



PENINSULA FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC.

Mornington Peninsula, Victoria, Australia

CELEBRATING 60 YEARS 1952-2012



The genesis of the Peninsula Field Naturalists Club lay in a notice placed in the Frankston Standard in May of 1952, sponsored by Frankston Rotary Club, calling a public meeting aimed at the formation of a junior branch of the Victorian Field Naturalists Club, for young people between 8

and 18 years of age.

Following this meeting on the fifth of June 1952, the Frankston Junior Field Naturalists Club was formed, with a provisional committee and Secretary in Mr Alan Spillane (see below). It was stated that “field rambles” would be the most interesting feature of the new club.

Even before the next meeting it was decided to open the club to people of all ages, and the name was amended to Frankston Field Naturalists Club.

Election of the first official committee took place at the next meeting in July 1952. This committee drew up the first Constitution for the Club, which was not amended until 1975. However the name was amended to Peninsula Field Naturalists Club in 1968.

The first President was Mr F.M. Smith, who held the post until 1957. The venue for meetings was at first the Mechanics Institute Hall; other venues have included the Temperance Society hall (Willard Hall) that once stood in Thompson St Frankston, the CWA hall, the former

Mr Alan Spillane

Alan was inaugural Secretary of the Club, from 1952 to 1956. After that he served on the committee from 1957 to 1963, was Editor of the newsletter from 1955 to 1962, vice president from 1958 to 1972, and President from 1973 to 1978. It is no wonder that he was made a Life Member in 1973, at the Club's 21st birthday celebrations.

His particular interests were the geology and archaeology of the Mornington Peninsula, Eucalypts and spiders, and he regularly spoke on these subjects at meetings, wrote articles for the newsletter on them, and led excursions, for example to the middens of the Mornington Peninsula.

He was a quiet gentleman, much respected and liked. His sister Shirley, with whom he lived, also held office in the Club. Alan died in June 2005, after suffering from Parkinsons Disease for some

years, and was much missed. At the June 2005 meeting, when we paid tribute to him, Mike Carter said that Alan had laid out his garden for him. - Judy Smart

Frankston Teachers College (now the Monash University campus), Frankston Technical College (now Chisholm), and church halls in High Street.

Meetings were held monthly, the meeting day varying from time to time but since 1977 meetings have been held on the second Wednesday of each month. Until 1959 members received individual meeting notices, but since then a yearly or, as at present, a half-yearly programme has been issued. Since 1960 a programme of excursions has also been published. - Lee Denis

[Major source: History of the Peninsula Field Naturalists Club 1952-1977, by Jean H Grey, in The Peninsula Naturalist No 12, October 1977]



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Office Bearers 1952-2012					
President		Secretary		Treasurer	
1952–57	Mr F. M. Smith	1952–56	Mr. Alan Spillane	1952–57	Mr S. J. Clough
1957	Mr E. J. Kent	1957–59	Mrs E. Wood	1960–78	Miss Florence Hosking
1958–59	Mr J. C. le Souef	1960–61	Mr E. J. Kent	1979–85	Mr. Philip Biencourt
1960–62	Mr R. Marriott	1962	Miss Lett	1985–94	Dr. Alan Rodwell
1963	Mrs E. Wood, Miss L. M. Noall	1963	Miss L. M. Noall	1994–96	Mrs. Joan Crockford
1964	Mr W. Ogden	1965–74	Mr Paddy Bulfin	1996–97	Miss Shirley Cowling
1965–73	Mr Owen. Dawson	1974–78	Mr. G. Jones	1997–2001	Mr. Robin Hill
1973–78	Mr. Alan Spillane	1978–84	Mrs. Irene Bounds	2001–05	Mrs Kate Rabl
1979–80	Mrs. Dorothy Johnstone	1983–89	Mrs. Alison Walker	2005–06	Mrs Pat Gomm
1980–84	Mr. Lou Davis	1989–93	Mrs. Kate Rabl	2006–12	Ms Doris Wiegert
1984–88	Mr. Owen Dawson	1993–96	Mrs. Judy Smart	2012–	Mrs Linda Edwards
1988–94	Mrs. Pauline Ferris	1996–97	Mrs. Brenda Saunders		
1994–96	Mrs. Alison Walker	1997–	Mrs. Judy Smart		
1996(briefly)	Mrs. Judy Smart				
1997–98	Mrs. Pauline Ferris				
1998–2005	Mrs. Gloria Dean				
2005–06	Mrs Bett Mitchell				
2006–	Mrs Pat Gomm				

