



FoCC Incorporated Spikey News



Linking the community with Woookarung and the Canadian Corridor
October 2023 Issue Number 104

Spikey News features

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1. "Bunny Trail" opened

The Bunny Trail was opened on Tuesday 24th October 2023 by City of Ballarat Mayor Cr Des Hudson and Mt Clear College student Columbus Barton.

A large crowd of local residents, cyclists', walkers and Mt Clear College were present to celebrate the official opening.

The opening is the culmination of four years hard work by the Friends and Mt Clear College students with support by the City of Ballarat, Community Bank Buninyong and Regional Development Victoria.



Mayor Des Hudson and Mt Clear student Columbus Barton cutting the ribbon to open the trail.



FoCC President Bob Hartman welcoming the large crowd.



Mayor Des Hudson outlining Council's role and support.

Image: courtesy of Cr Coates



Community Bank Buninyong Chair Ian Corcoran (right), speaking at the opening.

How it began

On October 30 2019, an auction sign was placed by the Victorian Government on what is now known as the

Recreation Road Bushland Reserve in Recreation Road Mt Clear.

The FoCC spotted the possibility of a rail trail along the old “Bunny” rail line embankment on the land and quickly went to work.

First item was to postpone the auction. Prompt work by Michaela Settle MP saw the auction postponed. Discussions began with the Community Bank Buninyong for a grant to construct a bridge and trail which quickly moved the trail proposal forward. The City of Ballarat saw the trails connection to the Cities then fragmented trail network and agreed to purchase the land for the community.

Delays, due to the impact of Covid and in completing the surveying and registering the easement all took time, before the actual construction could be commenced. The bridge was installed in March this year, followed by trail earthworks, drainage, installation of the picnic table, bike racks, fencing and signage.

Mt Clear College students removed hundreds of sapling pine trees and planted many small shrubs and grasses, plus hundreds of hours of Friends volunteer labour. Parks Victoria complimented the project with map signage and fencing at the north end entrance to Woovookarung Regional Park.

Walkers and Cyclists can now follow the Bunny Trail all the way to Ballarat Station. At present the trail is not marked. The next stage is for signage along the whole trail to assist visiting walkers and cyclists.

The FoCC wish to acknowledge the generous support from:

City of Ballarat in purchasing the land for \$55000.



Community Bank Buninyong grant of \$34000 to install the bridge and construct the trail.



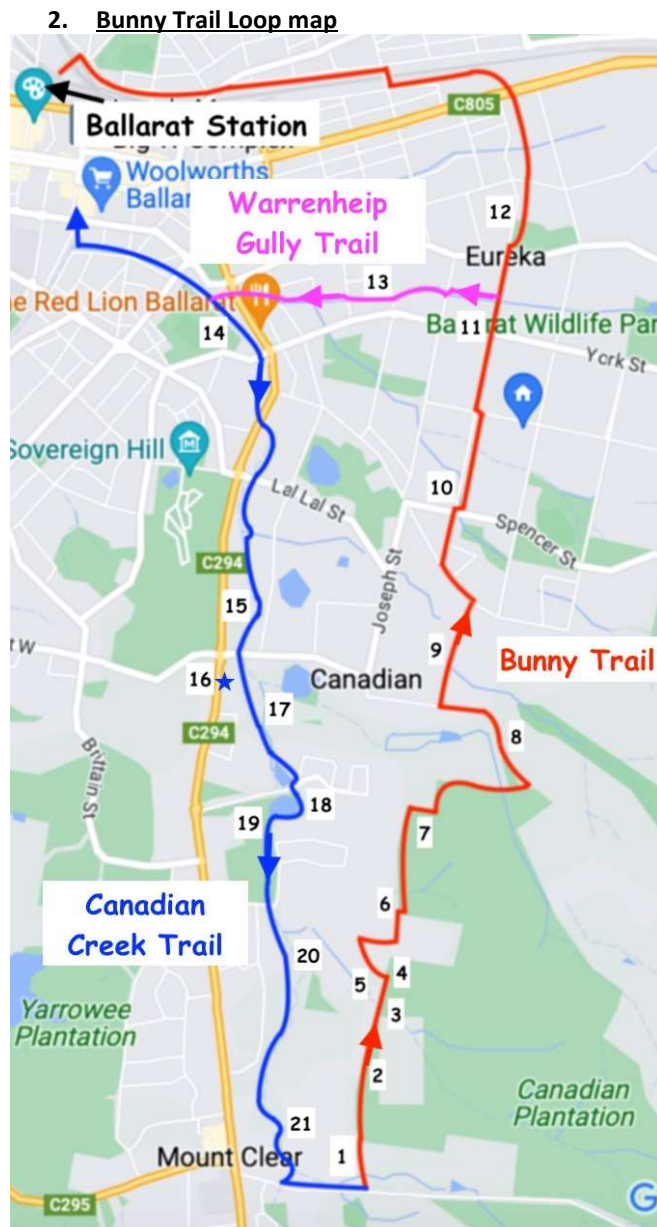
Regional Development Victoria grant \$6039 to build the rest stop table, bike racks and signs.



