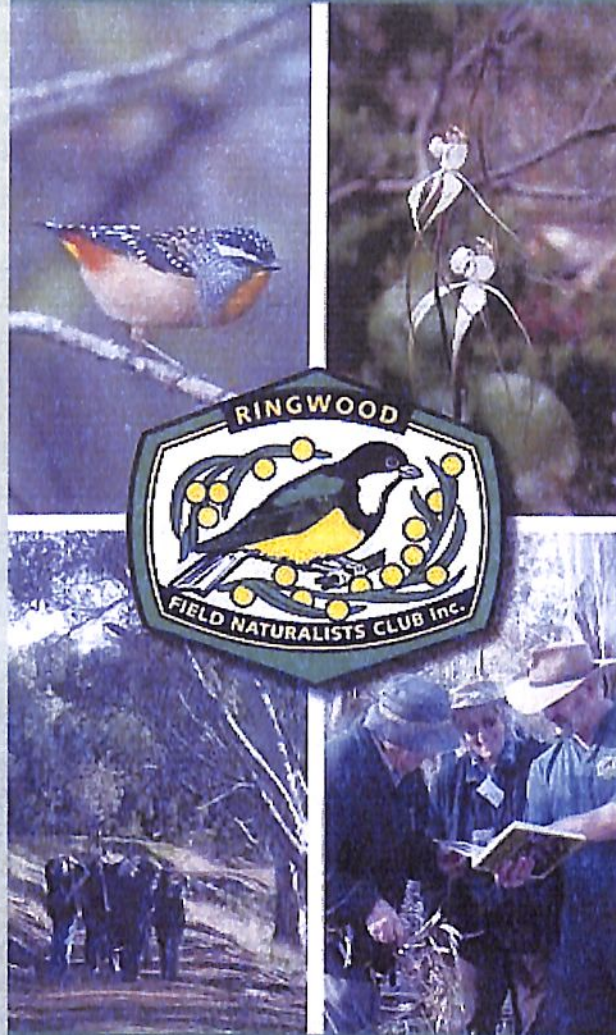


Ringwood
Field Naturalists
Club Inc.



www.rfnc.org.au

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MEMORIES THROUGH THE YEARS

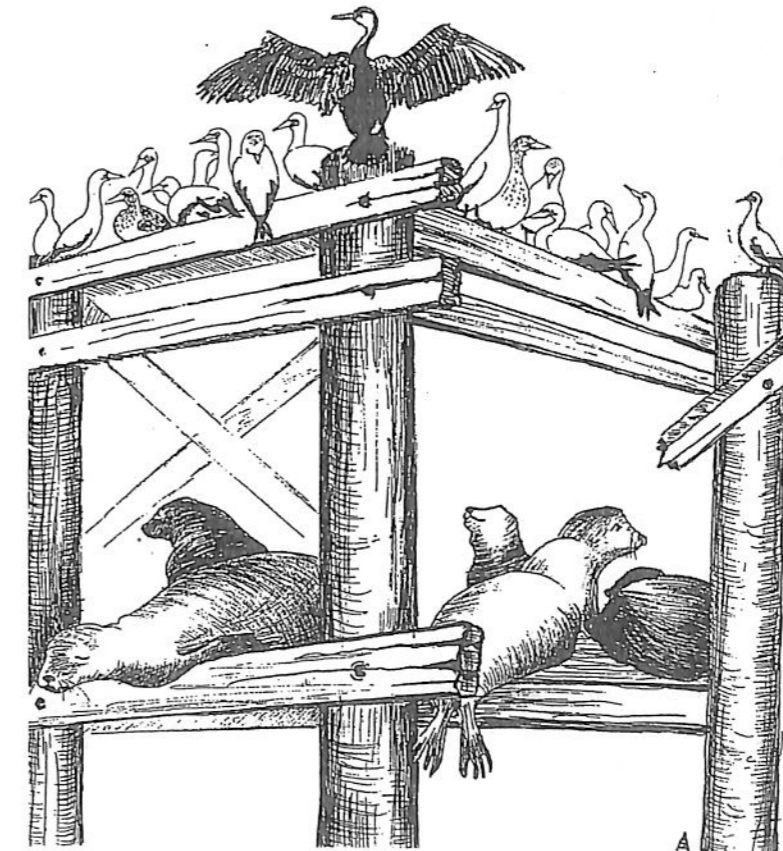
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PREFACE

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Club. Many people have contributed to the Club in various ways throughout this time. Unfortunately many of our earlier members are no longer with us, but their legacy lives on. This is evident in the longevity of the Club and it's enthusiasm of members to learn about the natural world around us. Many members refer to the influence of the early members in many of their reminiscences. In this publication we have tried to capture some of these many thoughts and memories.

Alison & Peter Rogers 2011



Drawing by Sylvanne Alkemade of gannets and seals during a Bay Trip

J Marion King

Foundation member - Life member - Current member

My husband, Bill, and I got to know Jack Hyett in the late 1950s when he came to live in Ringwood after he'd been teaching for almost 20 years in one teacher rural schools in Victoria. We had mutual interests in natural history and particularly birds and orchids, and at that stage Jack was writing articles which appeared in a number of newspapers including our local, "The Ringwood and Croydon Mail". Some of these essays were published in his book "A Bushman's Year" and in 1961 he published a second volume "A Bushman's Harvest" for which Bill and I, along with our older son Alan, provided the photographs.

We were delighted when there was such an enthusiastic response to our invitation to form a club and the RFNC has been an important part of our family life for the 50 years since. The meetings were held in the new North Ringwood Methodist church building and a number of those first involved (eg Fred Flentje – the first secretary) were associated closely with that church. Early members had been active in various other clubs and organisations with compatible interests, including the Bird Observers Club, the Ringwood Colour Photography Club, the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria and its various interest groups and the Native Plants Preservation Society of Victoria. The RFNC provided a local focus. Members later on played major roles in many groups including the Society for Growing Australian Plants, the Victorian Ornithological Research Group, the Mammal Survey Group of the Victorian Field Naturalists Club (RFNC even had its own branch of that), and various conservation organisations. In that way the influence of the Club was widespread. The early participants also brought with them the experience to set up the Club on a sound basis. Paul and Marielies Fisch, who ran the Hawthorn Juniors FN Club were especially helpful. When Paul died prematurely the RFNC sponsored the Paul Fisch trophy for the best slide of an orchid at Photoflora. Jack Truscott, a prominent local artist and foundation member, designed a beautiful and appropriate Club badge illustrating the Golden Whistler and *Acacia leprosa* both common in the Ringwood area at the time.

When the Club started Ringwood was still rural in part and many members were, in their daily life, close to nature. Greenhods still grew on the nature strip along Warrantyte Road, and North Ringwood, Wantirna and Doncaster were still orcharding areas though time was running out. Nature Study was still a regular part of the primary school curriculum: indeed Jack Hyett was seconded to the Burwood (Primary) Teachers' College in 1963 to lecture in Nature Study.

From the beginning the RFNC had an active programme of talks and regular excursions. Later there were club weekends and in keeping with the times and interests of the members these were "camp-outs". Looking back these were relatively unsophisticated occasions but we all enjoyed them a great deal and learnt a lot together. The Club was very much a family affair, especially with the "camp-outs" and excursions, so we were really pleased when a Junior Field Naturalists group was formed and this was led successfully for 15 years by Bruce Fuhrer.

Over the years the Club has given me wonderful opportunities to share the beauty and joy of Australian nature, and provided me with a special group of friends, and even one son-in-law. The friendships made include many which have survived even though people have relocated away from the local area, even to other states.

In my own notes as a student teacher in 1940 the aim of my nature study classes was "to intensify and maintain the child's natural curiosity, interest and appreciation" of the natural world. The RNFC has maintained and expanded that vision into adulthood for many of us and I'm pleased to have been an active member for its first half century. I am also very honoured to have been awarded a Life Membership to the Club in 1998.

J Marion King 2011

Gordon Coutts

Foundation member - Life Member - Current member

Fifty years ago my wife May read in the paper that a Field Naturalists Club was starting up in Ringwood, and of course, always taking my wife's advice, this one paid off. I joined up and over the years I have enjoyed not only numerous outings but the companionship of friends with valued shared interests.