Stanley Robert Mitchell

Stan Mitchell was one of the founders of the Club, and became its Patron. He spoke at the first meeting on Glaciers, and was a regular contributor to the Club newsletter, and speaker at meetings.

He was an ethnologist, mineralogist, metallurgist and businessman. He gained the Geologists' Expert's Certificate in 1911, and from there became an instructor at what is now RMIT, had his own business as a gold-assayer, and then as a refiner of precious metals, and subsequently established Mitchell's Abrasives, manufacturing sandpaper. He was honorary mineralogist (1931–63), honorary ethnologist (1949–63), and a trustee and treasurer (1945–54) of the National Museum of Victoria. He was also a founder and president of the Anthropological Society of Victoria. He belonged to a group of ethnologists and collectors with Baldwin Spencer who collected Aboriginal implements, and he wrote Stone Age Craftsmen in 1949, which was considered a pioneering work. During this time he made major collections of minerals and rocks and Aboriginal artefacts, which he kept at his Frankston home. After his death in 1963 the collection of minerals and rocks went to the Museum of Victoria, and the Aboriginal artefacts eventually to the National Museum in Canberra. He was President of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria in 1936, also co-founded the Hawthorn Field Naturalists Club, and received the Natural History Medallion in 1955.

He was married three times, and had 3 sons and 2 daughters, including Dr John Mitchell, also a member of our Club and a regular speaker until a few years ago. - Judy Smart

Information for this came from the Australian Dictionary of Biography and the National Museum Collectors and Collections website.

Owen Dawson

One of the major characters of the club was Owen Dawson. He was a real bushie, usually wearing his favourite overalls, with his hessian gunny bag over his shoulder, and with a fragrance of goats. He was a judge of Anglo Nubian goats for many years, and long after he stopped keeping them retained the fragrance. He was not at all retiring, and loved to show off his knowledge, with reason, as he had an encyclopaedic knowledge of insects, birds, plants, marine life and fauna, and many other subjects too. He was a regular speaker, with his excellent slides, on subjects as diverse as case moths, frogs and their calls (no recording devices used – Owen did the calls himself), roaming around Western Australia, the Legume family (wattles, peas and cassias), banksias and many others. He led many excursions, which were always interesting and fun, and he made a list afterwards of what was seen.

He used to tell us about "his "native bee, named after himself, which I have forgotten the name of, but while looking for it I came across records of his contributions to entomology, especially in the 1940s, starting during his wartime service with the RAAF Radar at Onslow in Northern WA, and continuing after the war with collections of (new to science) reed bees (Exoneura) and Nomia australica from Clyde and the Dandenong area, in conjunction with Tarlton Rayment. He was President from 1965 to 1973, and 1984 to 1988, and made a Life Member in 1976.

He was very involved with Langwarrin Flora and Fauna Reserve, starting with the campaign to have the Langwarrin Military Reserve become a National Park, from the first meeting in 1976, and once this was achieved, being part of the Friends committee until he left Frankston. The Owen Dawson Walking Track was named in recognition of his long contribution, and pleased Owen greatly.

After his wife died Owen moved out to Nyora, and we saw less of him, but he hosted us at excursions out there regularly. He used to say cheerfully that all the Dawsons developed dementia at 80, and so it was with him. He made sure that we got his slide collection before he lost his faculties, and we show them at members' nights occasionally. He was the life of the Club, and greatly missed as he withdrew from it. He died August 2005. - Judy Smart

It was considered that “field rambles” would be the most interesting feature of the new club...