Tracie Currie for generously donating a portion of land for the connecting trail easement.

Read the story in the Ballarat Courier at: <https://www.thecourier.com.au/story/8398627/permission-to-explore-ballarats-backyard-with-a-unique-donation/>

Neil Haydon and Associates for the generous provision of legal services for the establishment of the easement



The Bunny Trail Loop Map PDF can be accessed at: <https://www.focc.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/BunnyTrail-Trifold.pdf>

3. 8th Wildflower Walk

Will be held between **Sunday October 29th** and **Sunday November 5th** along the Dementia Forest and Sensory Trail in Woovookarung Regional Park.

The trail starts at the **Car Park** at the **Dementia Friendly Forest and Sensory Trail on Katy Ryans Rd.**

The Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat and FoCC have organised the self-guided pop-up wild flower trail signage. This year wildflowers have opened early. Traditional favourites such as “Egg and Bacon” bushpea have completed flowering and are now dormant.

The walk is designated “Seniors Friendly” and is listed on the “Victorian Seniors Festival” calendar for the month of October! The walking trail is a gentle walk uphill on formed track. Good footwear is recommended.



4. FoCC City of Ballarat “Biodiversity Strategy” response

The FoCC held a special meeting on October 4th to formulate a “Biodiversity Response”.

The key foci for the FoCC are:

- **Climate Change:** Recognising that climate change is upon us and will have an expanding ongoing impact on the state of our Biodiversity well-being in our built and natural environment. Utilise the DEECA Regional Climate Adaptation Strategy climate predictions and recommendations in all biodiversity initiatives.
- **Biolinks:** Identify the locations of the Canadian Corridor and the Northern Corridor including lesser bio links such as, the Mt Clear and Mt Helen non-urban breaks.
- **Flora:** Bush, forest and grasslands
- **Fauna:** Wildlife and koala protection
- **Waterways:** Yarrowee River, Canadian Creek and associated little creeks
- **Lakes and wetlands:** Including retention basins design to include biodiversity.
- **Rezoning and naming:** Rezoning inappropriately zoned land outside the designated residential and industrial areas and naming key currently unnamed creeks.
- **Enabling:** The community to participate effectively and efficiently in environmental management and restitution.

The FoCC is looking forward to seeing the “Strategy” transform the extent and valuing of Biodiversity in Ballarat. The full 15-page FoCC submission can be obtained by contacting the FoCC at focinfo@gmail.com

5. Bird of the Month XXV (October 2023)

Laughing Kookaburra (*Dacelo novaeguinae*)

Kookaburra sits in the old gum tree... you know the rest. Just as you would know all there is to know about this iconic Australian bird, right? Wrong! Far be it from predictable or a known quantity, the Laughing Kookaburra is never short of surprises. Here are 10 facts you may not know about Laughing Kookaburra.

Nickname: Laughing Jackass

Name origins: ‘Kookaburra’ is derivative of ‘guuguubarra’, the Aboriginal Wiradjuri name for Laughing Kookaburra — so called because it sounds like its famous call.

Family tree: The Laughing Kookaburra is a large (40-47cm), terrestrial tree Kingfisher — one of the largest Kingfishers, worldwide. In the north coast, its congener, the Blue-winged Kookaburra shares range overlap. There are a further three Kookaburra species in New Guinea: Shovel-billed; Spangled; and Rufous-bellied, Kookaburras. All five Kookaburra species belong to genus *Dacelo*.

Being a kingfisher, it must live close to water? Actually, no, the Laughing Kookaburra is not closely associated with water. More important is the availability of suitable trees

to support them. It will, however, occasionally plunge into shallow water when hunting.