Now 86 years old not with the best of memories I can still remember night outings with Bill King where we watched out for the Barn Owl and Tawny Frog Mouth. Out came the binoculars and cameras to show our Club members of our achievements for the night.

Bird watching was one of my main interests and over the years I have kept extensive bird lists of their habitats and the exact times I saw them.

I can also remember Club nights and taking our very young daughter Julie, now in her fifties, in a sleeping bag where she went sound asleep under some chairs. You were always made welcome it did not matter what age.

It is some years since I have been able to attend any outings, the last outing was to the Cranbourne Botanical Gardens.

I still enjoy the newsletters sent to me which brings back many happy memories of the "Good Old Days".

Gordon Coutts

Ed Note: In the early years, Gordon was responsible for compiling and printing the Club program/newsletters. These were initially produced each month and later became 3 or 4 monthly productions. Gordon was immensely passionate about the bush and enjoyed nothing more than spending time photographing honeyeaters with Bill King or owl spotting at night.

Ross and Joyce Cowling

Foundation Member - Current Members

Ross and I would like to send our congratulations to the Club on reaching its' 50th Anniversary in September.

Ross remembers attending the very first meeting in the North Ringwood Methodist church Hall in 1961. He had seen the meeting advertised in the Ringwood Mail, and as he had always had an interest in the Australian bush (having been born and brought up in Castlemaine, Central Victoria), he thought it would be a good connection to get back to the bush he so loved – with others of like mind, for a bonus! Our daughter, Julie, who would have been about 12 at the time, was very keen to attend, also – so we think they both attended that 1st meeting. Certainly, thereafter, they both attended the meetings regularly. As we had 2 younger boys, I remained at home with them. However, the Saturday outings soon became a regular Cowling family event.

Ross particularly remembers his good friends – Bill King, Fred Rogers, Gordon Coutts and Jack Hyett among others, who each had such a wealth of knowledge that they willingly shared with the group, and an infectious enthusiasm that they actively passed on to the younger generation. Julie still remembers Mrs Fisch and her extensive knowledge of Australian plants. She consistently had new information, and things to show, share and impart to all. As well, many interesting speakers were invited to share their knowledge, providing us a window on their environmental speciality. What enrichment in our learning, for us!

I remember my first introduction to the Grampians and staying at the Uniting Church Centre in Halls Gap. We were both captivated by the peace and dramatic beauty of the area, and were to return many happy times since, including taking members of my family from overseas to experience its special magic.

Over the years we joined most of the 'camp-outs'. We both felt that it was a special privilege to be shown parts of the bush that we would otherwise never have known existed, but for the Field Nats.

All these things that I mention were a privilege to share with like-minded friends and have enriched our lives immeasurably. We thank past and present members, all! We are both sorry that age and poor health have prevented us from attending this great celebration, and send our very best wishes and congratulations to all.

Kind regards

Joyce and Ross Cowling

My best wishes to all members of the Club - Ross Cowling

Ed Note: Ross & Joyce moved to WA several years ago to be closer to their daughter and one of their sons. In the early years Ross was Committee member. He was also a member of the Victorian Mammal Survey Group and attended many outings and campouts with them. He was a keen bushwalker and enjoyed all facets of nature.

Robert J King

Foundation member - Former Member

When the Ringwood Field Naturalist Club was formed in 1961 I was 15 years old and it was almost automatic that I became a member. The Club brought together a number of interests that we had as a family: natural history – plants, animals, geology (at that time particularly birds and terrestrial orchids), bushwalking, camping, photography and a broad appreciation of the Australian environment.

It was no surprise to me when a significant number of people turned up to the invitation given by Jack Hyett and my father to people 'interested in natural history' to form a club, though I remember clearly some anxiety in the household in the days preceding the meeting. Many of the early members were already friends of the family (Nell Arnott, Maisie Pridmore and Peter, and the Moore, Truscott and Flentje families) while others (Gordon Coutts and family, the Cowlings, the Fisch family, and the Rogers) quickly became so. There was a good mixture of those who knew things and those who didn't, but all were keen to learn more and excursions were a highlight.

I subsequently went to Melbourne University with the avowed intent of studying mathematics and chemistry and took first year biology and geology for fun. That 'fun' became my life and I majored in zoology and botany. Botany field trips often covered the same ground as had RFNC excursions and I remember with amusement an excursion to Beenak on which I could impress the lecturer as I identified all the species with ease. In the final plant taxonomy practical exam I knew all the species and worked backwards and forwards through the keys provided to establish how to get to those right answers.

In my subsequent career as a botanist I was often asked if my parents' interests in natural history and the RFNC had played a role in determining my career. In the early days I would have denied any such link, claiming to be a 'scientist' rather than a naturalist but this is perhaps a half-truth. While my research expanded into aspects of biochemistry and molecular genetics, nonetheless the research questions that I addressed often had their origins in natural history observations.

I congratulate the Club on its fiftieth birthday, thank the Club for what it has done and wish it all that is good for the future.

Robert J King 2011

John (Jack) Truscott

Foundation Member - Former member

I was born, and lived for the first twenty years or so of my life, in the suburb of Gardenvale. In those days, although there were, in the earlier years, a few paddocks nearby, the only native birds to be seen were blue wrens, which nested in creepers near our house. Being a nature lover from my early years, I determined to 'go bush' at the earliest opportunity, and so, after marrying in 1950, was fortunate in being able to purchase a few acres in Oban Road, North Ringwood.

Oban Road, in those days was a dirt track and many native trees were to be found along its edges, although much of the adjoining land was orchard. Fortunately the block of land that we purchased had many Eucalyptus and Acacias. Therefore many native birds were to be seen, and I recorded them for a number of years. In the years 1964-1968 approx: 70 different species are listed.

However, some years before that time I had heard that a certain gent: called Bill King was anxious to start up a Field Naturalist Club, and my wife suggested that I join same. So I did, and was fortunate in then making the acquaintance of others of the original members- Jack Hyett, Fred Rogers, Gordon Coutts etc. Of course the wives of the gents listed also paid an integral part in the formation of the Club!

I am reminded that quite early in the life of the Club, I had the honour of designing the Club Membership badge.

Ed Note: The Club was fortunate to have John Truscott, a local artist, as a member of the Club. He designed both the original car sticker and also the Club emblem which consists of a Golden Whistler on *Acacia leprosa* which were both prominent at the time in the local area.

Peter Pridmore

Foundation member - Former Member

SOME PERSONAL MEMORIES OF THE RINGWOOD FIELD NATURALIST CLUB

My earliest memories of the Ringwood Field Naturalist Club are of the foundation meeting which took place in the North Ringwood Methodist church in 1961. However, it is the guest speakers that were part of most evening meetings and the field excursions that I particularly remember.

Amongst the visiting speakers I particularly remember Norman Wakefield. At the time he spoke, Norman Wakefield was a lecturer at Melbourne Teachers' College and editor of the Victorian Naturalist. He was an acknowledged expert on Australian native mammals and had published on the discovery, taxonomy and natural history of living members of this group, and on fossil mammals from various south-eastern Australian sites. However, his knowledge extended well beyond these subjects. Norman Wakefield had grown up near Orbost in East Gippsland, and had made the transition from naturalist to scientist seemingly without losing the best qualities of a bushman-naturalist. He was a tall, quietly-spoken man and had a peculiar manner of holding his hands when addressing an audience. He would extend both his forearms forward with his hands placed together so that the folded fingers on each hand touched. In this position his large thumbs sat uppermost. As he talked, Norman seemed to make a detailed comparison of his two thumbs. Surprisingly, this seemed to draw in his listeners. His talk was fascinating to anyone with an interest in Australian native mammals, and I particularly remember a diagram he presented, based on fossils he had excavated from caves in East Gippsland, which showed how limb dimensions had changed over millions of years in sugar gliders.

The other feature of the Ringwood Field naturalists Club that I recall with pleasure is the excursions. There seemed to be an excursion almost every month, but I particularly remember excursions to Philip Island, Myers Creek (Healesville,) and Winton Swamp (north of Benalla). The Phillip Island excursion was evidently run by Ron Jenz, a son-in-law of Mr

and Mrs Fisch. It served to introduce the members who took part to the animal life of the rocky foreshore. The excursion was timed to fit a particularly low tide and as a result of this we were able to view a range of marine invertebrates that most of us had never previously seen.

