

ANNUAL REPORT for 2020/2021

The past year has been very different, although it started as usual with the 2020 AGM followed by our only face-to-face guest speaker for the 2020/21 year, Professor Susan Lawrence, whose talk on “Sludge – an Environmental History of the Gold Rush” revealed details of long term and continuing damage to our waterways. George Broadway stepped down as President after 3 years (his 4th stint in the role) and while the position of President remained vacant, Dianne Thomson was elected as Vice-President, Jenny Rolland as co-Editor with Noel Young to share the production of the newsletter, and Euan Moore as a general committee member. Geoff Harris continued as Treasurer, Peter Turner as Secretary, and Richard Piesse and George Broadway as general committee members. The next day saw our only excursion for the year, to the Botanical Gardens Nature Reserve, to hear from ecologist Karl Just about his ideas for the management plan he was preparing for Council – and to learn how many interesting plants are on the Reserve.

The April newsletter announced the cessation of our usual meetings, excursions and regular roadside cleanup sessions due to the Covid-19 restrictions, but since May we have held successful online meetings using Zoom, with good attendances including visitors from other clubs and groups. Euan Moore took us to the NZ sub-Antarctic islands in May; in June, Professor Phil Batterham described non-chemical solutions for controlling pest insects without damaging beneficial species. The importance of the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas, used by DELWP in planning controlled burns and other activities, was explained by Elizabeth Newton in July – we are now working towards using iNaturalist for reporting observations so relevant data can be forwarded to the VBA. In August Geoff Williams spoke about Platypus Conservation, while in September we were taken on a tour of Bhutan, learning about the amazing bird life and terrifying mountain roads from members Giles Daubeney and Nina Tsilikas. The final two speakers for 2020 covered contrasting approaches to restoring native species: Greg Kerr described the major effort, using large machines, to restore wetlands near Hamilton, while Noushka Reiter's work on conservation of threatened orchid species has involved challenging field, laboratory and glasshouse techniques. Ending the 2020/21 year, in February Peter Turner spoke about his 2018 trip to the Great Victoria Desert in WA – but the February excursion was a Covid casualty! A benefit of meeting online has been to hear from experts who may not normally be able to come to Castlemaine – we are grateful to all our guest speakers for contributing to a stimulating and informative program during 2020. Reports on all the presentations are available in the *Castlemaine Naturalist*.

While excursions no longer possible, members were active observers in backyards and nearby bush, as seen in the Observations reported online during our meetings, with Euan Moore's assistance in displaying them. The *Castlemaine Naturalist*, prepared on alternate months by Noel and Jenny, has been a highlight each month, with reports on talks, George's analyses of 1940's *Wildlife* magazine, and members' observations. Members' Night in December on Zoom was highly successful, with a range of reports. With the easing of restrictions in November, the scheduled roadside cleanup was possible – and filled many bags with rubbish. We ended the 2020 with a Covid safe picnic in the Botanical Gardens, followed by a walk led by George Broadway to view a selection of the significant trees.

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the death of Chris (Kit) Morris on 30th May 2020, aged 90. Kit and Helen came to Castlemaine in 2005, and Kit was an active member of the club and the committee for many

years. His contributions are summarised in the July newsletter. We miss his expertise on natural history, especially birds and his friendly advice.

The Council's weed control program benefits greatly through the dedicated work and expertise of Margaret Panter in identifying Needle Grass infestations on Council land. CFNC received \$5000 for 2020/21 for the contractor working with Margaret. Her team of volunteers, including CFNC members, continued the removal of Needle Grasses in the Botanical Gardens. The club has contributed to other conservation and environmental monitoring issues through support for the campaign against duck shooting, and inputs to the development of a management plan for Kalimna Park by Harley Douglas and the Dja Dja Wurrung team (as reported in the March 2020 newsletter). Members also assisted with monitoring Eltham Copper Butterfly populations in Kalimna. This year we hope to establish a long-term project to monitor the impacts of the controlled burn last year in Kalimna.

The committee has been supported in running the club through the dedicated work of Newsletter Distributer Geraldine Harris and Webmaster Ron Wescott. Geraldine also forwards emailed copies of the Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong FNC newsletters to interested members, and maintains the membership database. We have been updating sections of the CFNC website so Ron has been provided with changes as well as the monthly information about meetings. Recent improvements include Damian Kelly's revised Bird List, and Euan Moore's updates of the Butterfly pages. Frances Cincotta and Lesley Perkins have recently provided Ron with revisions to the *Castlemaine flora* web pages. Our thanks to all members who have assisted the committee in these ways.

While we will continue meeting online for the next few months, we can all hope that we can return to meeting at the Uniting Church room later in the year, as the vaccination program and continued safe practices reduce the risks. Meanwhile, our individual and group natural history observations support our well-being and appreciation of our surroundings, and if recorded suitably contribute to long term monitoring of changes - for better or worse – in our precious environment.

Peter Turner, Secretary

For the Committee

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.

**INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT
Financial Year 1/2/2020 to 31/1/2021**

			FY 2019	FY 2018	FY 2017	
OPENING BALANCE		9017	4874	4759	4479	
INCOME						NOTES
Memberships	1870		2210	2195	2060	a Funds for 2020/21
Interest received	75		127	119	65	
Donations	340		380	585	410	b Reduced by changing to Harris address
Needle Grass Project Grant	5000	a	5000	3000		
Other	0		2260		860	c We now report to ACNC which does not charge for annual reports
TOTAL		7285	9977	5899	3395	
EXPENDITURE						
Newsletter printing to 31/1/21	1283		1169	1369	1343	d Includes surplus of \$2212 from SEANA Meeting
newsletter postage/envelopes	388		300	488	428	
Meeting Room hire	48		330	330	330	
Speaker's expenses	0		50			
Zoom subs to 31/1/21	230					e Includes \$800 donations for flora database
PO Box Rental to 31/3/21	39	b	135	127	124	
Insurance to 31/6/21	206		253	235	181	
SEANA m'ship to 30/11/20	20		20	20	20	
Secondary College Awards	150		150	150	150	
Needle Grass Project contractor	5465		3053	3000		
Stationary	44			8		
Advert against duck shooting	200					
Annual Consumer Affairs fee	0	c		57	55	
Flora database costs	0		147		484	
Printing information leaflets	0		227			
TOTAL		8073	5834	5784	3115	
CLOSING BALANCE		8229	9017	4874	4759	