Then

On the occasion of the Club's 50th birthday, founding member **Florence Hosking** wrote down some reminiscences of field trips in earlier days.

Somers Camp School

Mr. Alan Reid was headmaster. A student had found a shark's egg on the beach. It was put in a tank in the school room and eventually Jackie the shark was hatched. It was quite a miracle to see this tiny shark swimming around the tank.

Foxey's Hangout

- where farmers hung the dead bodies of foxes shot on their properties, presumably to discourage other foxes. Nearby was the best sincline I've ever seen, part of a rock bank on the side of the road. Fairy martins flew about the area. Their mud nests looked just like bottles pushed sideways into the rocks with their necks sticking out.

Two Bays Road

There were few houses in those days. In the late winter the bank at the side of the road was a mass of red, white and pink heath and the area at the top was covered too. A seam of slate in one place contained clear fossils of ferns or leaves preserved in it over thousands of years.

In the Spring all of one side of Two Bays Road was like a beautiful wildflower garden. Orchids, varieties of Greenhoods, *Thelymitra* (sun orchids) several varieties, *Glossodia* (waxlip), Spider orchids, helmet

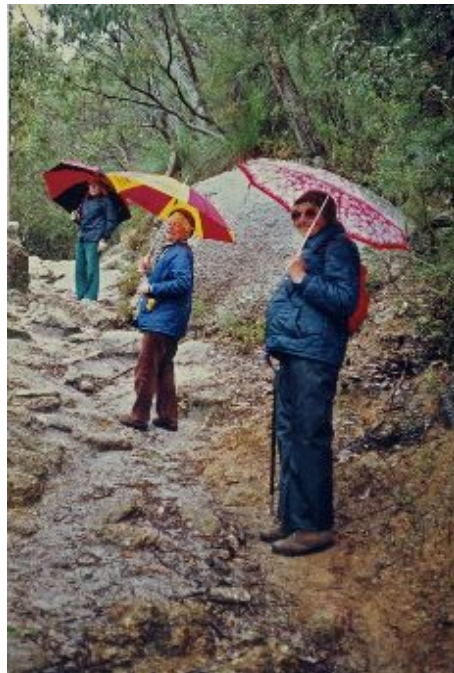
orchids, and so many varieties of wildflowers - milkmaids, blue stars, trigger plants and lots of maidenhair fern. It was so beautiful, you can't imagine. It is almost all gone now. From the Two Bays Road there is a lovely view of the Baxter flats where we used to see dozens of flame robins and white fronted chats. They are not there now though.

Rail Line Walk

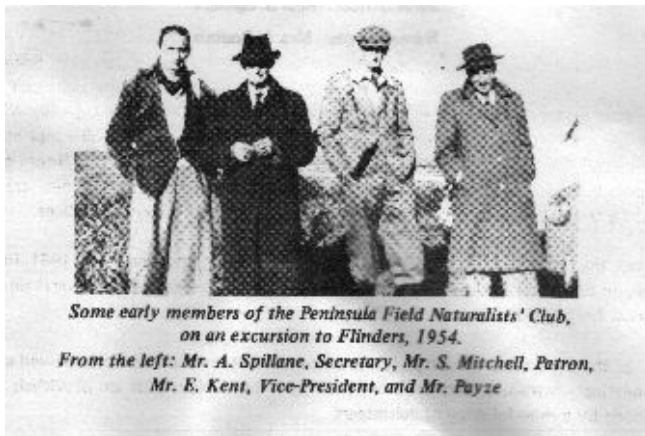
From Railway Bridge near the Catholic Church to Langwarrin Railway station. Near the bridge we found

Lyperanthus (Brown beaks) and *Prasophyllum* (leek orchid). They are all gone too. We walked by a lovely wall of coral fern further along the track and near Langwarrin station there was a most beautiful stand of wattle trees. Also near the Station was the loveliest patch of Purple Diuris. When it was known that the Railways had other plans for this spot, members of the FFNC got permission to move plants to the Langwarrin Reserve.