The Myers Creek excursion was the evening add on to a day trip to the Healesville area. This addendum originated with Jack Hyett, who suggested that members might like to stay on after dark for some spotlighting. Following an evening meal in Healesville we drove up the Myers Creek Road to a point where cars could be safely parked. We then proceeded to walk as a group about 100 metres up the road to a very large, spreading, white-barked eucalypt. After suitable periods of group silence and careful interrogation of the upper branches of the tree by Jack's spotlight we managed to catch glimpses of two yellow-bellied gliders. Our view of these was improved when binoculars were applied to the task; although we all suffered some neck strain, whether we used binoculars or not, since we had to look almost vertically up to view the gliders. Of course, this was a small price to pay for viewing one of the most fascinating of the gliding possum.

The excursion to Winton Swamp evidently took place on Saturday 13th October 1962 and was part of an extended visit by members of the Ringwood Field Naturalist Club to Benalla hosted by that city's field naturalist club. Prior to arriving in Benalla it had been arranged that Ringwood club members would divide into two groups in Benalla, with some going to view wildflowers in the Reef Hills area, and others going to view birds at Winton Swamp. In the event it was a group of Ringwood men and boys who drove out to the Winton Swamps. At that time the Winton Swamps consisted of several shallow wetlands that varied in size and upon arrival it was decided that our group should wade across one of the larger of these. I remember asking whether we would do this barefooted to avoid soaking our footwear, but was quickly told, by Jack Hyett I think, that we should all wear our boots and socks and expect to change them on completing the walk. This didn't present a problem as we had all brought a change of clothing and footwear with us. The merit of retaining our boots and socks quickly became apparent when we encountered the tussock clumps which dotted the swamps. Most clumps supported at least one large snake and several carried two or three coiled together.

Walking with continuously soaked boots, socks and lower trousers was a curious experience, but the great variety and impressive numbers of wetland birds we saw more than made up for any discomfort. As we walked flocks of ducks of several species would rise up and quickly fly off before settling again on the water's surface. Less inclined to flight were three species of egrets which foraged individually across the swamp. These stately white birds would stride elegantly away when our path took us towards them; although, if we approached too quickly they too would take to the air. Cormorants of several species were present in good numbers along with various other wetland birds including herons, but the most fascinating birds were the two species of bitterns that we sighted in some reed beds.

In addition to official excursions of the Ringwood Field Naturalist Club, there were a few others that I managed to attend as schoolboy through my connection with the Ringwood Field Naturalist Club. The two non-official excursions that stand out were to the Marysville area and to Warrenbayne in north-eastern Victoria. I owe my involvement in both to Bill King who regularly went out of his way to promote my interest in Australian mammals and birds. I mention these two excursions not only because they allowed me to observe two of the most fascinating marsupials of south-eastern Australia, but also because I consider them influential

in my later decisions to study zoology at university and eventually become a vertebrate biologist.

The excursion to the Marysville area occurred in the early 1960s and took those involved into mountain ash forest. The highlight was seeing Leadbeaters possum which had only recently been rediscovered by Eric Wilkinson and colleagues after not been sighted with certainty for more than 50 years.

The excursion to Warrenbayne involved the local postmaster, Ted Harrison, who was also a farmer and apiarist. Ted had a strong interest in natural history and for several years had been spreading honey on the trunks of red gums in order to attract wildlife. As a result sugar gliders would sail in each evening to lap at these trees. But the most astonishing thing was that they would often be joined by numbers of brush-tailed phascogales or tuans. At that time tuans were considered very bloodthirsty animals so that it seemed quite extraordinary that one could observe the two species lapping away together at Ted's honey.

When I went off to study zoology at Monash University in the late 60s my involvement with the Ringwood Field Naturalists Club was inevitably reduced. My subsequent post-graduate studies and academic career have largely been concerned with investigating the mechanical capabilities (especially locomotor capabilities) and evolution of various vertebrate animals. However, within that research compass I have always wanted to understand how the capabilities of animals (living and fossil) allow them to operate within their particular environments. My fascination with such matters undoubtedly reflects a variety of influences, but undoubtedly one of them is the times I went out spotlighting and birding with Bill King, Jack Hyett, and other members of the Ringwood Field Naturalist Club.

Ed Note: Peter Pridmore was a Foundation Member along with his mother Maisie Pridmore. Maisie enjoyed bird-watching and hunting for orchids.

Wendell Flentje

Foundation member - Former Member

MY MEMORIES OF THE RINGWOOD FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB.

In 1961 I was 17 years old and in my final year at Ringwood High School. I kept a diary in those days and I recorded that I attended the inaugural meeting of the Ringwood Field Naturalists Club at what was then the North Ringwood Methodist Church on Tuesday 1st August 1961.

At the next meeting on Wednesday 20th September Jack Hyett was elected President, my father Fred Flentje Secretary and Bill King Treasurer. My diary entry that day says that Marc Gottsch showed some beautiful colour slides but I'm not sure of the subjects!
The next meeting on Wednesday 18th October was a "member's night" when various people showed slides of many different subjects.

On Wednesday 15th November the speaker was Dr Geoff Christensen who showed some magnificent slides of wildflowers.

I remember those early months of the Club as exciting and inspiring for a young person who was developing an interest in natural history and photography. People like Jack Hyett, Bill

and Marion King and Fred Rogers had a wealth of knowledge that they were willing to share. The Kings' skill as photographers was especially inspirational for me and has resulted in my continuing interest in it as a hobby and something that I have been able to incorporate into various aspects of my working life.

I cannot recall attending excursions that the Club organized but I did attend many outings with the Kings, my Uncle Ern Moore and Aunt Serene Moore, and Fred Rogers in those early days. I was eager to learn and am very grateful for enthusiastic people who encouraged young people like myself to develop a love for and an understanding of the bush and its features.

Wendell Flentje, Darwin, April, 2011.

Bob Fisch

Foundation member - Former member

I am unable to attend the Club's celebrations as I will be in Queensland at the time. It would have been lovely to meet the members who were part of the group, who, along with my parents Paul and Marielies Fisch started the Club 50 years ago.

My six sisters and I, along with school friends from Doncaster were members of the Junior Field Naturalists Club Victoria from the early 1950's when Mr & Mrs Freame ran the junior branch meetings at the Hawthorn Town Hall. In later years of field naturalists, we went on many excursions and campouts with the senior groups including the botany and geology groups. For many years, after the Freame family, my father ran the Hawthorn Junior Field Naturalists.

It was through the enthusiasm of my parents and others including Bill King and Fred Rogers that the Eastern group was started at Ringwood in 1961. My Dad died in April 1962, less than twelve months after the first meeting but my mother was able to continue as a member travelling to meetings with Bill King. Her association with the group continued 'til she moved to Queensland in 1976.

The interests and skills I learned as a child in these groups have been carried through life and I hope, passed on to my children and others I have been associated with over the years.

I wish you all well in your celebrations on September 25th 2011.

Bob Fisch

Ed Note: Bob's father, Paul Fisch, was a well-respected Foundation Member of the Club. After his death, he was honoured with a perpetual trophy, The Paul Fisch Trophy, which was awarded at Photoflora.

Joan Pearson

Foundation member - Former member

Note from an ex-member

It was a very definite reminder of the march of time when a phone call from my friend Marion King brought to my notice that 50 years had passed since the inaugural meeting of the Ringwood Field Naturalists Club. So first and foremost congratulations to the Club members for all those years of continuing study and recording of events in our natural world.

Following on this call a request for some notes recalling those early days, sent me up into the shed loft searching out old note books which I hoped would assist my memory. Well, you can imagine what a 'Pandoras Box' that opened - the day was gone! Whole chunks of time I'd long forgotten evoking many a chuckle and 'picture memories'.

The object of this reach into the past was to determine the year I was encouraged into signing up as a member of the newly established RFNC - a most rewarding move. Enthusiastic stalwarts the Kings, Rogers, Grays, Coutts, Fuhrers, Jack Hyett and the Thomas's to mention a few - all with their particular fields of interest actively encouraged all members to be involved through meetings excursions and campouts. Those campouts were great fun - the first I recorded was to Reef Hills near Benalla and Lake Mokoan - full at the time and noteworthy for the snakes.

