



# FoCC Incorporated January 2020 News Update



## Issue Number 62

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1. **Powerful Owl discovered on the fringe of Woookarung Regional Park**

A Powerful Owl has been sighted and photographed adjacent to Woookarung Regional Park.



Image P Darveniza

An early-morning walk and the watchful eye of Peter Darveniza, spotted the rare species just off Bell Avenue on January 24. The image of the unidentified owl was later confirmed to be the endangered Powerful Owl. The age and sex of the photographed owl could not be determined, so whether the sighting is indicative of Powerful Owl  
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breeding within the Park, or a wandering individual passing through the area is not known.

This discovery marks the potential for the Park to support this rare species and speaks volumes for the quality of habitat herein – The Powerful Owl needs large tracts of old-growth eucalypt forest and nesting hollows – to provide a functioning ecosystem with an adequate prey base to sustain Australia’s largest owl.

The owl atop the food chain, with an impressive wingspan of 140 cm, this nocturnal predator feeds on possums, fruit bats, birds, and beetles (don’t worry, Koalas are not on the menu!) to help maintain the delicate balance of the ecosystem, ensuring prey species do not become overpopulated. As such, Powerful Owls are very ecologically important!

According to online citizen science databases there have been only 5 sighting reports in Ballarat – EVER! The most recent example was in April 2018 in Buninyong, whilst another in Canadian in 2012.

A conservation priority for this species in the corridor requires rejecting habitat destroying development proposals, and upgrading of the surrounding Parks and Reserves conservation and protection measures to improve the ecology for the Powerful Owl habitat

Indeed, the habitat importance of Woookarung Regional Park has skyrocketed since the owl was sighted, as it adds more reasons for the Parks surrounding corridor to be conserved and protected.

If you see an owl in the Corridor, try to take a photo and seek assistance with identifying the species in question. Please report it to FoCC facebook or website or Birdlife Ballarat or on an online citizen science database such as:

Birdata: <https://birdlife.org.au/projects/powerful-owl-project>

eBird. <https://ebird.org/australia/home>

2. **Koala news**

If you see a Koala please record time, tree species and age, place and hopefully an image. Send to [focinfo@gmail.com](mailto:focinfo@gmail.com)

**The FoCC Citizen Science Koala Sighting Report summary:**

The question of whether “Koalas are still living in the Canadian Corridor” has been positively answered. The FoCC Citizen Science Program involved local residents sighting and recording the sparse Koala population in the Corridor.

Our initial report to the City of Ballarat in June 2019 claimed just eight Koalas in the Corridor. Subsequent sightings suggest a few more in the south, west and north east of the City. The FoCC Citizen Science approach has successfully encouraged many local residents to report

Koala sightings, and has generated renewed interest in Koala wellbeing as an icon for the local natural environment.

The sightings show Koalas in urban areas such as the Yarrowee River Valley in Brown Hill, the Canadian Creek and other creeks in the corridor, the Woowookarung Regional Park, Buninyong township and the traditional Koala sighting place at Mt Buninyong. Other Koalas have been found in Sebastopol and at Sovereign Hill.

The City of Ballarat Koala Plan of Management identifies koala monitoring as a key factor in keeping Koalas in the corridor.

A University of Melbourne student and the Australian Koala Foundation are collaborating with FoCC to conduct Koala monitoring in Woowookarung Regional Park and Union Jack Reserve and adjacent watercourses in April and October this year.

The revegetation of the ex-plantation land in Woowookarung Regional Park is another key to improving the Koala habitat in the corridor. The FoCC has planted over 1600 Koala trees over the past 3 years and more are planned for future years.

The Midlands Highway upgrade hopefully contains measures which may reduce Koala deaths on the road. The opportunity exists for other roads in the corridor to be considered from a Koala safety aspect with works and speed reduction.

The decision to not proceed with the Warrenheip Growth Zone is a major boost to the conservation of the Canadian Corridor. The mosaic of native vegetation and small rural properties will allow Koalas and other wildlife to maintain the north south links.

One question arising from the Citizen Science Koala sightings has been; where to go when a Koala is found in an inappropriate place or with injuries.

The FoCC suggests the creation of a "Koala and Wildlife Response Guide" to assist residents living in the corridor to know where to go for assistance.

The Full Citizen Science Koala sighting report is now on the FoCC website. [www.focc.asn.au](http://www.focc.asn.au)



### **3. General Meeting February 19th 2020**

**7pm Wednesday Feb 19<sup>th</sup> 2020**  
**Earth Ed Science centre**  
**Mt Clear College**  
**Olympic Avenue**  
**Mt Clear**

Theme "Little Creeks do matter".