I could go on about Tubba Rubba, where we panned for gold, or looked for sapphires and zircons at Point Leo. When the 1st Frankston Brownies went to Heatherhill Rd Sanctuary to help clear up the teatrees, weeds and rubbish. Did you know that aboriginal artifacts had been found in Langwarrin Reserve? In those days whole families came on excursions. Mum, Dad, grandparents, down to quite small children. We did enjoy them.



Florence Hosking (foreground) on the Sealers Cove track at Wilsons Prom, October 1987



Some early members of the Peninsula Field Naturalists' Club, on an excursion to Flinders, 1954. From the left: Mr. A. Spillane, Secretary, Mr. S. Mitchell, Patron, Mr. E. Kent, Vice-President, and Mr. Payze



Quail Island, November 1996

And now

Excursions are still an important part of the Club's activities. Some of the favourite locations on the Peninsula include

Greens Bush

This is part of the Nepean National Park and has a variety of attractions, from birds and flowers in the spring and summer to fungi in the winter – it is also one of the favourite sites for the Victorian Field Naturalists Club Fungi Group.

Coolart

The water, and the birds, have returned to Coolart after the drought. Breeding Ibis, many kinds of Duck, Herons, Cormorants, Nankeen Night Herons – the list goes on. Then there are the bush birds – Tawny Frogmouths can often be seen, together with many kinds of Honeyeaters; Sacred Kingfishers, Whistlers and Red-browed Finches. With luck you can also see a Koala.

Woods Reserve

This reserve is a favourite spot to see birds, and also has many orchids in season. Wedge-tailed eagles have been known to nest there. Koalas, wallabies and kangaroos are also often seen.

Langwarrin Flora & Fauna Reserve

This is an important reserve on the outskirts of Frankston, where a multitude of birds, orchids, frogs, and native plants can be seen – or at least heard in the case of the frogs

The Club played a role in the preservation of this former army property; Alan Spillane represented the Club on the steering committee formed in 1977, which eventually led to the proclamation of the Reserve by the Cain government in 1985, and the formation of the Friends Group in 1988. This was the staging post for the Light Horse before embarkation to the Middle East in WWI; its use by the army was only occasional by the 1960s. A report in the *Standard* in 1960 carried suggestions that the land would be sold to the Housing Commission for a new housing development, however this never eventuated.

PFNC members who were prominent in the establishment of



Many of our members still participate in the Friends Group at Langwarrin FFR.

the Reserve include Owen Dawson, Grace Fraser, and Anne Read. Owen Dawson is commemorated there with the "Owen Dawson Walk".

Other places on the Peninsula include Pt Nepean; OT Dam, Eaton's Cutting and Seawinds/Waterfall Gully near Arthurs Seat; Seaford wetlands for birds; Cranbourne Botanic Gardens; The Briars at Mt Martha; Warrengine near Hastings; Mt Eliza Regional Park (aka Moorooduc Quarry); and Gordon Rolfe Reserve in Tyabb.

Further Afield

In recent times excursions have extended as far as Morwell NP, Wonthaggi, and Nyora to the east, and the You Yangs and Brisbane Ranges to the west.



Getting a closeup look at an orchid - Brisbane Ranges NP November 2011

The club also organised campouts in the early days, ranging as far as Mt Buffalo, Marlo, Wilsons Prom, The Otways and Rushworth.

In March 1985 the Club hosted the Field Naturalists Club Association, organising talks and excursions to Moodooduc Quarry, Sweetwater Creek, Shoreham, Flinders, Bushrangers Bay and Cape Schank.

In 2007 the Club held the SEANA spring campout at The Briars in Mt Martha. This campout was very successful, and will be repeated in March 2013 when we will hold the SEANA autumn campout at Merricks.