Many members have gained distinction for their research and studies and many, like me, have just enjoyed the horizons opened up, the friends made, the companionship of sharing new landscapes and environments and knowledge of flora and fauna.

There's a new generation (or two) of members now bringing their expertise using wonderful technology to explore, dissect and record ever deeper into the secrets of 'being', of survival, extinction, space and depth - so all you young ones carry on with the benefits of these aids, but sometimes just looking and 'seeing' can reveal so much, and that is the lesson I believe the Field Naturalists foster so well. Here's to the decades ahead!

Joan Pearson 2011

Margaret Clarke (nee King)

Foundation member - Former member

When the Ringwood Field Naturalist Club was formed I was in my early teenage years with an interest and appreciation of the Australian bush developed and encouraged through my parents' interest in nature study. It was always good to attend meetings, go on outings and learn from those with knowledge in different areas of natural history who were happy to share it. Being in the company of other members, including people like Jack Hyett, each with a similar interest, was great.

I have fond memories of many outings and campouts and particularly remember a campout at Mt Baw Baw in 1966 enjoying the unique alpine flora as well as outings in the Spring time, discovering a variety of the delightful ground orchids.

Since shifting from the area I have been pleased to be able to join in with some meetings and outings catching up with members, some that I have known for many years. Recently I was able to participate in a weekend excursion to Nagambie, with the club, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

Since those early years I have continued to enjoy and learn more about God's wonderful creation visiting many National Parks and other bushland areas whenever I have had the opportunity.

I am thankful for those years spent in the Ringwood Field Naturalist Club that encouraged my interest and helped me learn more in an area that is so extensive and interesting.

Margaret Clarke

June Rogers

Foundation member - Former Member

When asked to look back over the fifty years of the Ringwood Field Naturalists Club, and what it had meant to me, I found it hard to define any one thing. RFNC has been a part of our life from its very beginnings as Fred was involved at that stage. I was mostly house-bound with a baby and three other children, so my involvement was minimal. The satisfaction Fred was having from his participation had him waiting for the time when I would be able to join him and enjoy the same activities. Eventually the children and I began attending excursions and later meetings, and so I became part of this developing club, which I really enjoyed.

One of my special memories of RFNC is the first campout to Cathedral Mountain, when Mrs Fisch was one of our knowledgeable members. I also remember that there was a large number of children in attendance with their families. Tall tales told around the campfire, beautiful scenery, good friends and good walks made it special.

Another highlight of those early years' activities was the Nature Shows which we produced in the Ringwood Lower Town Hall. Local school children visited with question sheets and the general public also attended, both being educated by the displays provided by our members. I recall having one of Jack Hyett's rats - a nice one - in its cage, from a show, on my lounge room floor for some time. While there it made itself a beautiful nest out of reeds.

When we moved to Horsham in 1976 we still retained our interest in the Club through family involvement, and visiting when possible. We joined the Horsham FNC, and when it closed due to declining membership, we joined Nhill, so kept our interest in natural history alive. So what did I get out of being a member? Many lasting friendships and memories, lots of lessons learned from the more knowledgeable members and being inspired by the beautiful nature photography presented. And we acquired a daughter in law Alison, through our long time family friendship with Bill and Marion King whom we met at RFNC.

Those original members deserve our congratulations for their foresight in starting the Club. The fact that the Club still thrives after fifty years is a lasting tribute to them and to the members who have come after and keep that concept alive.

Alison Rogers (nee King)

Current member - Committee

When I was 6 years old, on my mother's (Marion King) suggestion, Dad (Bill King) and Jack Hyett formed the Ringwood Field Naturalist Club. This group became a huge part of our family's lives and it still is today.

At the beginning the attraction for me was really the company of the member's children. Excursions became a lot of fun, not so much for the destinations, but for the games we played with the Rogers, Moore and Coutts children.

Over the years meetings were looked forward to with not only good speakers and slide shows, but also the members who became close friends. A typical meeting was a greeting at the front door by Gordon Coutts where we signed the attendance book. Inside the hall (Nth Ringwood Methodist) there would be Chris Gray setting up the extensive library, Dad setting up the projector, and perched on the corner of a table Jack Hyett who would have a crowd around him listening to his every word. In those days supper was served every meeting and was set up by Mum and June Rogers during the last part of the meeting. As kids we would help out with the dishes and clearing up. (When I think about it now, were we a help or a hindrance.)

One of the things I remember was that Mrs Fisch would always have a small bunch of native flowers in a 'ginger pot' for display, always something different and colourful. I try to bring something along to the current meetings to encourage members to plant native plants so as to encourage birds in their gardens. The exhibits table was always covered in interesting items, from rocks, to fungi and even a few live specimens at times. Yes, even snakes. There was always something to look at.

Over the years we attended many outings and camps. The first camp was to Mt Cathedral and was well attended. I remember being bitten by a 'Jack jump' ant on my leg. It was extremely painful until Miss Gray rubbed the end of a broken 'bracken fern' stem on it and the pain went immediately.

Other campouts I remember were to Mt Baw Baw, Inglewood (always a favourite), Grampians and more. Recently weekend trips, to Wilson's Prom, Mt Arapiles, St Arnaud, Echuca, Nagambie, Anglesea and the Grampians, have been enjoyed immensely. Members always are keen to attend these, not only to learn and appreciate these different areas, but also to share their knowledge.

As most would know, the King and Rogers families were joined when Peter and I were married. We have enjoyed many trips with both sets of parents and have tried to learn a little from their extensive knowledge that they were/are always willing to share. I am still trying to learn from Mum every time we go out and her patience when the same questions get asked is appreciated. As our family is now grown up, we can put some time and energy back into the Club. Committee meetings are as much about trips and sharing experiences as they are about business. We are enjoying the time we spend with new friends who have the same interest as ourselves. I appreciate the fact that both my parents had such a love for the bush and instilled in us the same.

It is wonderful to think that the Club is 50 years old and still going strong.

Peter Rogers

Current member - Committee

I have been involved with Ringwood Field Naturalists Club since the mid-60s as a young child. In the mid-70's and 80's my involvement with the Club was limited to attending occasional meetings, mainly to hear a family members speak. It was not until the mid 90's that Alison and I became regular members.

So, initially I was dragged along to meetings and excursion because I was a child and mum and dad wanted to attend. But from the association with mum and dad and other like-minded members, I developed a love of nature, especially birds. There were good teachers, especially "birdos" like Bill King, Jack Hyett and my mother, June Rogers.

In the early days, meetings were held at the North Ringwood Uniting Church. As a child I found these meeting interesting but they always finished way past my bedtime. Often you would find me at the end of a meeting, curled up under a chair at the back of the church, or in the back seat of the car, sound asleep.

Excursions and campouts were really a lot more fun, there were often other children with whom to play games at the frequent stops. These friendships with these children certainly lead to a great romance some years down the track with Alison King.

Some of the locations stick in my memory for other reasons:

- Lake Mountain where I can still see the cars parked at the Playground whilst the men filled in potholes, removed trees and generally made the road passable, often up to Echo Flat. If they could not get the cars that far we walked to the top.
- Tomahawk Gap (Beenak), the old sawdust heap, cars parked around the area but more importantly the old damp and dingy dugout. We were expressly told to stay out of it (it was for emergencies) but that never stopped us.
- Halls Gap Caravan Park, arriving late and setting up the tent and then to be woken the next morning to the incessant calling of the Pied Currawongs.

As mentioned earlier, I was not as active during the 70s and 80s mainly due to a new family, work and study. But my passion for nature was not lost and even carried this to University where I studied Botany and still enjoyed birdwatching whenever I was out.

In 1995 Alison and I felt we had time again to spend more time with the Club. It was not long before I got involved in the running of the Club taking on the role of Secretary and President over the last 15 years or so. It has been rewarding arranging speakers, excursions, weekends away, being with like-minded people and sharing knowledge.

Meetings, outings and weekends away have enabled members, both old and new, to get together and share knowledge. There have been some wonderful weekends – Little Desert, Anglesea, Nagambie and many more. It is also great to see the photographic skills of members during the member's images section of the meetings. I love seeing the Club continuing to grow both in numbers and knowledge. It is pleasing to see new members being encouraged to join in, their passion to learn and also share and the new friendships being formed. In all it has been a wonderful 50 years of natural history for me.

