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Introduction

Laura Mumaw, Convenor

Welcome to the 30th anniversary of the Best Friend Award – a special edition of our regular newsletter. It is a remarkable achievement and we've updated our VEFN banner with a beautiful new design. The Victorian Environment Friends Network (VEFN) would like to recognise the incredible work that individuals undertake as volunteers in Friends Groups on the lands of the First Nation peoples. We thank them for caring for country for thousands of years before us. Caring and nurturing the environment is a passion for our 'Friends'.

Friends groups are made up of dedicated volunteers who give their time to foster the wellbeing of their special places and species, and introduce the community to them and volunteering. Hundreds of groups across the state nurture coastal sites, forest and bush, grasslands, watercourses, wetlands and indigenous plant and animal species from backyards to beyond.

The Victorian Environment Friends Network advocates for the common interests of all Friends groups in Victoria. The network supports Friends groups to share knowledge, goals, strengths and resources, and to build their collective capacity. The Best Friend Award is an opportunity to celebrate and promote the outstanding achievements of environmental volunteers and their groups.

www.friendsvic.org

"Our efforts may be local, they may not seem like much, but together they make a patchwork of care, and caring for country is everything"

– Laura Mumaw



Everything is interconnected in a network.
Photo: Richard Kelly

The Importance of Friend Groups

Geoff Durham's words from VNPA ParkWatch article 'Parks need Friends' in 2016 sum up the essence of Friend Groups:

"...A Friends group is an autonomous and independent group of volunteer supporters of an indigenous flora or fauna species, a conservation reserve or an area of scenic, historic, cultural or scientific interest. They are not paid in cash or kind, and they do things that would often not otherwise get done. Friends work with, not for, the management authority. The key is mutual respect and good communication. Friends groups are particularly significant as expressions of community support. Groups form out of community environmental consciousness and concern. They are a grassroots phenomenon, and the proliferation of groups has been remarkable, with hundreds now established. There is constant change, with new groups emerging and others fading away. A common complaint by groups is the lack of younger people. I think there is great potential for attracting retirees. The contribution of volunteers, particularly Friends groups, to conservation and parks in Victoria is enormous, perhaps incalculable..."



"The contribution of volunteers, particularly Friends groups, to conservation and parks in Victoria is enormous, perhaps incalculable."

– Geoff Durham

Geoff Durham at Wanderslore Sanctuary
Photo: supplied by Margaret Hunter

Environmental Achievement and Recognition

VEFN Secretary, Margaret Hunter, provided some highlights from the thirty years of recognizing and celebrating outstanding environmental achievement.

The first edition of the Friends Network News dated 1991, is an historical record of the early days of the then Victorian Friends Network. The newsletter was funded with financial support from the VNPA following a number of successful Friends Conferences in the 1980's. Editors of the newsletter have included Marion Taylor and Geoff Durham, Robert Bender and currently Stephen Derrick. Geoff Durham won a Best Friend Award in 2004 and received the first VEFN Lifetime Achievement Award in 2020. In 2020 we also celebrated our first Young Best Friend Award, Matilda Venn from Stawell, aged only 14 years old but already with many years experience in environmental volunteering.

The very first Best Friend award was an outcome of the Bacchus Marsh conference when a "special Best Friend Award" was given to Don Marsh, a founding member of the Friends of the Organ Pipes, for his contribution to the group. (Don Marsh died recently with a memorial service on 28 November 2021.)

The Award criteria established at this Conference was:

“To recognize any volunteer making an outstanding contribution through exceptional dedication as a Friend”. Another criterion for the award was “usually, but not necessarily [having] regular honorary involvement in the work of a Friends’ group over a period of at least 10 years”.

Recognition of the achievements of environment volunteers continues in 2021, thirty years on. In this 30th year of our awards, we take stock and celebrate the range of work the extraordinary volunteers who have received BFA awards have accomplished.

