

F O S B R NEWSLETTER

Friends of Sandy Bay Rivulet Inc.

Newsletter 16 — January 2012

FIELD DAY

"THE FISH IN OUR RIVULET" BY DR PETER DAVIES

SUNDAY 19TH FEBRUARY 2012

Meet at Overell St. (near RAW) at 10.00am. The group will then work its way down to Parliament St, Regent St and finish at Quayle St by a combination of car and foot.

Peter Davies is a freshwater ecologist working in both research and applied environmental problems. He lives in Sandy Bay and has conducted surveys of stream life in streams and rivers around Tasmania, including Sandy Bay Rivulet. His research group designed and built baffles to help native fish swim through concrete culverts, and organised their installation under the Parliament St and Regent Street road crossings, and has worked with the Hobart City Council to design restoration works for the stream beds below these crossings to further help the fish.

On the field day he will show us the various fish species in the rivulet and discuss the ecology and management the stream. A great event for adults and children.

WORKING BEES

Our Working Bees are generally held every second Sunday of each month, from 9.30 – 11.30 am, and we meet at the picnic table in Fitzroy Gardens nearest to the corner of Pillinger St and Fitzroy Crescent. If the weather is bad give our Secretary a call

Future dates are: 12th February, 11th March, and 8th April 2012:

If anyone can spare an occasional hour or two, please turn up and we will make you very welcome, and there are always different grades of work to do to suit different abilities. We have a comprehensive volunteer insurance which covers our community based activities.

WE NEED YOU !

Please support our community effort to look after the Sandy Bay Rivulet and its catchment by joining and, if possible, participating in our activities. We welcome new members, and the cost is ONLY \$10 per year. Your subscription helps us continue to our work and continue to inform the local community about rivulet issues through these Newsletters, which are distributed to local householders, and by Email to interested people and to Aldermen at the Hobart City Council.

The aim of the Friends of the Sandy Bay Rivulet is to conserve, restore, improve and celebrate the cultural, historical, social and environmental values of the rivulet and its immediate environs. It is a stream with a great history. It is also an important ecological corridor from the estuary to Mt Wellington

We work co-operatively with Hobart City Council, government agencies, industry, land owners, schools and the community in the interests of the area. We are part of the HCC's Adopt a Waterway program.

In particular we undertake through grant funding and working bees revegetation of the stream banks and the riparian zones. We also help gather and assess information on the ecology of the rivulet including the flora, fauna and water quality.

Please contact one of the committee for more details.

OFFICE BEARERS:

President	James Bowler
Secretary	Julia Greenhill
Treasurer	Beth Harnett
Committee	Patsy Jones Deb Maeder Penny Parrish Robert Rands
CHCA reps	Beth Harnett Jim Bowler Julia Greenhill
Public Officer	Julia Greenhill 62 341516 or juliafg@bigpond.com
Web site	www.fosbr.org.au
Web Manager	David Edwards



Spotted Pardalote or Diamond Bird taken by John Greenhill in the area

GABION WALL & FISHWAY

The HCC has undertaken work on stabilising the northern side of the rivulet bank at the Dignity St /Parliament St junction. This work was necessary due to the scouring of the bank during floods. We understand that the bank on the park side will be restored to its existing condition when work is completed and appropriate plantings will be carried out.

Work was also commenced on the rivulet bed downstream of the bridge. This is necessary to overcome the step caused by the bridge footing which hinders the movement of native fish up the stream. The HCC has prepared plans for the fishway however some difficulties were experienced in developing the flow patterns sought during construction and the work has been temporarily suspended pending further design consideration. This is pioneering work not previously attempted and we all hope for a favourable outcome.

Wings over the Rivulet

by Don Knowler

The hunting white goshawk carries on its wings the spirit and romance of the wild. There is no more fitting a symbol, or icon, for a degraded open space being returned to nature than the magnificent but elusive raptor.

The Sandy Bay Rivulet has been blessed in recent years by the arrival of the once rare goshawk to make the watercourse its own and it is possibly no coincidence that it has found a happy home there through the efforts of those who are endeavouring to return this overlooked and forgotten corner of Hobart to its natural state.

The pure-white goshawks, with fierce amber eye, and yellow beaks and talons, are mean and lean hunting machines and the small birds they prey on do not stand a chance.

The goshawk, though, is only part of the modern rivulet story. The rivulet and its banks is actually home to an amazing 74 recorded species of birds, and 23 mammals if the eight bat species found in Tasmania are taken into account.

Some of these birds are under threat in other parts of the state but the conservation of riparian vegetation and old-growth eucalypts along the watercourse ensures that they are given sanctuary within the confines of the urban environment.

The strong-billed honeyeater is a case in point. Declining and often hard to find in its wet-forest habitat, this lovely bird with a black-and-white striped head that is endemic to Tasmania is commonly found on the rivulet banks parallel to Waterworks Road and

Romilly Street.

Eleven of the 12 birds that are only found in Tasmania can all be seen along the rivulet banks, including the country's biggest member of the honeyeater family, the yellow wattlebird and a bird more associated with paddock and pasture, the Tasmanian native-hen.

It is birds of prey, however, that draw the attention of both bird-watcher and casual observer and a raptor some consider even more dramatic than the white goshawk can be heard at night along the rivulet, even along its more built-up and suburban reaches in Sandy Bay. It is the masked owl, the biggest member of the barn owl family which, like the strong-billed honeyeater, is struggling to maintain a foothold in the rest of the state.

I must confess that I have never seen the masked owl, I've only heard its eerie screams in the night, but the birds that do turn up from time to time, especially in my garden, which borders the rivulet close to the Romilly Street bridge, never fail to amaze and excite me.

I thought – having listed 56 species in 11 years – I had exhausted all possibilities but recently, while on the telephone in my kitchen, I looked out of the window to see the only Australian finch found in Tasmania, the beautiful firetail, perched in a yellow bank-sia.

Among other notable birds for the garden checklist are species usually found in wet forests like the olive

whistler and brush bronze-wing pigeon. But birds found in both wet and dry woodland birds also proliferate, like the golden whistler, the grey shrike-thrush and the grey fantail. My checklist also includes birds seen flying overhead, wedge-tailed eagles, peregrines and little falcons (or hobbys) among them.

Out of all the birds, though, the white goshawk (known as the grey goshawk on the mainland, where it does not attain a pure-white plumage) has to be my favourite.

Its fondness for raiding chicken coops saw it exterminated soon after European settlement but a more enlightened attitude towards wildlife in recent times has enabled it to return. Instead of shooting it when it perches on chicken runs, Hobart's citizens now merely place covers on the chicken-wire, so the goshawks can't see the chooks and move on.

The white goshawks of the rivulet - a pair have nested along its course in recent times – have forsaken chooks and now concentrate on hunting starlings. And they use the recently planted and conserved steam-side shrubs and bushes to spring ambushes on their unsuspecting victims.

Along with the meandering, leafy river course, the white goshawks have become an attraction in themselves in the years that the Friends of the Sandy Bay Rivulet has been operating. And the efforts and commitment of the Friends soar daily on the wings of this magnificent bird of prey

Don Knowler is very well known for his bird column in the Saturday Mercury.

He is also an author, having written a book about Central Park in New York, "The Falconer of Central Park."

Don gave up a career on the Fleet St newspaper, The Independent, in London to come to Australia with his Tasmanian wife. They both fell in love with their house because it was on the Sandy Bay Rivulet. The UK's loss is our gain.