Guest speaker will be Lachlan Gordon from the Friends of Barwon River. Lachlan will be talking about the Friends of the Barwon 's plans to restore the Barwon River Health. Everyone welcome. Gold coin donation at the door. Light refreshments afterwards.

"Friends of the Barwon is a catchment wide network of groups and individuals working to protect and restore the long-term health of the Barwon River and its tributaries through building partnerships, empowering communities, engaging with government and providing strong and effective advocacy. The vision is for a healthy, flowing, life-sustaining Barwon River system which is valued by all the community."

The Canadian Creek and the Yarrowee River are both part of the Barwon River catchment. According to locals the longest branch and therefore the head of the Barwon River is the unnamed forest creek which branches off the Canadian Creek at Mt Clear. Its start point is at the back of Green Hill and it runs through the gorge in the park.

### **4. Report from the 55 Recreation Road working group**

55 Recreation Rd was withdrawn from auction by the Government on November for community consultation about its future.



Blue line – easement

Red line – boundary of 55 Rec Rd

Yellow line – Old bunny rail embankment

The working party informally consists of friends from:

- FoCC
- Ballarat Mountain Bike Club
- Ballarat Bushwalking and Outdoor Club
- Mt Clear Scouts

- Fed Uni Outdoor Dept
- Field Naturalist Club of Ballarat
- Birdife Ballarat.

In December the group walked along the trail and identified identify the route and nature of the trail.



Image: The old bunny rail embankment looking north from Recreation Road.

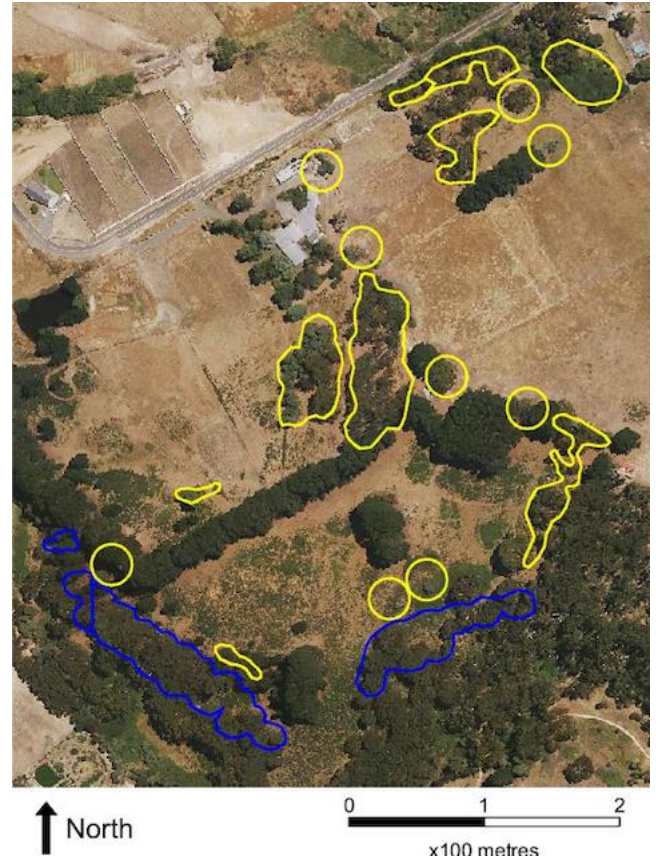
The party's findings or ideas include:

1. Utilising the bunny rail embankment for the trail.
2. A new bridge over the remnant rail bridge. Perhaps similar to COB trail bridges.
3. Fencing of the trail within the private easement. Approx. 40 metres of 4 strand or similar to the fencing on the north side of Sailors Gully.
4. Fencing the western boundary between 55 Rec Road and the adjacent property. Approx. 100m
5. Consideration of fencing along Rec Rd from the south west corner up to the rail embankment to protect the lomandra and grasstrees. Approx. 50m
6. Governance: The land is probably owned by the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA). Enquiries at Mt Clear College, Mt Clear Primary School and The Regional Office suggest that the VSBA is the holder of the land.
7. The idea for the land to stay in its current ownership and a committee of management for the land is a possibility. Other models also exist. Parks Vic could become the manager but that would take a long term.
8. Easement across private land. How?
9. Vegetation management. The site contains a mixture of native veg and old pines. The seedling pines should be removed ASAP.
10. The City of Ballarat Living Corridors study which is just beginning, is a logical place to confirm the community connection inherent in the trail.

##### 5. **Objections - 2 Hill View Road**

The FoCC objected to a development proposal at 2 Hillview Road, Brown Hill which was seeking permission to remove 3 hectares of Koala habitat.