A Judge’s Observations

Janet Bolitho

Janet Bolitho, who has convened the Best Friend Award Judging Panel since 2016, provided some feedback on what she has observed over the years.

What characterises a Best Friend?

- **Best Friends** are respected by their peers and representatives of the management authorities with whom they work. Their advocacy is characterised by unstinting perseverance.
- **Best Friends** inspire others but seldom put themselves forward. They generate enthusiasm and momentum for projects. They also think of others – the morning tea, the lunchtime sandwich, the bowl of water for washing hands.
- **Best Friends** are as comfortable on their hands and knees weeding as writing grant applications and submissions.
- **Best Friends** are doers, not talkers, although they are persuasive advocates when their place is under threat. They readily share the knowledge accumulated over their long experience. **Best Friends** are multi-faceted people!
- **Best Friends** are held in high regard by their particular Friends of group.
- **Best Friends** require a minimum of ten years contribution but for many of our **Best Friends** it was many more years. Tireless dedication is the hallmark of the **Best Friend**.

What have Best Friends achieved?

It is the transformation that their work and dedication has brought about. *It was this, and it has become that* was a refrain through nominations. Neglected, weed infested places have become biodiversity havens. Through the efforts of **Best Friends**, parcels of land have been added for conservation purposes and places under threat have been fiercely, but respectfully, defended.

What changes have you seen to the Best Friend Award?

Over time, gentle changes have been made to the Awards. They now recognise that sometimes it is a power couple rather than an individual that are the **Best Friends**. An award for young people has been introduced. There is a new emphasis on succession and renewal. Application processes have been refined.

Judging the Best Friend Award has given me the opportunity, with colleagues, to have an overview of the exceptional work of the **Best Friends**. Victoria’s network of parks and reserves are all the better for their work.

“Best Friends are doers, not talkers, although they are persuasive advocates when their place is under threat.”

– Janet Bolitho



Photo: Friends of Kororoit Creek (with permission from Group)

Best Friend Award

– What are the criteria?

It can be a tough choice for those on the selection committee with some outstanding candidates working on worthwhile environmental projects. By using judging criteria, different aspects of each nomination can be assessed objectively. Awards are judged by an independent panel made up of a previous award winner, a representative of an agency with extensive use and support of Friends volunteers, and an experienced and

The nominee will have made an outstanding contribution under some or all the following criteria or equivalent activities:

- Support the group's **activities**.
- Form strong **relationships** and partnerships and/or advocate against threats for the protection and benefit of the park / reserve.
- Attract **funding** for the benefit of the reserve; through local fundraising, seeking support of corporates for events or through grants from government agencies.
- Show personal dedication and **leadership** qualities by supporting and encouraging the group to work towards its goals, sharing knowledge and mentoring members to take on various roles within the group.
- Support sustainability and **succession** planning for the group, e.g. introducing young people to the reserve or on the organising committee.
- Make a **personal** impact in improving ecological condition, protective works and/or visitor facilities in the reserve.

We all know many worthy people who work tirelessly to protect and preserve reserves, parklands, bushland and coastlines of Victoria. Why not nominate them for the Best Friend Award in 2022?

We are also considering the introduction of new awards, including for younger volunteers who may not have years of experience under their belts but nonetheless have achieved amazing things, and potentially for Friends groups themselves.

THIS YEAR'S WINNER

2021 Best Friend Award Winner – Nina Earl

Friends of Bradshaw Bushland Reserve

We wish to congratulate Nina Earl on her well-deserved award. Nina's Friend Group holds her in high regard for her knowledge and determination to protect the parcel of urban space that represents the original vegetation of the area.

Nina Earl has volunteered for the environment for more than 22 years. She has been a member of Friends of Bradshaw Bushland Reserve in Mordialloc since 1999, serving as vice president and is also active with Friends of Mordialloc Catchment in the Mordialloc Creek Reserve, Yammerbook Nature Reserve and Epsom Conservation Reserve.