Owen Dawson gets in for a closer look at Langwarrin FFR

Florence Hosking

Along with her brother Perc, Florence Hosking was a founding member of Peninsula Field Naturalists Club in 1952 and made a life member in 1973. She was Club Secretary for 18 years from 1960-78. She particularly loved birds, native orchids and fossils.

Ms Hosking's family moved to Frankston when she was 10. She lived in the family home for the rest of her life. Her parents were the registrars of births, deaths and marriages for the Frankston area in the 1930s and kept all the records in a shed at the family home.

She served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force during World War II, was stationed at Victoria Barracks and rose to the rank of sergeant.

She was secretary to the principal at Frankston High School for 33 years, from 1948 until her retirement in 1981. She travelled the world in her holidays, visiting Russia in the '50s - one of her favourite places - and China in 1978.

On her daily early morning walk on Frankston beach she would collect washed up dead birds; storing unusual ones in her freezer until they could be sent to Melbourne Museum for identification. She involved her large extended family in the Field Naturalists and passed on her love of nature to her many nieces and nephews and their children. Ms Hosking often spoke sadly of the lost open spaces around Frankston of her youth and the many wildflowers and orchids that once grew there.

In retirement she did voluntary work at Frankston Hospital and collected aluminium cans from Frankston beach, the proceeds going to a children's cancer fund. When she was 80 she had a car accident which resulted in many broken bones. It seemed unlikely that she would survive and impossible to return to her home. But she was quietly determined to do so and after eight months' rehabilitation was able to return to her home where she lived for the rest of her life. - **Judy Smart**

Grace Fraser

Grace Fraser was a long time member of the Club, until her death in July 2010. She never held office in our Club, but dedicated herself to environmental campaigning in the local area.

Her career as a pioneering landscape architect in Victoria is covered in Anne Latreille's obituary. Parallel with this, and even more so after retirement, she was a tireless campaigner for the Mornington Peninsula environment. She campaigned for years to fight off the Frankston Marina, with Frankston Beach Association and with MEAFEC (Mt Eliza Association for Environmental Care) and her great friend Anne Read to create and enhance the Moorooduc Quarry Reserve, in which they worked towards an integrated Mt Eliza Regional Park, encompassing the Quarry Reserve, the Railway land, and Emil Madsen Reserve. She was involved with every local issue in Mt Eliza, her home, but also with Arthurs Seat, Kanook Creek, the campaign for Greens Bush, and with Langwarrin Flora and Fauna Reserve from the original committee, continuing on to the Friends group, of which she was an active member.

Grace would always come to our meetings, and report on local issues, and help at working bees, but she never came on excursions, saying that she had too many submissions to work on. She never became discouraged by the setbacks and the endless VCAT hearings, but doggedly kept on keeping on. She was still campaigning until a few years before her death. She was a great companion, always interested in everyone else's lives, and a lovely person. - **Judy Smart**

Anne Read

Anne Read was born in Scotland (and always retained her gentle Scottish burr) and moved to Australia in 1961, with her second husband Dickie and family of four children. She worked to save bushland from threatened development, then when it was reserved got to work on weeding, fencing, replanting and protecting, persuading councillors and council staff to provide the funds and staff time to look after these public assets.

The reserves she was most associated with were Paratea, Langwarrin Flora and Fauna Reserve, Lorna's Triangle, Green's Bush, Kunyung Rd beach cliffs and most of all, close to her home, the Moorooduc Quarry. This disused stone quarry was being wrecked by neglect and motor cyclists, but Anne, with the enthusiastic members of Mt Eliza Association for Environmental Care, saw the potential and campaigned at Frankston City Council to have it declared a Flora and Fauna Reserve in 1973. She organised working bees, grants and brochures, grew plants at home for replanting, and supervised gangs from the Office of Corrections Squad ("the naughty men" as she affectionately called them), to do the work of restoration there. Her grand plan, "Annie's pie in the sky", was for a Mt Eliza Regional Park, stretching from Wooralla Drive to Two Bays Road, encompassing Emil Madsen Reserve, the two closed tip sites, the quarry and Balcombe Creek.