Jenny Hill (nee King)

Current member

Although I was only young in 1961 (4 years old), the Ringwood Field Naturalists Club has always been part of our family life. Over the years we have all enjoyed a great variety of natural history interest. Because there were many young families in the club, we always had many friends on our outings and campouts.

In the early years we were able to drive to Echo Flat on Lake Mountain and we enjoyed playing in the Sphagnum bogs and the alpine meadows. Another highlight for us was the trips to Shoreham and Flinders where we learned about the life of the sea creatures and studied algae there.

Happy memories too were the campouts to Mt Baw Baw staying in the alpine chalet, sleeping in the bunk-room and learning a little of the mountain flora.

Spotlighting in the high country for Leadbeaters Possums, Greater and Yellow-Bellied Gliders was exciting, also seeing Powerful and Sooty Owls. Nearer to home the Barn Owls and Tawny-Shouldered Frogmouths in the Yarra Valley.

Campouts at Upper Thompson where we gathered around the campfire after a day with the fungi and autumn berries, then spotlighting.

I'm sure that Dad would be really pleased to know that R.F.N.C is still such an important part of our family's life. Mum, a life member has attended almost every meeting and excursions over the last 50 years. My brothers Alan and Robert have both given talks on a wide range of topics over the years, Alison and Peter are both involved in the committee and excursions and I attend excursions and meetings with Lawrie as often as we can.

Jenny Hill (King).

Bruce Fuhrer

Life member - Current member

In my early 20's I met botanists on a trip to Portland and so began my love of plants and nature particularly through the lens of a camera. Later, living in Portland I had a business as a professional photographer and soon after joined the Portland Field Naturalist Club.

Several people were instrumental in continuing with my interest in natural history. J. Willis – plants, P Finke – fungi, M. Streeter – birds, O. Lightbody – plants, N. Learmonth – birds, F. Melblom – orchids, C. Beaglehole – general knowledge on everything.

When I returned to Melbourne to live I joined the Vic Field Nats and then the Ringwood Field Nats which was close to where I lived. I was very involved with the starting and running of the Junior Club at Ringwood from 1967 until it closed in 1982. I then started another group in the Basin.

Highlights of my times at Ringwood were the campouts at Upper Thomson where we looked at the berries including mock olive and coprosma (also shooters who turned up during the evening), also sightings of several Leadbeater's possums, Traralgon finding *Pterostylis fischii* and Mount Worth looking at fungi and ferns, Bendigo/Whipstick campout and to Yea wetlands looking at aquatic plants and masses of floating liverworts.

Friends at the Club who imparted knowledge to me were Jack Hyett and Bill King. I appreciated Marion King for her photography, Gordon Coutts for his friendliness, Doug and Ella Thomas for their interest in ferns, Fred Rogers for his wattle book contribution, the Fisch family. Also memorable were stimulating speakers like Ron Jenz who spoke on *Polychaetes* at the home of the Fisch family.

I find that most Field Nats Clubs in general are made up of members who are over 50. It would be good to appeal to, and attract, younger members. Natural History has been and still is a major part of my life.

Ed Note – Bruce was awarded a Life Membership to Ringwood Field Naturalist Club in 1978. Along with other awards, he was this year awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia.

Ella Thomas

Life member - Current member

In 1964 a friend told Doug and I about The Ringwood Field Naturalist Club.

We decided to join, we thought we may learn more about Ferns. We were also interested in Birds and Native Plants. We enjoyed the meetings. Good Speakers and so many different subjects.

Excursions were good because it gave us a chance to get to know people and make good friends.

A few of the excursions enjoyed were The Whipsticks for wildflowers, Serendip Sanctuary – a wonderful Bird Day, Tangel Bren, Mt Baw Baw for Alpine flowers in full bloom and orchids (no drought then), Anglesea for Orchids that were just beautiful.

At a time like this I think it is important to remember the many friends made and those who first gave us The Ringwood Field Naturalist Club. Many no longer with us.

As Doug and I are slowing up – it is good to see so many members carrying on the good work. Good speakers. Photos and excursions.

Doug Thomas

Life member - Current member

Ella has perfectly 'set the scene' to describe our interest in all things to do with nature and how much we appreciate the fact that Ringwood Field Naturalists Club has over the years become an important part of our lives.

For me, I will always appreciate being appointed President of the Club on several occasions and for the opportunity to make lasting friendships with many members.

At present, surviving members are my friends and I share with Ella the fact that our days are slowing, but we are sure that a most successful future for the Club is assured.

Judith Cooke

Life member - Current member

MEMORIES OF FORTY YEARS AS A MEMBER

Shortly after I returned to Melbourne from a twelve month trip overseas, Mum and I joined the Ringwood Field Naturalists Club in 1971, having heard about it from Club member Margaret Mellor who worked with Mum at Korowa Girls' School at the time. We became members at the AGM that year. The Club's 50th anniversary therefore marks my fortieth year as a member.

We were immediately immersed in the breath-taking world of our natural heritage, with valuable opportunities to learn about Australia's spectacular flora and fauna with a like-minded group of enthusiastic people. It was a privilege to have access to the wealth of knowledge and expertise available from Foundation members such as Jack Hyett, Fred Rogers, Gordon Coutts, Bill and Marion King, Bruce Fuhrer, Christine Gray and others.

I had met Jack Hyett at a bird-watching outing in the You Yangs some years earlier, organised after a Guide Leaders Conference, already owned his books *The Bushman's Year* and *The Bushman's Harvest* and later attended his CAE course. I also attended Guide Leaders' Bushcraft Tours at which Jack and Fred Rogers contributed the expertise.

Excursions provided many happy memories and were eagerly anticipated, offering opportunities to visit different parts of the country. Sometimes outings could be quite adventurous such as when emergency road clearing or vehicle towing was necessary. Of course, there were also the occasional snake encounters. I included natural history content in my University courses, majoring in geology with Neil Archbold as a role model and taking a Botany unit with Dr Malcolm Calder. Later I was invited to be a guest speaker at Club meetings on geological subjects. I also ran geology excursions to the Organ Pipes NP and Studley Park, as well as others to share the delights of my family's holiday place at Flinders.

The first camp-out I attended was at Reef Hills, visited by Jean Galbraith. Other memorable campouts were held at Inglewood, Mt Hotham, and more recently at Horsham, recalling many elements of adventure and fun from the early days. An excursion highlight was a sighting of Wilson's Phalarope at Werribee with Jack Hyett. Another was exploring the

Anglesea Heathlands with Mary White. I always enjoyed Bruce Fuhrer's entertaining and informative talks on Fungi, and I was inspired to contribute records to the national Fungi Map project.

I was asked by the Committee to become Secretary, and served for four years in that capacity. Regrettably, that Minute Book is now missing. I was appointed Club Librarian and held that position for a number of years, expanding the Club's collection of reference books.

In 1997, the retiring President, Dr Geoff Christensen, persuasively invited me to accept nomination as President. As a consequence, I became the Chair of the organising committee for the very successful March 1998 VFNCA weekend the Club ran jointly with Upper Goulburn FNC at Marysville, based at El Kanah. The destruction of that building and the devastation throughout this part of the state on Black Saturday 7 February 2009 has left a deep impression and I return regularly to photograph and record the regeneration of the bush. I served two terms as President with only one year in between, when the Club was without a President. In 2001, as President I led the Club in its 40th anniversary celebrations and wrote the Club's history to that point.

© Judith V Cooke, 28 February 2011

Loris Peggie

Current member

DELVING INTO THE MEMORY BANK

I cannot remember when I joined the Ringwood Field Naturalists Club and I had a period when work commitments meant I could not attend regularly but I first became aware of the Club when Photoflora was screened at Club meetings in the 1960's. Ruth and Geoff Christensen travelled around Victoria presenting the Photoflora entries and results in Clubs in a slide show and I attended several of these nights, entered a number of the competitions and helped list entries one year where I also met Joan Dyall and Ilma Dunn.

I was always interested in botanical subjects and in particular, native orchids and I joined the Ringwood Field Naturalists Club to extend my interests. I certainly appreciated the lectures and wealth of knowledge shared by members at meetings, on field trips and camp-outs over a long period. It is difficult to name people as there were so many – most of the Club were so willing to share their experiences.