Nina's advocacy is determined, respectful and effective. She was one of a group of people instrumental in Kingston Council purchasing a development site for a bushland reserve that was the last remaining patch of coastal vegetation in the area.

"The flora and fauna of this country is so rich and interesting, the landscape and prehistory too. The Mordialloc catchment was once a great wetland that rivalled Kakadu. I didn't grow up here, so the learning curve has been steep, but the opportunity to protect remnant vegetation and restore the original plant communities of the area is so rewarding," Nina said.

Nina has been resourceful in attracting funding to environmental projects. She produced an informative leaflet to invite sponsorship from 90 local businesses. In 2004 Nina successfully applied for a grant from the Mordialloc Village Committee to provide shelter and additional security for the Friends of Bradshaw Bushland Reserve's water tank pump.

Nina is highly regarded by her colleagues for her kindness, empathy and unwavering support. She has been an influential presence in Kingston – a champion for the local environment and for her community.

"... the opportunity to protect remnant vegetation and restore the original plant communities of the area is so rewarding..."

– Nina Earl



Nina Earl at Bradshaw Bushland Reserve.
Photo: supplied in nomination

Nina's Friend Group

Friends of Bradshaw Bushland Reserve

Bradshaw Bushland Reserve is located in Mordialloc and contains approximately 1.7 hectares of rare vegetation once typical of very large areas of the Melbourne sand belt. Originally known as Bradshaw Park, it was named after William Henry Bradshaw, a councillor of the City of Mordialloc from 1920 to 1931, which included a year-long stint as mayor in 1924. The reserve was used, at one stage, as a storage area and works depot by the Country Roads Board. It was neglected until 1972 when concerned locals decided to restore the site as a reserve for native plants and animals.

The reserve is now a sanctuary for many species of local native plants and animals, which the Friends continue to restore as an example of the original bushland. Being in the heart of the suburbs, it needs careful management and plenty of tender loving care from a strong Friends group. Bushcare Bees are held monthly every third Saturday of the month from 10am – 12 noon.

Lifetime Achievement Award

Geoff Durham

Maelor Himbury, a long-term member of the VEFN Committee and former Convener, gave the Lifetime Achievement Award speech about Geoff Durham. This is an abridged version:

Geoff Durham has a lifetime connection with the Wanderslore Sanctuary and worked with Constance Coleman (1903 – 1990) to save the area from highway expansion by the CRB back in 1973. He was the foundation member of the Friends of Wanderslore back in 1993. He has nourished communications and working relationships with members, committee and the community. He remains an active member and esteemed mentor of the Friends of Wanderslore.

Geoff's environmental credentials go back further being a member of the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) since 1959 and remains active despite having retired from conducting Walk, Talk and Gawk in 2019. In an article written by Don Garden about the VNPA's history, Geoff Durham was acknowledged as a solicitor who brought legal skills and an immense commitment to the VNPA over many years in such areas as bushwalking, Friends Groups, and the administration of national parks. He was President of the VNPA in the difficult years of 1978-81.

Geoff has been a member of many groups including the Friends of Wyperfield to which he has belonged for over 40 years and for which, in 2001, he authored a publication, Wyperfield Australia's First Mallee National Park.

Geoff's nomination for the Lifetime Achievement Award acknowledges his skills and knowledge that the VEFN has benefitted from. Geoff was actively involved in the creation of the VEFN and the active recruitment of Friend Groups to protect special places and species. He has continued for many years on the Friends Network Committee, many of those as editor of FriendsNET.



Geoff Durham speaking at a VNPA picnic in 2007
(Photo: Bernie Fox)

Young Person Best Friend Award

Matilda Venn

Project Platypus

Matilda was the first recipient of our Young Person Best Friend Award impressing judges with her curiosity about the environment and her ability to showcase it to others through talks and tours.