Adult Laughing Kookaburra and feeding time. Image credit:s Rob Loveband. City of Ballarat

Surprise assassin: In addition to the widely known prey of snakes (including dangerously venomous species), Laughing Kookaburras also feed on lizards, frogs, worms, insects, small birds, small mammals, crustaceans and goldfish from garden ponds. Recently, on social media, astounding images emerged of a Laughing Kookaburra with a hefty Brown Hare in its bill. Small prey items are swallowed whole, while larger prey is violently thrashed against a branch or the ground. What it lacks in a raptor’s hooked bill and powerful, grasping talons with sharp claws, the Laughing Kookaburra makes up for with unrivalled tenacity and a BIG appetite! Nature’s pest control!

Habitat: occupies a diverse range of habitats, including woodland; open forests and forest clearings; wooded watercourses, including along semi-arid riverine systems; farmland; parks; gardens; and orchards.

Geographic distribution: The Laughing Kookaburra occupies the entire Victorian state; the southeast of SA; all but the extreme northwest of NSW; and the eastern two-thirds of QLD, including the entire coastline and Far North. The Laughing Kookaburra was also introduced to WA, where it inhabits the southwest; and to Tasmania, including King, and Flinders, Islands. It was also introduced to New Zealand.

Breeding: The Laughing Kookaburra nests in tree hollows, and arboreal termite mounds. More obscure nesting options may include haystacks and walls. Above all else, though, large, old, hollow-bearing trees are desirable to support breeding success. Within the chosen cavity, the nest tends to be bare and unlined. Each clutch numbers 2-4 eggs. Egg incubation is carried out by the female or both parents. 'Helpers', which are mature offspring from 1-2 years prior, remain in the parents' territory to support them with raising the latest brood.

Identifying sexes, different ages: Laughing Kookaburras are largely sexually monomorphic (i.e. both sexes look the same), but breeding males will develop a blue 'flush' on their rump/lower back. Juveniles have a dark lower mandible/bill, whereas adults have the two-toned bill where the lower mandible is pale. Additionally, juveniles have fine, brown scalloping of the breast/upper belly.

How are Laughing Kookaburras faring? Official conservation status reads well: the entire population is listed as 'Least Concern' (LC), with a population trend of 'Stable', while in each of the states it occupies, Laughing Kookaburra is listed as 'Secure'. However, anecdotal consensus among local birding hobbyist groups suggests Laughing Kookaburras may be in decline, particularly in suburban settings. Many agree that in said settings, Laughing Kookaburra is not quite as commonly-encountered as it was previously. Research concerned with this anecdotal consensus is emerging, and more will be needed to better understand Laughing Kookaburra population trends, threatening processes, etc. Two targeted conservation measures spring to mind: 1) better protection of large, old trees; and 2) raising awareness of the dangers posed by secondary rodenticide poisoning (i.e. when predators get poisoned from eating poisoned rodents). On that matter, homeowners would be advised to consider alternative methods of rodent control; and when poisoned rodents are found deceased, it is recommended the carcass be double-bagged and binned to minimise risk to scavengers.

Next time you wander through Woookarung Regional Park, or another local forest patch or farm, when you next see or hear a Laughing Kookaburra, maybe now you'll have a deeper appreciation of the surprise packet that is the Laughing Jackass!

Author note: FoCC Committee member and co-admin of FoCC's Facebook and webpage, Joel Ellis is the resident bird nerd, amateur Powerful Owl researcher, and editor of FoCC's (co-funded) 'Indigenous [Species] of Southern Ballarat' brochure series. Joel has studied birds up to Honours degree level, interns as an ecological consultant (ornithologist), and is a member of BirdLife Australia (Ballarat branch).

6. Koala sightings

October to March is Koala breeding season and peak sightings time.

If you see, hear or find scat from a Koala, please send the information containing the when, where, and how to:

focinfo@gmail.com.

Images are gold.



Near Lavery Avenue Mt Clear. Image: Courtesy of Rex, 23rd September 2023



Cnr Boundary Rd and Greenhill Rd Mt Clear. Image courtesy of Calvin, 28th October 2023.

7. "Koala Counter" App

CSIRO has developed a 'Koala Counter' App as part of the National Koala Monitoring Program (NKMP). (Note: 'Koala Counter' is the most current CSIRO App – not to be confused with others of similar name.)

The app is available at:

<https://apps.apple.com/au/app/nkmp-koalacounter/id6444713649>

It has been designed to provide more information than just seeing a koala.

Part of its purpose is to find out where there are no koalas. It asks users to describe quality of habitat and other info, using simple drop-down menus. It automatically records precise location co-ordinates. The information you provide is useful to CSIRO even when there are no koalas counted.

