

Walking Together- Balak Kalik Manya – Newsletter Update February 2020

The Walking Together- Balak Kalik Manya Project is a four-year project committed to writing site-specific management plans for two sites within Dja Dja Wurrung Country; Kalimna Park in Castlemaine and Wildflower Drive in Bendigo. Both sites have been selected because of their proximity to growing townships and the increasing pressures of urbanisation slowly encroaching closer and closer to these park boundaries. The project is focusing on how we can increase community connection with nature, improve visitation rates and encourage healthy use of these sites, all while maintaining and improving biodiversity. The project will promote Djaara employment and assist in Djaara reconnecting with traditional practices of land management.

We are currently in the planning stage of the project with preliminary assessments wrapping up in the coming weeks; including cultural surveying and recording, flora and fauna surveying, and visitor monitoring. This is being completed to inform management plans and gain a greater understanding of everyone/everything that uses/lives within these parks.

Cultural surveying has been completed at both sites with several new rockwells being discovered and recorded within Kalimna Park. Previously known rockwells in the area were shown to us by local elder Uncle Rick Nelson and then recorded using Aboriginal Victoria's 'Victorian Aboriginal Place Component Form'.



Visitor monitoring is being undertaken in conjunction with one of Parks Victoria's Social Science Officers. The original idea was to get both sites added to the Visitor Satisfaction Monitor; Parks Victoria's yearly survey which gains an indication of visitor demographics and

usages. After both sites were assessed by the Social Science Officer, we decided to create our own questionnaire tailoring the survey to more site-specific questions and allowing us the opportunity to conduct another survey after the project has concluded to monitor the effectiveness of the management plans from the perspective of the community. When this survey is ready, it will be distributed to all relevant stakeholders and user groups for their input.

Flora and Fauna surveying is being completed by local ecologists Elaine Bayes and Karl Just (Rakali Consulting). These surveys have found extremely positive results with the endangered Pink-tailed Worm-lizard being recorded within Wildflower Drive. This legless lizard lives underground and navigates using ant galleries. The surveying method required to record the presence of the Pink-tailed Worm-Lizard is rock-rolling; an average of around 3,000 rocks is being rolled before finding one. Surveying was completed with assistance from students at Bendigo TAFE, Bendigo Field Naturalists members, and other volunteers from around the state of Victoria. The Pink-tailed Worm-lizard is highly vulnerable to inappropriate fire regimes and disturbance of ground (land clearing, illegal mountain bike trails, mining). We also recorded two of the vulnerably listed Woodland Blind Snake, several Stumpy-tailed Lizards, Blue Tongues, and thankfully no venomous snakes!



Pink-tailed Worm-lizard

Other surveying has been completed through Elaine Bayes and Karl Just with assistance from the local Castlemaine community to record and monitor the presence of the

endangered Eltham Copper Butterfly within Kalimna Park; with terrific results and the most comprehensive mapping of *Bursaria spinosa* ever undertaken (worldwide). The Eltham Copper Butterfly is well known to Castlemainians, but not much is known about this butterfly to Bendigonians - even though there is a recorded population at Big Hill. Because of this, it is not a stretch for Eltham Copper Butterflies to occur at Wildflower Drive also – given there is plenty of *Bursaria* present at the site. Wildflower Drive was mapped for *Bursaria spinosa* by local ecologist/butterfly expert Julie Radford with no flying butterflies seen whilst conducting the mapping.

Other important, threatened animals that we are currently monitoring include Brush-tailed Phascogale, Sugar Glider, Fat-tailed Dunnart and other animal species that may frequent the sites.

At the beginning of 2020 we will be developing two management plans and consulting with key community stakeholders and user groups about what their aspirations are for these parks. Balaki wurrekang (to speak to the mob) - consultation with the DDW community will occur at this time with a great opportunity to incorporate our ideas into the delivery phase of the management plans; e.g. interpretative signage, food and fibre trails, shelter design, signposts with Djaara language, cultural burning, and many other options are possible.

If there is anything you would like to discuss regarding this project, I am available in person, by phone or email.

I would love to have your input.

Thank you,

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Sugar Glider in Kalimna Park