She first started taking an interest in the environment when she attended tree plant-outs for the land-care network Project Platypus with her parents. She was only 3 years old when she attended her first plant out. She has since attended many more, being involved in tree planting, land care, helping with lunches and working as part of a team.

When walking from her home to her school in Pomonal, Matilda started to notice the native orchids that bloomed in the area and became really interested in finding out more about these natural delights. She discovered that there were about 12 varieties of orchids that came out each year in her immediate area, so she started learning more about them. From there Matilda started taking her peers on orchid walks and telling them about her discoveries. By the time Matilda was 12, she started to take larger groups of people on tours to see the orchids as part of Pomonal Native Flower Show.

Stawell had a 'Biggest Science Experiment' program under the banner of the Wildlife Arts Museum of Australia earlier this year and Matilda took part, creating a survey to collect information about native orchid species, including numbers and locations that could be used to identify the impacts of a changing climate on the plants. Matilda and her father Matt developed an app on her phone to support the information she collected. "I wanted to see if the number of species all together would go up or down each year and see how the climate was affecting them," said Matilda.



Matilda displayed an interest in the environment from an early age. Photo: supplied with nomination

Matilda's Friend Group

Project Platypus

Project Platypus is a community-based Landcare network working in the Upper Wimmera Catchment supporting Landcare groups and landholders across the region to improve catchment health. They undertake a substantial amount of works including Landcare support, revegetation, protection of remnant vegetation, erosion control works, invasive plant and animal control, project management, hosting environmental and sustainable agriculture events and other environmental services.

<https://www.platypus.org.au/>

First Best Friend Award

Don Marsh (vale)

Friends of Organ Pipes National Park

<http://friendsoforganpipes.org.au/>

The August FriendsNET newsletter featured the much-valued contribution to environmental volunteering by the late Don Marsh who was one of the key founders of the first Friends Groups, Friends of Organ Pipes National Park, as well as the first recipient of the Best Friend Award in 1991.

In 1969 with two friends Don formed the Maribyrnong Valley Committee, lobbying politicians for protection of land in the west of Melbourne, which had almost none, eventually narrowing his focus to the Maribyrnong valley. When the Organ Pipes NP was gazetted in 1972, Don and his committee devoted their lives to the restoration of this very damaged area, forming one of Australia's first volunteer conservation groups, Friends of Organ Pipes (FOOP). Working as a team with the first national park ranger, Don organised working bees to clear rubbish and weeds from the site. He was a tireless letter-writer, to senior bureaucrats and politicians about protection of the park and its surrounds.

In those days the real expertise in bush regeneration was in volunteer groups rather than in the state bureaucracy. There were no models to guide the relationship between volunteer groups and parks public service, or to restoration of damaged areas. Don and close friends worked out what has become the standard model for operation of volunteer conservation groups, of which there are now over 1,000 in Victoria and many in other states.

Indeed, the Best Friend Award was created to honour his great contribution to conservation volunteering. Friends of Organ Pipes NP is still growing strong and celebrates 50 years from its founding next year.

First Friend Group Profile

Friends of Organ Pipes National Park

The Friends of Organ Pipes National Park (FOOPs) began in 1972 when the park was proclaimed due to its unique geological features. The land surrounding the Organ Pipes had been severely degraded over many years with weeds, rabbits and farm rubbish. Its transformation into a showpiece of restoration was undertaken by a remarkably dedicated bunch of people who have continued to repair and preserve this fragment of the Keilor Plains and its valleys to how it was 170 years ago.

Friends of Organ Pipes NP, the state's first volunteer conservation group and has been through several generations of leadership, most of whom earned their conservation credentials under the supervision and mentoring of Don Marsh.