Guest lecturers are always so dedicated to their subjects of interest with many fascinating and in depth, illustrated programs to share. I have been particularly fascinated with the platypus and the conservation being undertaken there. The conservation of native orchids, taking their seed and producing tubas to replant and increase populations in safe natural areas. The time line and how history can be explained from an embankment uncovered during road construction. Life cycles of insects, habits of native animals, protecting and increasing bird species and releasing them safely into their natural habitats, migratory birds and so the list goes on and on.

The social aspects of the Club on monthly field trips where there is a recording and sharing of all we see and then the Camp-outs where we have extended time travel around an area to

search for special, sometimes specific interests, or just enjoy the natural environment within the group of interested members.

I remember feeling we had lost such a huge amount of knowledge with the passing of Bill King, Fred Rogers and Jim Willis all within a few months. It was so important for members to have had the chance to know and share their accumulated knowledge and I feel quite honoured to have known them and been there to share their time and interests.

However, looking forward from this point in time there has been so much research achieved, more reference material than we have ever had access to, conservation work has actually increased the number of plants with many new discoveries and work being done to secure endangered species, building records, GPS positioning and all the modern technology so that we all have access with such ease.

But we still need the meetings, sharing of sightings, field trips, weekends away, friends and all that allows us to learn, discover and accumulate knowledge to enjoy the natural world around us. I certainly value my membership and the time I have been able to enjoy amongst friends within the Ringwood Field Naturalists Club.

Jean Neville

Current member

It was in the early 60's that I joined the Field Nats. This was through the goodwill of Avril Yates, a member here, who later was the President of a naturalists group in Bairnsdale. It is friendship such as hers that I value most, and a developing love of nature. I went with her on many of the Club's excursions in the early days.

I remember the different meetings of the Club – Charles Compton reported regularly about the Powerful Owls at Lysterfield, Bruce Fuhrer spoke about the flowers in Western Australia, which I later saw when I went there. His slides showed with amazing precision their delicate minute structure.

I appreciate the regular lifts with Doug and Ella Thomas to the meetings for many years. I was particularly impressed by Fred Rogers and his patience in explaining to me, a novice.

We went on various camps such as those at 'Norval' in the Grampians. I would come home from these, and the monthly excursions, to write down lists of flowers and birds to learn them. I took my son, Warwick, when he was younger to "Norval", and he also went to the Junior Club for a while.

My awareness of flora and fauna was stimulated when we went caravanning, and we made many friends this way, such as Bill and Norma in whose house at Bairnsdale we spent several months while they holidayed in Queensland. On our caravan trips I was able to observe birds especially. We met regularly with a couple of bird observers in the Chiltern State Forest when we saw the Regent honeyeater.

My husband and I went to Aardvark in the Club's summer camps in the Alps for a couple of years. Bill King would tease me because they were always in my birthday week.

I attended, with Jean Moy, a couple of interstate camps and always will remember the one in Launceston because of the generosity of our hosts in taking us to some many places.

For many years I have had the friendship of Judith Cooke with whom I would go on the different monthly excursions. I have appreciated the quality of Judith's newsletters which she has produced for many years. These have enabled me to keep up to date with the Club now I cannot attend meetings.

I was the Club's librarian for a number of years and brought the catalogue and the collection up to date.

So many friends have died but their contribution will always be remembered.

Jean Neville
18 August 2011

Betty Norris

Former member

I'm not sure how we heard about the Ringwood Field Naturalists, but Ron and I joined the Club not long after moving to Mooroolbark in 1970. We thoroughly enjoyed listening to excellent speakers at the meetings and went on many interesting and varied outings. My husband and I were members of the Aardvark Ski Club, and this club had built a lodge high up on Mt Hotham. On three occasions, in the summer, quite a few members spent a few days at Aardvark and thoroughly enjoyed identifying a great variety of wild flowers, many of which were new to some members.

Congratulations to the Club on reaching your 50th Anniversary.

Betty Norris

Ed Note: Ron was a Committee member for many years and Club President for two. Both Betty and Ron opened their home and property for excursions and outdoor meetings over the years.

Phillip Daniell

Life member - Current member

A City Boy Goes Bush

The understanding of the world around us starts with the small area of our backyards and the local neighbourhood. As we grow up we see seasonal insects like butterflies, ants spiders and so on. I remember going to the Healesville Sanctuary with my school and bringing back home some owl pellets, being interested in just what they had eaten; my parents were not amused!! Some experiences, good and bad, I remember growing up and when I was ten, my father took my brother and I up to Noojee to see the result of the 1939 bushfires. His company, Kraft, had a timber lease to supply wood for the furnace at the Drouin Butter Factory, which made cheese for them. The destruction and power of the fires made me nervous about going into the bush. When my brother and I, joined the Scouts, we went

camping in the bush at Gilwell, the fear of the bush began easing after about a week. The scouting movement helped me to understand the natural world and to replace fear with curiosity about the inhabitants. I was a city boy learning about the world! During the War my friends and I collected butterflies, and rode bikes to the 'secret' sites of various plants that certain butterflies loved. If the sites were far away, we then took our bikes on the train and got at these spots that way. We encouraged our Uncles (then fighting in PNG) to catch, and, under our instructions how to pack the butterflies for posting. When they arrived we would 'relax' them and mount for display. After the war I went 'Jackarooing' in the Western District 'sheep belt'; learning about pasture grasses (native and introduced), dung beetles, blow flies, ticks and other insects that beset Man and his animals.

Back in Melbourne I did several courses in Geology and Palaeontology with David Barkley, at Melbourne Uni. Under Noel Schleiger and Neil Archbold.

Also at Monash, with Pat Vickers-Rich. I joined Cheong Park Gem Club for the Geology, not making 'Kitch' jewellery!

I joined Vic Nats geology group, and a couple of years later somebody said "why don't you join your local club at Ringwood".

So that's how I came to the Club; that has in its members, a wealth of knowledge on most things natural, and friendly with it!!!.

Flora Anderson

Former member and

Jean Galliot

Current member

Jean and I agree that, through our membership of the Ringwood Field Naturalist Club (RFNC) we have formed lifetime friendships.

We visited places on the field excursions we may not have gone to on our own. Much later, I was confident enough to lead a small group along the cliff walk at Aireys Inlet.

Jean particularly remembers Greens Bush. She also remembers that on an excursion somewhere, she asked Phil Daniell for the time. Instead of just glancing at the sun's position and making a rough guess as we ordinary mortals would, he set a stick upright in the ground, took out his compass, looked at the angle of the shadow cast by the stick and told Jean the time.

At Kinglake, Jean recalled being shown fossils in the stone walls of the toilet block, and, of course, we would all remember, with sadness, the wonderful Marysville Bakery where we bought at least, a little luxury.

Speakers at meetings were always excellent, sometimes inspirational. I'm thinking of the high standard of photography evident in the slides used to illustrate talks. The wonderful

variety of subject matter is especially noteworthy eg insects, birds, butterflies, mammals and marsupials, marine life. Individual member's areas of expertise was generously shared.

I enjoyed learning about fungi through Bruce Fuhrer's field excursions and his beautiful photographs. Always interested in the natural world I felt like a sponge soaking up new information.

Noel Schleiger's geology excursions were great. Alistar Trill's dedicated, patient observations of mammals, insects, birds and bats on his and Carol's property at Wonga Park were fascinating. Cecily Falkingham's passion for native bushland was infectious. I am extremely conscious of the fact that all Victoria's native vegetation are merely remnants. Kevin Handrick on soils – so informative. Judith Cooke comes to mind too. Marion King's photography – superb. Dr Jim Willis's wizardry with his old fashioned slide projector was a wonder to behold. He was my favourite speaker – articulate, precise, erudite.

In addition to the speakers of meetings, was the 'specimen table', which was an opportunity for 'show and tell' segments.

There was, too, access to the library. I must admit that I was easily motivated to buy my own books, gradually building a modest library, which I often use. To open Tim New's 'Name that insect' is to be reminded of the fabulous size of the insect Kingdom.

I am grateful that there are members who continue the work begun by the illustrious foundation members, keep the Club alive, take on the responsibility of office, write articles for the newsletter, lead field trips and inspire young people simply by loving what they are doing.

To sum up, RFNC offers the joy of belonging in a group of people with mutual interest in the natural environment and the opportunity to share experience and knowledge.