A number of FoCC friends attended as objectors, pointing out that the COB Koala Plan requires the development to maintain and or enhance Koala Habitat, not destroy it. Local residents told the session of the richness of the wildlife in the area and of the adjacent Yarrowee River.



All the vegetation in the yellow outline is proposed to be removed and the blue to remain. The Yarrowee River runs below the blue outlines.

##### 6. **Regional Roads Victoria (RRV) Recreation Road Upgrade**

Last year Regional Roads Victoria (formerly VicRoads) released a study in 2018 on the possibility of Yankee Flat Road being considered as an eastern bypass for Buninyong. The report found the bypass was unwarranted at current and expected traffic volumes.

Buried in the report is a line identifying Recreation Rd for an upgrade sealing and a 60 kph speed limit.

FoCC has now written to the RRV Regional Manager seeking clarification of the plans.

##### 7. **BALLARAT ROAD TRANSPORT STRATEGY (2007)**

Also, in the Regional Roads Victoria report was a reference to the 2007 Ballarat Road Transport study which identified road "B" as a 100 kph arterial route straight through the middle of the Park along Recreation Road. The now dead report joins many other plans to use the forest to solve problems at the expense of the forest.

VicRoads commissioned Ratio Consultants Ltd to develop a Ballarat Road Transport Strategy in 2007. The Ballarat Road Transport Strategy was developed with consideration to the future growth aspirations of Ballarat (forecasting population growth in the region from 88,000 in 2001 to 115,000 in 2031). Note, these growth forecasts have been superseded<sup>5</sup>. Key links within Ballarat that were identified as potential concerns included the Midland Highway (Creswick Road), and Geelong Road at Federation University. The study

considered four potential major road infrastructure projects which are depicted at a high level in the map below.

**A** A new arterial route around the western outskirts of Ballarat (the Ballarat Western Link);

**B** A new arterial route through the southern areas of Ballarat (a continuous high-speed route from Woodmans Hill, via Whitehorse Road/ Bridge Road and Bells Road to the Glenelg Highway);

**C** A new arterial route around the eastern areas of Ballarat (Upgrading Yankee Flat Road and connections between Woodmans Hill and Geelong Road/ Gear Avenue);

**D** Duplicating existing arterial roads (Sturt Street West, Gillies Street (south of Sturt Street and north of Norman Street), Wiltshire Lane and Geelong Road West)

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Source: Ballarat Road Transport Strategy 2007 – section of Figure 4.2 Option “B” running via Foos Lane and Recreation Road

**8. Buninyong 2020 Smart Building and Living Expo**

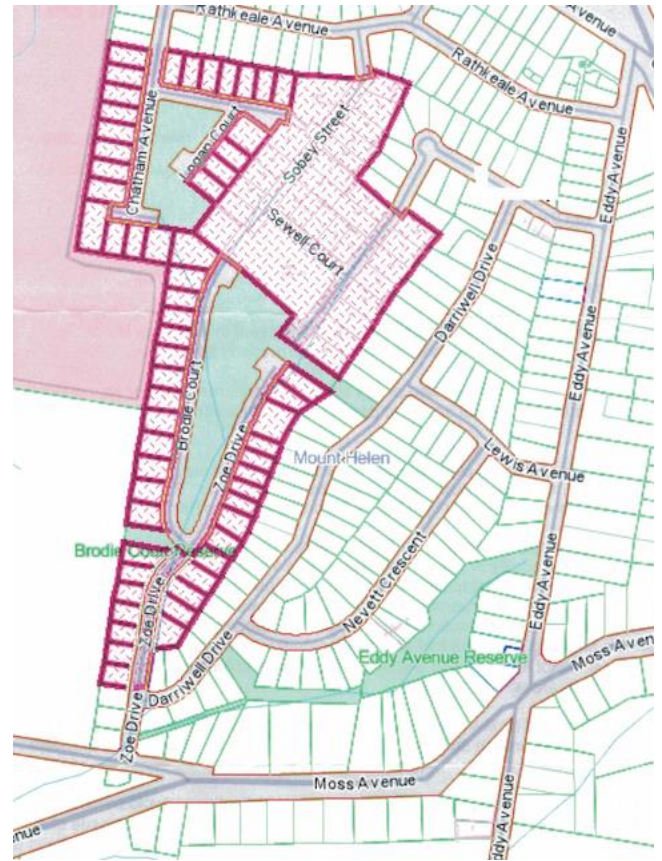
FoCC will be hosting a stand at the Buninyong 2020 Smart Building and Living Expo to be held at Royal Park on Sunday February 23<sup>rd</sup>.

An excellent day out to peruse the stalls and activities.