More comprehensive information about the history of Friends of Organ Pipes National Park can be found on their website: <http://friendsoforganpipes.org.au/>



Carl Raynor (left), Barry Kemp (centre) and Don Marsh (right). All three have Best Friend Awards with Carl in 1998, Barry in 1993 and Don 1991 (the first ever recipient).
Photo: **Robert Bender**



Barry Kemp (left), Jack Lyale (2nd), Carl Raynor (3rd) and Don Marsh (right).
Photo: **Robert Bender**



Jack Lyale watering (left), Don Marsh, Alan Dash (local scoutmaster) and possibly his daughter (right).
Photo: **Robert Bender**

Urban Friend Group

Tony Flude (vale)

Westgate Biodiversity: Bili Nursery & Landcare

<https://westgatebiodiversity.org.au/>

Friend Groups are found in many different forms across Victoria. Urban Friend Groups indicate how much people love their local areas and communities, valuing the spaces that have once been deserted wastelands and creating special sanctuaries. Westgate Biodiversity and Bili Nursery demonstrate what can be achieved with vision and cooperation. This article celebrates one of our award winners.

This article was prepared by Janet Bolitho from an obituary by Rob Youl.

Tony Flude was a well-known leader, co-ordinator and worker with Friends of Westgate Park – now Westgate Biodiversity: Bili Nursery & Landcare. Over twenty years, the group has regenerated the 45 hectares of bushland on Parks Victoria land between Todd Road and the Yarra River at Fishermans Bend.

From the outset, Tony worked closely with Landcare Australia to host numerous corporate works teams. He mastered the art of corporate fund-raising. Exceptionally canny when it came to applying for grants, Tony launched and led a continuous fundraising campaign that generated more than \$1 million for the Park. The project was supported by a core group of volunteers, work-for-the-dole and disability support programs.

Tony was an outstanding comrade and a passionate, yet affable, community-minded environmentalist. He was a resolute advocate for the Park and defended any threat to it fiercely. His administrative and organizational skills were peerless. He was noted for his decency, efficiency, diligence and reliability. People warmed to him, and it was a pleasure to respond to his requests for support.

The onset of leukaemia curtailed many activities, but he continued to work at the park whenever he could, uncomplaining and as enthusiastic as ever. All who knew him felt a great loss, but none more so than his partner of 46 years, George Fotheringham, whose contribution to Westgate Park's development is equally admirable and with whom he shared the Best Friend Award in 2019. The group won Landcare Australia's National Urban Landcare Award in 2010.



Tony Flude (left) with
Race Mathews (Minister 1985)
and Lecki Ord.
Photo: provided by Janet Bolitho

Bushland Friend Group

Bernie Fox (vale)

Friends of Brisbane Ranges

<https://www.facebook.com/fobrnnp>

An abridged version from an article in the VNPA's ParkWatch about a true and inspirational Best Friend who left a legacy of protected land and ongoing scientific work to help protect special places and species.

Bernie was a great friend to the "Friends Groups" of Victoria, a man who contributed much to various conservation organisations around Victoria. Perhaps Bernie's most well-known contribution was that he campaigned tirelessly to have more than 1200 hectares of land added to the Brisbane Ranges National Park in Victoria.

Bernie played a major role in many conservation campaigns including protecting mallee flora and fauna, creating Point Nepean National Park and expanding Brisbane Ranges National Park.

He served as president of the Friends of Brisbane Ranges, the Victorian National Parks Association and the Victorian Mallefowl Recovery Group. He was on the committee of the Victorian Environmental Friends Network, distributing their quarterly newsletter.

Bernie inspired people of all ages from all backgrounds to get involved with nature conservation. He was a great friend of the Friends groups, and personally took part in hands-on activities such as tree-planting and track maintenance.

Bernie was instrumental in getting the Victorian National Parks Association's NatureWatch program established. This community volunteer-based biodiversity monitoring program is now a core element of the associations' work, bringing together scientists, land managers and community groups to design and carry out monitoring projects.

Bernie was always deeply generous in sharing his wisdom and knowledge with everyone. In recent years he focused on inspiring the next generation, supporting families and children to get involved and to become active members of their local Friends group.