Congratulations on your 50th Birthday.

Flora Anderson.

Marlene Lyell

Current member

A few memories for me.

_____ Ringwood Field Naturalists Club _____

In 1979 our family completed a trip around Australia by travelling up through the Centre, down the West Coast and back across the Nullarbor. On returning I realised that I had more photos of birds than I did of all the towns and places we had visited.

I only had the 2 volume Slaters Field Guide and, basically, I knew nothing about birds. So identifying most of the birds became a challenge.

On returning home to Warrandyte, I wanted to know which birds were around our block as well as the birds I had photographed on our trip. So I went down to my favourite nursery in South Warrandyte run by Bill & Marion King and imitated a call I had heard at home which I

wanted to put a name to....my whistling wasn't all that good, but Bill and Marion had no trouble in advising me that the bird was a Spotted Pardalote...the first bird I learnt to identify from its call. I was hooked.

While 'normal' people play music or listen to the radio in their cars, I would borrow bird call tapes from BOCA and play them whilst driving around. An interest had turned into an obsession.

Marion and Bill then took me under their wings...introduced me to the RFNC in 1980 and took me on many of their outings. During these outings Bill and Marion tried, in vain, to teach me about all the wonderful wildflowers, shrubs and trees of our beautiful countryside. But all to no avail...I was off with the birds, literally.

One of Bill's greatest pieces of advice was to always carry your binoculars with you when you need to go behind a bush...just when you thought you were shielded from everyone, there will usually be a bird that you've been looking for, close by, keeping an eye on you.

Many wonderful days were spent in the bush with the RFNC. Leeches, March flies, spiders and snakes have all been encountered. After the tragic bushfires of 1983, one of the most popular outings was visiting the Otways in search of the beautiful orchids which sprang up everywhere.

Many hundreds of photos were taken and just when I thought I was starting to grasp the Latin names of some of these beautiful plants...they changed the names...I gave up on botany.

Spotlighting for Owls was always a 'must do' and Bill & Marion, along with son Alan, were always ready to lead a walk out into the bush in search of these.

The RFNC had many wonderful and interesting speakers over the years as well as some very learned people as members. Along with birds and plants, butterflies, moths, orchids, lizards, geology and many more diverse and fascinating subjects were enthusiastically presented by members.

Bill and Marion not only became mentors in helping me with my bird identification, they took me into their family and their family welcomed me. The King family are, and have always been, invaluable members of the wonderful RFNC with that tradition now being carried on by Peter & Alison (nee King) Rogers and Robert King flying down from Sydney to give the occasional talk.

Long may that association last.

Marlene Lyell

Geoff and Helen Thompson

Current members

RFNC some of our memories

We were introduced to the Club by Felix and Enid Haarhoff in 1989. Since then we have been to many beautiful places we didn't even know existed.

We have heard addresses by: Bill and Marion King on the wonderful natural world out there, Gordon Coutts, Brenda and Mick Murlis, Arthur Farnsworth with "Life through a lens", Ken Clarke "Wonderful world of insects", Loris Peggie's encyclopaedic knowledge of orchids, Cecily Falkingham encyclopaedic knowledge on everything (who kept inedible specimens in the freezer for later ID), Phil Daniell. Doug and Ella Thomas (who woke us up to the beauty and variety of ferns), Bruce Fuhrer and Fred Rogers, Judith Cook on Geology, Ruth and Geoff Christensen.

Xmas meetings at the home of Alistair and Carol Traill, (met a tawny frog mouth, resident in their back room!) also Doug Alkemade, Bruce Burton (who, particularly, with their wives, became firm friends,) and so many others. And delightful line drawings on many programmes by Sylvane Alkemade.

Our first Camp-out was in Inglewood, led by Bill King. After dark he led us out and said "absolute hush. No - 'there it is'. And with a recorded voice of the powerful owl, called in this glorious bird, which silently swooped in low over our heads and sat in a tree looking at us with his big golden eyes.

We also fondly remember, from that campout. Bruce B saying "pardolot", Judith asked "spotted? "no!" said Bruce" - just heard"

All wonderful memories, all lovely people, and our grateful thanks go to the new leaders and enthusiasts.

Ruth Christensen

Current Member

RINGWOOD FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB --- 50th ANNIVERSARY

As soon as we moved into the area 18 years ago, we joined the Ringwood Field Naturalists Club and I am just as certain now, as earlier on, that becoming part of the club was the key factor in enjoying our re-location to North Ringwood.

Geoff had contacts with the Ringwood Field Nats. almost from its inception and during the "Photoflora" competitions which he organized, the club had a significant role in the success of the bi-yearly events. Even so, we had no idea of how many facets of natural history come together in a Field Naturalists Club and, of course, the Ringwood club in particular. RFNC has been fortunate to have many members with considerable knowledge in various fields and to have good and enterprising leadership so that we have always had programs covering a wide range of natural history areas. Members have been encouraged to broaden their particular interests and to share their expertise.

We have learnt that it takes more than bad weather to keep us from excursions --- to be out in the field regardless of the weather has great value both in what we see and find for ourselves and what we share with others. Overall, it is the broadening of our understanding and appreciation of the natural world that surrounds us, that is so valuable.

Wasn't it fortunate we came to live so close to our long-time friends, Marion and Bill King!

Ruth Christensen

Hazel and Alan Veevers

Current members - Committee

The Ringwood Field Naturalists Club

Our Involvement, - by Hazel and Alan Veevers

We have really enjoyed our involvement with RFNC because we like meeting other people who also love all aspects of the natural environment. The enthusiasm of other members is infectious and we have learned a lot from them. Conversely, if we have seen an unusual bird or insect it is great to be able to share it with others who will mirror our own excitement.

Our introduction to the Club began nearly twenty years ago, soon after we had emigrated from England. Hazel had been attending walks with Cecily Falkingham and she suggested we could learn more if we joined the Club – she was quite right! In those early days, for us, we sat in the back row and marvelled at the knowledge displayed by the “Elders”, usually accompanied by impressive photographic slides.

It was some years before we were able to attend weekend meetings, because of other commitments. Our first Excursion was a frogwatch, at night, at Latrobe University led by Phil Daniell. We had our young son with us and we all went home fired with enthusiasm and spent many subsequent happy evenings tracking down our local amphibians using techniques learned that night.

Another early trip with the Club was to Mount Baw Baw. We were amazed at the beauty and diversity of the flowers and other plants and were thrilled to find a Mount Baw Baw Frog.

Our first full weekend away with the Club was to Whimpey's Desert Lodge. One of our chief memories was of being taken to meet Charles and Di, a pair of Mallee Fowl, which were breeding in a special fenced enclosure. Whimpey's dedication to the birds was inspirational.

Our first attempt at leading an Excursion soon demonstrated how the best laid plans can go astray. We had dutifully done our 'recce' at Braeside Park the previous week, but on the day of the outing discovered that the State cross-country running championships were taking place, the main car parks were full and tracks closed! Some hasty improvisation took place and the Excursion went ahead successfully.

Since then we have led many Excursions without any serious disruption. This year the weekend we organized at Anglesey went really well, with perfect weather, beautiful flowers, rare birds and over twenty enthusiastic participants.

We always enjoy the meetings, which provide a good mix of experts and members. It is remarkable how high the standard of digital photography has become within the Club - always a highlight at meetings in recent times. We have both served on the Committee in various roles and both had terms as President – something that never entered our heads in those early days on the back row.

As the Club enters its 50th year we hope it continues to flourish and maintain the opportunity for like-minded field naturalists to get together and enjoy our wonderful environment.

Ray Wall

Current members - Committee

My name is Ray Wall and I joined the Ringwood Field Naturalists Club Inc. in September 1998. I knew friends from tennis who were in RFNC – Alison and Peter Rogers.

I was nearing retirement age and I was looking for interests I could pursue after retirement. I have always had an interest in Australian birds and Australian native plants. Alison and Peter suggested I come along to some meetings and excursions and see what I thought. They felt my interests may be satisfied in part by the Club.

The monthly meetings, with different Guest Speakers each month were very interesting. Many of the subjects were outside my area of interest but I found you always learnt something new. In some instances it made me want to learn more about the topic. This has been particularly true of member talks and their trips they have taken and areas they have travelled to.