**9. The Sanctuary Mt Helen**

The sanctuary is a neighbourhood in Mt Helen which was developed in the early 2000’s. The sanctuary is named because it is within a Koala habitat area and features open Koala habitat surrounded by well designed housing.



The Sanctuary Mt Helen.

The sanctuary is covered by a Section 173 agreement stating “no dogs in the maroon shaded lots”. In 2016 the City of Ballarat wrote to the sanctuary’s residents stating the area: *“Was designed to protect koala habitat areas from any development that would compromise the quality or integrity of koala habitats, to ensure that any development within or adjacent to koala habitat areas occurs in an environmentally sensitive manner, to incorporate the restoration of koala habitat as a component of developments where restoration as required by the Ballarat Koala Habitat Planning map and to ensure that any development maintains existing connectivity between areas of koala habitat and minimises threats to safe koala movement between such areas”.*

The dog exclusion fits in with the Councils statement to “minimise threats to safe koala movement between such areas.” The no dog rule has been breached by some sanctuary residents and the issue is now before council.

The sanctuary is adjacent to bushland and Koalas are present as evidenced by the most recent visitor being mid-December 2019.



A quite hard to see Koala in Chatham Avenue Mt Helen, Dec 15 2019. Image: Kent W

**10. Orchid**

Rosey Hyacinth Orchid (*Dipodium Roseum*) is flowering at the moment in Woowookarung. There are numerous flowering through the bush and are they are quite easy to find. A lovely orchid.



Image: Feb 1 2020 Peter Darveniza

**11. Membership**

All 2019 members were sent a reminder notice in December that their 2019 membership expired on December 31st. Thank you to the 28 friends who have paid already. Receipts will be issued in a couple of days. A great time to renew is at the general meeting on Feb 19<sup>th</sup> 2020.

**FoCC facebook**

Rob at webmaster@focc.asn.au is now overseeing the FoCC Facebook page.

[www.facebook.com/friendsofcanadiancorridor/](http://www.facebook.com/friendsofcanadiancorridor/)

Currently we have just over ~~403~~ 423 friends on facebook and growing. Feel free to add and pass on to other friends and press the like button.

**2020 draft calendar**

Feb 19th	General Meeting "Little creeks do matter" Friends of the Barwon
Feb 22nd	Buninyong Sustainability Festival
Mar 1 <sup>st</sup>	Clean up Australia Day TBA
Apr 15th	General meeting "TBA"
May 26th	Mining Heritage Walk
June 17th	Forum: Birds with "Sean Dooley"
Aug 2nd or 9th	Tree planting "Old motor cycle track"
Aug 19th	General meeting TBA.
Oct 21st	Annual meeting "Guest Speaker"
Nov 2nd	Wildflower walk
Dec 4 <sup>th</sup>	Christmas at the Lookout

The FoCC update is published on behalf of the Friends of Canadian Corridor Incorporated, Registered No A0097535B. Circulation this issue is ~~540~~ 560

The update is generally published monthly. Friends wishing to add articles to the FoCC update may do so by emailing [focinfo@gmail.com](mailto:focinfo@gmail.com)

Feel free to circulate widely including doctor's waiting rooms, work offices, friends and neighbours.

Any opinions expressed in the publication are those of the editor and do not officially represent Parks Victoria or the FoCC.

**Web** - [www.focc.asn.au](http://www.focc.asn.au) **Facebook**  
<https://www.facebook.com/friendsofcanadiancorridor/>

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# Friends of Canadian Corridor Incorporated

Registered number A0097535



## Membership Application 2020

Individual membership of the FoCC runs from January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup> each year at a cost of \$20 per year Community groups may be represented by individual members.

First Name:	
Last Name:	
Name of Group represented: (if applicable)	
Address first line:	
Address second line:	
Town/City:	
State:	Post Code:
Home Phone:	
Mobile phone:	
Email address:	
I agree to the rules of association and abide by the FoCC committee of Management decisions	
Applicants signature:	
Date:	
Applications may be sent by email to <a href="mailto:focinfo@gmail.com">focinfo@gmail.com</a> or by mail to the Treasurer (address below)	

Payment may be made by
1. Bank transfer to details: BSB 06 3502 Account No 10955630. Note: Please add your name to the bank transfer and email <a href="mailto:focinfo@gmail.com">focinfo@gmail.com</a> a copy of this application form or your name and the date of the transaction.
2. Payment to the Treasurer at a FoCC meeting
3. Cheques to made out to "FoCC Incorporated" and addressed to:
FoCC Treasurer PO Box 83, Mt Clear Vic, 3350.

Date Received:
\$
Receipt No