His campaign work resulted in permanent protection for several important areas of land across the state, which will allow future generations to benefit and to enjoy the beauty and values of these areas.



Mallee Fowl
Illustration: **Robert Mancini**

Coastland Friend Group

Janet Stephens

ANGAIR

<https://www.angair.org.au/>

All types of environments require the helping hand of Friend Groups. Last Year, Janet Stephens was awarded the prestigious Best Friend Award for her work protecting the heathlands and woodlands of the Anglesea District.

Janet has been involved in many activities within ANGAIR for over 20 years, including developing strategies for group advancement and as co-editor of the newsletter. In 2013 Janet took over a leadership position by sharing responsibility to prepare, organise and supervise ANGAIR's Monday morning working bees. She has been the organiser in protecting a 200-hectare parcel of bushland, which is part of the Anglesea Heath, a listed community of the National Estate, directly north and east of Anglesea township. Janet has been very successful in obtaining Government grants since 2014 to remove environmental weeds and restore the natural vegetation. She has actively sought volunteer labour from school groups, corporate groups, and ANGAIR volunteers, to complete these projects. Janet has also been involved in plant propagation, seed collection, and other activities of ANGAIR's Indigenous Plant Centre. Janet's drive and motivation has had a lasting impact on the protection of flora and fauna in the Anglesea district.



Caring for the coastline around Anglesea and Aireys Inlet

Stream Friend Group

Geoff Mitchelmore

Friends of Lower Kororoit Creek

<http://www.folkc.com.au/Friends-Of-Lower-Kororoit-Creek>

Friend Groups often care for areas such as streams or creeks which require coordination between different authorities such as the local council, Parks Victoria or private land. Geoff Mitchelmore represents the spirit of liaison and connection between these entities to achieve remarkable transformation of degraded land into functioning ecosystems. Here's the abridged version of Geoff's work from FriendsNET.

Geoff has been an active member of the Friends of Lower Kororoit Creek for over 20 years and was the founding President of the group from 2001 to 2020. His areas of involvement include group awards and recognition, website development, community support roles, event and tree planting, and regional, government and land agency connections and liaison. Geoff has represented the **Friends of Lower**

Kororoit Creek on groups including the Melbourne Water Healthy Waterways Strategy, Westgate Tunnel group, and Waterways of the West. He has secured sponsorships and funds for the group. Recently a section of land has been planted with 50,000 trees turning wasteland into a community precinct. Geoff is recognised by the environment community as a resource. He is author of the book *Friends of Lower Kororoit Creek*, increasing understanding and appreciation of its history as part of the Kororoit Creek ecosystem.



The restored waterway is a testament to the work of Friends of Lower Kororoit Creek with Geoff's leadership.
Photo: **Geoff Mitchelmore**

Robert Bender OAM

Friends of Organ Pipes National Park

Being part of a Friends Group is a journey of connection to both places and people. In this article, Robert Bender describes his activities with Friend Groups and associated research projects.

In 1983, at age 37, I learned of the Friends of Organ Pipes and started joining working bees with my two children. In 1985 Don Marsh told me he wanted to retire from leading the group after 14 years and asked me to take over, which I saw as a near-impossible challenge – a rookie following a very articulate, knowledgeable and experienced leader.

I started a newsletter, continued bi-monthly for 20 years to 2005 and incorporated the group soon after. A 1988 fauna survey by Arthur Rylah researchers led to a proposal to set up bat roost boxes, so 10 were assembled and screwed to trees in April 1992. 2½ years later we got the first bats using them and commenced a box-monitoring project which still continues and has helped several Honours and PhD students with their research – it is the longest-running bat research project on planet Earth and now has records of 25,000 bat captures and many life histories of individual bats.

There was a major infestation of Prickly Pear at the park's north end, so after working bees, I'd cross the creek and spend a few hours hacking it out, which after 5 years left the whole slope pear-free, then it was re-grassed.