In 1994 the Mt Eliza Regional Park was officially recognised, with the unveiling of two plaques, one commemorating the occasion up at the top lookout, and a second one at the entrance to the quarry stating "In recognition of the significant contribution of Anne Read whose vision for the Mt Eliza Regional Park became a reality". Sadly, due to ill health. Anne was not able to attend this celebration, and retired from her conservation work altogether soon after, to devote herself to caring for her ageing husband. She had become extremely knowledgeable on every aspect of the local environment, and was treated as an authority by many in local government and conservation organisations.. - **Judy Smart**



Club working bee at Mt Eliza Regional Park, July 2010

Peggy and Hartley Mitchell

Peggy and Hartley came to live on the Peninsula in the late 1950's. Peggy became interested in birdwatching around this time which led to an interest in indigenous flora. Hartley and Peggy joined the Peninsula Field Naturalists club in the early 1960's and soon became an integral part of the club.

Hartley together with Peter Chance was instrumental in ensuring that the Langwarrin Military Reserve was set aside as a reserve as it was earmarked for development. The Langwarrin Flora and Fauna Reserve is now an important refuge for flora and fauna on the Peninsula. Peggy started the monthly birding group in the early seventies and the first Monday of the month proved to be popular with members.

We used to get up to 25 members attending these outings and we always aimed for 40 species for the day. Sadly many of the once common birds are now locally extinct or rare.

Committee meetings were held at the Mitchell household as Hartley was on the committee for a number of years. A number of well known identities were present at these meetings including Paddy Bulfin, Owen Dawson, Alan Spillane and Florence Hosking. When the meetings moved to the Uniting Church in High Street Frankston Peggy for many years supplied the supper. She went out and bought plastic cups and tea and coffee and a jug to take to the meetings and then would take it home again to be washed ready for the next meeting. Peggy was made a life member for her services to the club.

Peggy now resides in a nursing home in Mt Eliza and at 91 years of age she still maintains an interest in the club and enjoys hearing news of club activities. - Bett Mitchell

Twenty-four years as a Field Nat

Soon after our family moved to Mt Eliza twenty four years ago I saw a notice in the local paper and went along to my first meeting. I was made very welcome and soon felt right at home, and thrilled to be among knowledgeable enthusiastic people, who were interested in flora like me, but also everything else - fauna, geology, fungi, insects and spiders, some of which I soon came to have an interest in. Twenty-four years later I am enjoying the companionship of like minded people as much as ever.

There are recollections of some of the club's past members and leading lights elsewhere in this newsletter, and when I started thinking about the last 10 years, since the club's 50th celebration, I became sad, thinking of all the wonderful people who have died in that time, but many others are still with us, such as Irene Bounds and Peggy Mitchell - both Life Members for their great contribution to the life of the Club - Alison Walker and Margaret Grice.

To go on excursions with many sets of eyes rather than just one, everyone with different interests, makes a destination come to life. At Coolart last month, on my own I would have spent 5 minutes in the bird hide, and not seen the Blue-billed Ducks and many other birds. One of the joys of joining the Club was discovering local treasures which I would not have known about otherwise, such as Rolfes Reserve, Studio Park, Crib Point, Eatons Cutting and many more. Other excursion highlights for me over the decades are Point Nepean, French Island, Cheetham Wetlands, the Dinosaur Dig at Inverloch, Wonthaggi Heathland, Nyora, the bird counts at Eastern Treatment Plant, and Quail Island

(we'll get back there one day! I have been saying that for years though.)