The App won't be too difficult to use once the basics are mastered, and is available now, free through the App Store. Some familiarity with it before 'going out bush' is recommended. It is quite straightforward to do a 'single' transect, and complete using the easy drop-down menus.

Total of FoCC Citizen Science Koala Count is now 300.

8. Seniors Festival

The FoCC held a stall at the recent Ballarat Seniors Festival held at Alfredton Recreation Reserve.



Jeff, Tarn and Bob at the stall, 4th October 2023.

9. Park works

Tree damage at the Dementia trail. Building shelters in the park seems like fun, but the effects can be around for a long time.



Parks Victoria sign at the site of the tree damage. Image: 8th October 2023.



Tree bark stripping damage. 30th September 2023.

10. Spikey

Echidna have been busy digging in the park. Particularly in the ex-plantation areas which is heartening.



Richards St vicinity Canadian. Image courtesy of Darcy and Glen, 6th October 2023

11. Great Australian Backyard Bird Count 16th to 22nd October 2023



All across Ballarat many people counted the birds in Ballarat backyards. Results are not yet available.

12. Snakes and lizards are out

This copperhead was quietly making its way along the edge of the footpath beside the Recreation Rd Bushland Reserve. Snakes are protected. If sighted please move away. Other sightings have been along Dozed Rd and Wilson St.



20th October 2023



A Lizard sunning itself on Wilson St. It took a leafy branch to move it to safety off the road. 28th October 2023

13. FoCC 7th Annual General Meeting

The FoCC will hold the 7th Annual General Meeting at the Buninyong Community House, 407 Warrenheip St Buninyong at 7pm Wednesday 1st November. The agenda will include guest speaker, annual reports and election of office bearers. Members wishing to nominate for the FoCC committee should contact the Secretary at focinfo@gmail.com for a nomination form.

14. Rubbish dumpers, thieves and vandals

The FoCC encourages Park friends to report track vandals, rubbish dumpers, wood thieves and other suspicious activity to Parks Victoria on 13 1963 or email: woovookarung@parks.vic.gov.au In emergency situations please call 000. If an offender is spotted, please note vehicle registration details as vehicle identification is most helpful, plus location and details.

15. Useful information

- Parks Victoria Woovookarung email address: woovookarung@parks.vic.gov.au

16. City of Ballarat wildlife information:

<https://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/me/pets-and-animals/wildlife>

- **DEECA wildlife issues reporting information** Report wildlife crime to Crime Stoppers Victoria on **1800 333 000**.

Report any wildlife at immediate risk of deliberate harm or neglect to **136 186**. Other matters relating to wildlife and wildlife management should use the **136 186** too.

The Help for Injured Wildlife tool will help you locate and contact the closest relevant wildlife carers and rescue and rehabilitation organisations to help the injured wildlife. The main point is for any matters related to wildlife crime, call Crime Stoppers.

17. FoCC Membership

Membership runs from 1st January to 31st December each year, Membership fee is \$20 per year. Children of members are free. New members after July are credited to the next year. Membership forms are [available online](#) or email focinfo@gmail.com

18. FoCC Facebook and web

The FoCC has well over 1100 friends following us on Facebook and growing. Welcome to all new friends. Feel free to pass on to other friends and press the like button. Rob is overseeing the webpage. webmaster@focc.asn.au

19. 2023 Calendar of events

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| October 29 – Nov 5 | 8th Annual Wildflower Walk. Starting at the Dementia Trail. |
| November 1 st | 7th Annual General Meeting |
| December 1 st | Drinks at the Lookout |

The FoCC Spikey News is published on behalf of the Friends of Canadian Corridor Incorporated, Registered No A0097535B. The purpose of "Spikey News" is to link the community to Woovookarung Regional Park and the Canadian Corridor.

The FoCC is a registered Landcare Group with Landcare Victoria Inc and a member of the Yarrowee Leigh Catchment Group. Circulation this issue is to ~~1126~~ 1131 subscribers. Welcome to all new friends.

The update is generally published monthly. Friends wishing to add articles to the FoCC update may do so by emailing focinfo@gmail.com Feel free to circulate widely including doctor's waiting rooms, work offices, friends and neighbours.

We are proud to walk this land with the Wadawurrung people and all other First Nations people. Any opinions expressed in the publications are made in by the editors in good faith and do not officially represent Parks Victoria or the FoCC.

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