The Best Friend Award was created, for Don Marsh, in 1991. Mine was awarded 2003 – Organ Pipes has more Best Friends than any other park and is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. The OAM was awarded in 2019, mainly for conservation work but also for contribution to adoption law reform, as I had been president of Jigsaw, an adult adoptee advocacy group 1976 to 1981.

In 1994, I assembled a long series of articles about the park's flora, fauna and geology by Barry Kemp into a book on the Natural history of the Organ Pipes, and the following year assembled the many early reports of excursions and local flora and bird life into a book, then another on the People of the Organ Pipes – mostly interviews with early members, but several of people who used to live in the area in the 1920s and 1930s.



Superb Fairy Wren Photo: Richard Kelly

By 1996, I had moved to Ivanhoe and got interested in the very degraded Wilson Reserve on the north bank of the Yarra, formed a Friends group and began a process of monthly working bees – 307 by now – and monthly newsletters recording the transformation of the area. A monthly frog survey around three local billabongs and water-hazard ponds on the adjacent golf course commenced in Sept 1998 and still continues – 30,000 call records to date. And in August 2000 the first 8 bat boxes were set up on trees – by then the Organ Pipes bat project was a big success – the properties had both once been dairy farms with most trees removed for replacement by pasture grasses. We got our first bat Feb 2005 and began another monthly box-monitoring project, still continuing. Our most-captured bat was caught 64 times before dying in 2017 – she taught us much about the lives of microbats. The boxes have attracted six bat species but are dominated by one species: Gould's Wattled Bats.

<https://batboxes.wordpress.com/>

Fungimap was created by the State Herbarium mycologists in 1996 – FOWR has contributed hundreds of records of local fungi species to this project – a wonderful learning opportunity. And we have overseen about ten Scout Venturers undertaking Environment Badge projects towards Queen Scout status, and several Duke of Edinburgh Award students.

<https://fungimap.org.au/>

The group won a Sustainable Cities award in 2008 and was incorporated in 2013, so has functioned with a committee of four for the past eight years. It celebrated completion of 25 years restoration work this year. Many of the members have been continuously involved for decades but we recruit many new people each year.



Robert receiving the Sustainable Cities Award

Roll Call of Best Friend Award Winners

The name of every Best Friend Award Winner is printed onto our ceremonial banners. Each person has contributed to the preservation and protection of their Friend Group's place or species. The Banners are shown below

1991

Don Marsh
Friends of Organ Pipes

1992 na

1993

Bill Golding
Friends of the Great South West Walk

Barry Kemp
Friends of Organ Pipes

1994

Margaret Witherspoon
Friends of Blackburn Lake

1995

Gerry McKay
Friends of Gellibrand Hill

1996

Tom Burchell
Friends of the Brisbane Ranges National Park

1997

Carl Rayner
Friends of Organ Pipes

Sam Bruton
Friends of the Great South West Walk

1998

Des Quinn
Friends of French Island

1999

Elizabeth Doery
Friends of Wyperfeld National Park

Vivien Freshwater
Friends of Sherbrooke Forest

Eddie Kleingeerts
Friends of Bogong & Friends of Mt Buffalo National Park

2000 na

2001

Marshall Baillieu
Friends of Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne

Nola Haines
Friends of Brisbane Ranges National Park

Millie Howell
Friends of the Prom.