I am always astonished at our generous and unassuming friends of the Club – Mike Carter, who has spoken to us 15 times since 1978; Leon Costermans, who has spoken at least 8 times over that period, hosted us at the George Pentland Gardens for our 50th celebration, and does so much for the Frankston environment; Hans Brunner, a tireless campaigner for fauna; Gidja Walker; the late Tom Sault; and our many speakers, who are willing to travel and prepare to speak to us and share their enthusiasm, all for the gift of a pen. Another joy for me is going on the SEANA camps, meeting Field Nats from all over Victoria, and going to all their local treasures. These camps are so enjoyable that we have felt obliged to host two of them, one in 2007, and another one next March (all offers of assistance gratefully received). I am always embarrassed at the gaps in my knowledge (better described as chasms perhaps), but it is great to be constantly learning and challenged, and enjoying yourself at the same time. - **Judy Smart**

Editor's Note: A great deal of credit and thanks must go to the Club's long-serving Secretary, Judy Smart. Judy has held the post since 1997 (after earlier stints as both Secretary and President) and has ensured the (mostly) smooth running of Club activities, including organising speakers and excursions, and providing our link with the community - whilst still allowing it all to be an enjoyable pastime.

Judy's particular interest is in flora, and she is being somewhat modest about her level of expertise - perhaps judging herself against some of the experts she has written about in the preceding pages.

For her services to the Club, Judy was herself made a Life Member in 2006.



Judy Smart (centre) surveys the scene from Flinders Peak in the You Yangs, June 2010

Looking back - and forward

The second half of the 20th century saw enormous change in the world, with the advance of technology at an ever-increasing pace - the dominance of motor cars, and the subsequent creation of a vast road network to carry them, including the freeway; great advances in communications, including television, the telephone network, and the rise of the internet. And, of course, an enormous increase in the number of human beings populating the planet.

In Australia, the population more than doubled in that time; while the population of our part of the country increased by a factor of around eight. In the census of 1954, the population of Frankston and the Peninsula was 36,000; by the census of 2011 it had reached nearly 283,000. The Mornington Peninsula has changed vastly in that time, from a rural community at considerable distance from Melbourne to become virtually a suburb of Greater Melbourne. The huge tracts of native bush have largely fallen to housing and commercial developments.

<i>Population at Census</i>			
	1954	2011	Increase %
Australia	8,986,873	21,507,717	239
Victoria	2,452,341	5,354,040	218
Melbourne	1,524,111	3,999,980	262
Peninsula*	35,965	282,697	786

* 1954: Frankston & Hastings + Mornington + Flinders
 2011: City of Frankston + Shire of Mornington Peninsula
 Source: ABS website

This has had enormous consequences for the natural environment and the animals and plants that lived in it.

Florence Hosking, who lived through most of this change, looked back at the Club's 50th anniversary with some longing and regret for what has been lost, and a call to continue to fight the good fight to preserve what is left.

Winty Calder, in her *Peninsula Perspectives* (Jimangle Publications, 1986) says that "... the impact of European settlement has brought about rapid and extensive change to the vegetation of the Mornington Peninsula." and further "Very few people realise that there is no original 'bush' on the Peninsula, but that all the surviving forests, woodlands, scrubs and heaths are secondary or tertiary regrowth communities". Walking through our larger nature reserves anyone can see the remnants of the tree which had been logged in former days.

Calder also states that in 1969, only about 15% of the Peninsula land area carried near-natural stands of vegetation, reduced to 14% by 1986. At that time there were 6 large areas of remnant vegetation, representing about 7% of the area of the Peninsula. Most of these areas are now in reserves, thanks mostly to public pressure during the 1970s and later. These areas can be separated into two groups:

— land owned by the Commonwealth and used for military purposes, and for that reason largely allowed to retain native vegetation. Langwarrin Flora and Fauna Reserve, Point Nepean and Sandy Point (still occupied by the HMAS Cerberus naval base) all fall into this category, as does the nearby Cranbourne Botanic Gardens.

— land in private ownership, not cleared for various reasons (although logged and grazed) - Greens Bush, areas around Arthurs Seat, and Quail and Chinaman Island at the north end of Western Port Bay, fall into this category, as do smaller reserves such as Woods Reserve, Gordon Rolfe Reserve, The Briars and Coolart.