The excursions have always been enjoyable. Meeting the members and sharing their individual areas of expertise has been very illuminating. There is a wealth of knowledge to be tapped and shared. My problem is retaining even a part of the knowledge!

I particularly enjoy the trips away known as “camp-outs”. They are great opportunities to see different parts of Victoria. Recent trips to Horsham, St Arnaud and Echuca are examples. I have passed through Horsham on many occasions and even stayed overnight. However, I had never taken the time to have a good look around the area. The wetlands that have been developed and the river walk are testimony to the good work being undertaken by both Council and the Community. St Arnaud is an area I'm not overly familiar with as it is not on the “mainstream” exits from Melbourne. I found the old example of “chock and log” fencing method particularly interesting. Echuca presented an opportunity to foray into NSW and the Barmah State Forest to see Kingfishers in close proximity. Also Nankeen Night Herons in their 100's!!

I have an accounting background and took on the Club's Treasurers role around 2003. This role has also provided opportunities to keep me occupied in semi retirement. I was successful in getting two government volunteer grants for the club to purchase an optical imaging projector and a laptop computer.

These acquisitions have allowed club members to put the images from their digital cameras on display to maximum effect.

I have gained companionship and friendship from fellow club members as well as broadening my interest in birding and native plants. I am looking forward to pursuing these interests further when I retire fully from the workforce.

David Hewitt

Current members - Committee

Eeva and I first attended a meeting of the RFNC in about 2003 at the invitation of the Veevers. As a physical scientist (organic chemistry) of many years standing I had a deeply ingrained scepticism of the biological sciences – dismissing them as merely ‘stamp collecting’! Eeva was more open having been taken by Hazel Veevers on many walks though local reserves, and she was developing a much deeper knowledge and interest in flora and fauna than I.

I cannot remember the topic of the first meeting, but I was immediately captivated and was particularly impressed by the display of members’ slides. I have had an interest in photography since my teenage years and was, briefly, a member of a photographic club in Perth. Here was an outlet for this interest, but it seemed that the presentation was a little old-fashioned. As an inveterate stirrer, I immediately started lobbying Alan Veevers to introduce digital projection. Shortly afterwards we gave a demonstration in which we showed some of the advantages of digital photography and projection over slides.

It has been exciting to see how rapidly this has been accepted and how many members, new and old, now contribute to the members’ digital images section of each meeting.

I soon found the members to be extraordinarily knowledgeable and most willing to impart their knowledge, and the more I learnt the more fascinating talks and excursions became. I became more observant and started to appreciate the diversity of nature. No longer were there just ‘gum trees’ – now there were 700 species of eucalypt, and more than 1000 wattles, and even more than 200 butterflies and 20,000 moths! And everything could be photographed and displayed and learned about! It was a whole new area of interest of which I had never dreamed. I now look forward to every monthly meeting, whatever the topic, and thoroughly enjoy all the excursions (when they don’t interfere with Saturday tennis).

David Hewitt, 2011

Helen Fernandes and Graeme Fernandes

Current Members

RFNC Inc. 50th year Celebration.

In 2001 Alison & Peter Rogers invited us to join the Ringwood Field Naturalists club, coming from a country background of North-central Victoria, we were already interested in birds and nature.

Our first excursion was to the You Yangs, a place we had driven past but never visited. Since being involved with the club our interests have expanded from birds to the many types of

flora and fauna. From first joining as a club member then progressing to leading excursions and joining the committee we have met and made many new friendships and learnt a considerable amount from such a knowledgeable group.

Some of the highlights were: helping organize the RFNA SEANA Camp-out in October 2008 which showcased our beautiful lush forests and country surrounding Healesville and the May 2009 Camp Out at St Arnaud. We now look at the surrounding area with its diverse bird life, box iron bark stands of the Kara Kara State Park and the geology of the gold mining era with new eyes.

The Club always has a wide coverage of topics and great photography at our monthly meetings, with excursions and campouts showcasing our own backyard near and far. We hope to follow in the footsteps of Ella and Doug Thomas who are still enjoying our Club in their nineties.

Graeme and Helen Fernandes

Inta Needham

Current Member

Roger Needham

Current member - Committee

Inta and I have always been keen on travel and on seeing Australia. While we were working and bringing up a family all our time seemed to be committed.

Whilst teaching at Norwood Sec. College with Irene Furher I was aware of the Ringwood Field Nats., and at times had seen displays at the Ringwood library about the R.F.N.; but I believed that I didn’t have sufficient knowledge of the natural world, even though I had always been interested. After our retirement in 2007, we joined a natural history course at the Park Orchards Community House being led by Hazel and Alan Veevers. We enjoyed the course and they encouraged us to join the R.F.N. Both Alan and Hazel are great ambassadors and very enthusiastic members of Ringwood.

Once members, we were very impressed with the warm welcome and were encouraged by the help we received from many people.eg. Ella and ferns; Loris with orchids; Marion and plants; Peter and mistletoe; and of course lots of help with bird identification, and much, much more. Monthly meetings with interesting speakers, day excursions, to become familiar with the local surrounds, and weekends away on camp have all been most enjoyable.

Roger and Inta

Jackson Airey

Current members - Committee

In 2008 I stumbled across the Ringwood Field Naturalists Club website. I was looking for a local group who I could go bird-watching with. The next thing I knew I was at a meeting learning about dung beetles! Little did I suspect that my love for birding would plunge me into the mysterious world of bugs, ferns, rocks, moths, frogs, trees...and of course orchids!! Luckily birds get a mention too.

I now eagerly look forward to our monthly meetings and excursions, and camp outs are a real treat. It's wonderful to find a club that is so friendly, warm and open to all members and newcomers alike, no matter their expertise or area of interest. The best part is that activities and talks are open to everyone as well – a chance to really get involved. By September I'll have run a few excursions and my first weekend camp out. I've also given a couple of talks – and I'm not even an expert in anything! Running an excursion or giving a talk is challenging but it's extremely rewarding – it also gives me a chance to convert more people to bird-watching!

I've only been on a couple of camp outs but they've all been great. In particular I think back to the St Arnaud and Nagambie weekends. St Arnaud was my first camp out and I was immediately impressed by Graeme Fernandes' spotlighting tour on the Friday night. The count for the night was 1 moth! Things got a lot more exciting as the weekend went on though. Nagambie was a good lesson on when to take a tent, or more correctly when not to, although I did appreciate the midnight visits I got from Brushtail Possums to my annexe! The birding in the Box-Ironbark can be tough but Peter Rogers made up for that with a well spotted Spotted Quail-thrush.

The Club is a great asset to its members and the greater community, providing a forum to help keep alive people's interest in the natural world. It is also great fun and I have met many people who I know will be good friends for the many years to come.

Regards
Jack

Bob Tucker

Current members - Committee

My early years were spent in fruit growing and farming. I enjoyed the country and outdoor life but not the poor returns and came to Melbourne to further my career. I was always interested in nature, and in childhood had the usual collection of insects and lizards. I was even blamed, by my mother, for bringing a full sized and very agitated eastern brown snake into the house. I joined the National Trust and was involved in banding birds for the C.S.I.R.O. I have maintained contact with rural people and escape to the country whenever I can. When I enter the mallee I feel that I am returning home.

When I retired a few years ago I reviewed my life and interests. My one regret was that I had not been more disciplined in my involvement with the natural world. I had a profound

interest, matched only by an acute awareness of my ignorance. I thought I could address this weakness by joining the Ringwood Field Naturalist Club.

I have been overwhelmed by the knowledge held within the club and the quality of the presentations at meetings. The excursions have shown me that many eyes see much more than my one pair could ever hope to see and the members have patiently explained very basic things to me.

I know most of the more common birds and I am aware that there are over 600 species in Australia. I have now seen some that I never expected to see. I now know that a small moving dot in the upper foliage of a tall eucalypt can be identified by the way it moves and the strata of the foliage it frequents. I view a tiny moth with more interest, knowing that it is one of 2,000 species in Victoria only half of which have been identified. I was astounded at the number of different local fungi and the varied forms that the same species can take.

I doubt that I could be focussed enough to specialize in any one area but I enjoyed the research I did on the European wasp and hope that I can be of some value to the club in the future.

Robert (Bob) Tucker.



Drawing by Sylvanne Alkemade of members walking in the rain through Kinglake National Park

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