2002

John Munday
Ian Pratchett
Gladys Sweetten
John Sweetten
Friends of Woodlands Historic Homestead

2003

Robert Bender
Friends of Organ Pipes National Park

Jack Brooks
Friends of Mt Worth State Park

2004

Geoff Durham
Friends of Wyperfeld National Park

Max Sargent
Friends of Merri Creek

Marion Taylor
Friends of Coolart

2005

Zoe Hogg
Earthcare St Kilda

Judith Lewis
Lance Lewis
Friends of Brisbane Ranges National Park

Margaret Medley
Friends of French Island

2006

Doris Bevan
Friends of Sassafras Creek

Bill Goodall
Friends of The Point

Eric Mitchell
Friends of Braeside

2007

Sue Course

Darebin Parklands Association

Cyril Curtain

Friends of Brisbane Ranges National Park

Judy Douglas

Robert Reid

Friends of Werribee Gorge & Long Forest Mallee

Howard Hodgens

Marie Hodgens

Friends of Wattle Park

Graeme Hume

Friends of the Great South West Walk

Frances Overmars

Pinkerton Landcare and Environment Group

Alan Trevorrow

Friends of Nyerimilang

2008

Maelor Himbury

Robert Irvine

Friends of Organ Pipes National Park

2009

David Barr

Friends of Wilson Reserve

Ken Harris

Frinds of Morwell National Park

Geoff Lacey

Friends of French Isdland National Park

Wallace Mortimer

Friends of Wonnangatta Valley

2010

Margaret Graham

Friends of Bogong

Kevin Jones

Friends of the Organ Pipes National Park

Judith Rutherford

Friends of the Yarra

Ian Wheeler

Friends of the Maribyrnong Valley

Tony Woolford

Friends of Buckley Falls

2011

Eileen Collins

Friends of Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park

Jan Gillett

Friends of Edwards Point

2012

Phil Crohn

Friends of South Surrey Park

Alfred Klink

Ursula Klink

Friends of Kurth Kiln

Maureen Bond

Healesville Environment Watch

Peter Mauger

Friends of Hoddles Creek

2013

Max Ross

Friends of Mt Worth State Park

Noel Gross

Dudley Gross

Friends of Wright Forest

Rhonda Coffey

Friends of Barwon Bluff

2014

Dawn Kneen

Friends of Bogong

Bernie Fox

Friends of Brisbane Ranges

2015

Ann McGregor

Bruce McGregor

Friends of Merri Creek

Kay Johnston

Trevor Phillips

Friends of Gardiners Creek Valley

Morris Maxwell

Friends of Margaret Lewis Reserve

Les Smith

Friends of Little Desert

2016

Stanley Barker

Friends of Herring Island & Burke Road

Billabong CoM

Merrin Butler

Friends of Mt Worth State Park

Jane Hollands

Friends of Sassafras Creek

Terry Lane

Friends of Organ Pipes

Paul Strickland

Friends of Mt Worth State Park

2017

Jim Stranger

Friends of Tyers Park

2018

Judy Ingram

Friends of Maribyrnong Valley

Graeme Lorimer

Friends of Bungalook Conservation Reserves

Fiona Topolcsanyi

Friends of Ocean Grove Nature Reserve

2019

Joe Van Beek

Friends of Lake Tyers

Lorraine Ratcliffe

Friends of the Maribyrnong Valley Inc.

Tony Flude

George Fotheringham

Westgate Biodiversity: Bili Nursery and Landcare

2020

Barry Lingham

Friends of Ocean Grove Nature Reserve

Geoff Mitchellmore

Friends of Lower Kororoit Creek

Janet Stephens

ANGAIR

Sally Walker

Friends of Scotchman Creek and Valley Reserve

Tony Walker

Friends of Scotchman Creek and Valley Reserve

Matilda Venn (Young Person)

Project Platypus

2021

Nina Earl

Friends of Bradshaw Bushland Reserve

"... Friends are like a bag of liquorice allsorts because it takes all sorts to make a Friends Group! ..."

– Geoff Durham

Nominate a Best Friend in 2022

Perhaps you know of someone in your Friend Group is always going the extra mile or contributing without expecting acknowledgement or has been an inspiration to others. If they have provided years of dedication, inspiration and environmental work to your Friend Group, then they are eligible to be nominated for our Best Friend Award.

Nominations open early 2022



billardiera mutabilis.
Photo: Richard Kelly