Quail Island has been a reserve since 1907, but all of the others mentioned have been reserved and protected in the lifetime of the Peninsula Field Naturalists Club, mostly in the 1970s and 80s. As mentioned above, the PFNC had a leading role in the formation of the Langwarrin FFR; it was also instrumental in the formation of Bunurong Reserve in Frankston and Mt Eliza Regional Park. All of these reserves were created due to public pressure, after proposals to clear the land for housing or other uses. Although politicians like to perform opening ceremonies and get their names on plaques, few if any of our reserves are due to the foresight of our elected representatives.

People join organisations like the Peninsula Field Naturalists Club for a variety of reasons, but what they all have in common is deriving pleasure from the natural environment. Some are content to learn at some remove, from attending talks and watching TV shows; for some it's all about getting out in the bush (or the seashore) with others of like mind, and learning about the plants and animals and their interactions. For some people activism is the most important function of a Club like ours. None of these is the single correct purpose, but it is difficult if you love the natural world to be unmoved by its destruction.

The increasing clearance of native bush for housing has meant that a number of native plants have become locally rare - for example the Rabbit's Ears Orchid, *Thelymitra antennifera*, the Club's insignia, which was chosen in 1962 because it was very common around Frankston, is now rarely seen there, although it can still be seen on the Peninsula. Kangaroos, wallabies, koalas, echidnas can all still be seen in our local area, but some of the smaller mammals are doing less well - for example the Southern Brown Bandicoot is apparently now extinct in the Pines following the construction of the new freeway.

In the Club newsletter *The Peninsula Naturalist* of August 1976, club members and noted birdos Peggy and Hartley Mitchell gave an "abridged list of birds of Mornington Peninsula, Phillip Island and Mud Island" which lists 117 birds. Of these, the Grey-crowned Babbler, Gang-gang Cockatoo, and perhaps Striated Fieldwren are rare or absent from the Peninsula; others are less common now than previously. On the other hand Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo and Crested Pigeon are not included on the list and are now common.

The lifetime of the PFNC, then, corresponds to a period of increasing interest in the conservation of the natural environment, or as close as we can now get to it. Despite increasing population pressure a large part of the remaining native vegetation of the Peninsula has been protected in proclaimed reserves in that time - but the sad fate of the Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve reminds us that nothing is permanent. There will always be pressure to bulldoze remaining areas of native vegetation, and the fauna it supports, for housing or ever more grandiose freeways. There are still significant natural areas on the Peninsula under threat - the fight for Tootgarook Swamp is just beginning; decisions made for the land surrounding the Devilbend and Frankston reservoirs, in the opinion of many, represent missed opportunities. A new era where everything (except grandiose freeways) is judged on economics, where

even National Parks are under threat because they are not being seen to pay their own way, may be upon us. The challenge remains. Nevertheless, there is reason for optimism. Much to enjoy remains, and attitudes have changed greatly in the past 60 years.

What makes a Club like ours enjoyable, above all, is the willingness to share what knowledge we have while being open to learning from others. Often the loss of our natural environment brings a feeling of sadness or anger, and we should not abandon the example of people like Anne Read, Grace Fraser, Owen Dawson, the Mitchells, Leon Costermans, Hans Brunner and many others who fought for the preservation of our remaining natural areas. However, we should not forget to enjoy those places. - **Lee Denis**



Looking forward...

Peninsula Field Naturalists Club Inc

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month with a field trip the following Saturday. Further information and current Programme of Activities can be found at our website.

President:
Mrs Pat Gomm
9789 8121

Treasurer:
Ms Linda Edwards
95846790

All correspondence to
Secretary
Mrs Judy Smart
51 Wimborne Ave
Mt Eliza 3930
mandjsmart@gmail.com

Annual Subs due July

Adult	\$20
Concession	\$15

Newsletter edited by Lee Denis

www.home.vicnet.net.au/~penfnc
