

# F O S B R NEWSLETTER

## Friends of Sandy Bay Rivulet Inc.

Newsletter 19 — Jan 2014

### From the President

We have had another successful year and achieved much with limited resources. I particularly thank Julia, Jim, Kate, Beth, Trish, Gabe, Penny, Lee and Ben who have all helped at times during the past year, and we appreciated the help of the CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS, who provided us with a day of work organised by NRM South. Also a thank you to Don Knowler for his support and the article overleaf.

Quayle Street: Our reed plantings for the spawning of the galaxias are going well, and it was pleasing that the Hobart City Council recently made more holes and planted them with reeds to help. We will maintain a watching brief over the proposed Battery Point Walkway to ensure the development does not compromise the Rivulet outlet

Parliament St. Park: The fish ladder at Parliament St has produced lots of interest and appears to be working well. Unfortunately the initial reed plantings in and along the ladder failed as they had not had time to settle in before being tested by the heavy rains and large volume flows.

Along the banks of the rivulet within Parliament Street Park, the Friends have also continued to plant and weed and we are now seeing some healthy growth of many of these shrubs and grasses. More and more are now managing without additional protection.

Fitzroy Gardens The site here is really starting to make progress. If you walk up into this area you will note a dramatic change with large and small ferns, many young trees and shrubs, and grasses beginning to establish themselves. Our challenge here is to keep ahead of the weeds!

The help of the conservation volunteers greatly extended the scope of planting along the pathway and we are delighted with the emerging effect. A previous weed infested embankment is slowly being transformed."

With the new year ahead we look forward to enjoying the beauty and quiet presence of our rivulet with all who have an interest in promoting its health and well being. We would be keen to hear from home owners along the rivulet who may be interested in planting rivulet sensitive plants near their homes.

*Regards from Deb Maeder*

### Working Bees

Our regular working bees are held every third Sunday of each month, from 9.30 – 11.30 am. We meet at the picnic table in Fitzroy Gardens nearest to the corner of Pillinger St and Fitzroy Crescent. If the weather is bad or it is a public holiday weekend please give our Secretary a call to check whether the meeting will go ahead.

Future planned dates are:

16th February, 16th March, 18th May, 15th June, 20th July, 17th August, 21st September, 19th October, 16th November, and 21st December 2014.

If you and/or your family 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. Indeed just come for a chat and to make your views on the future of the rivulet known. We have a comprehensive volunteer insurance which covers our community based activities.

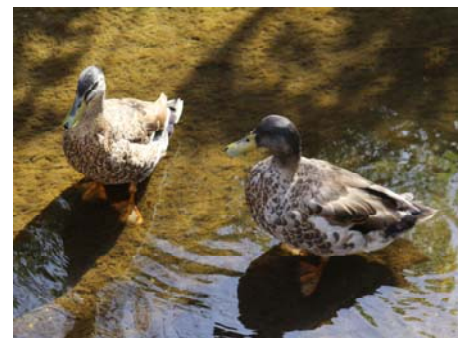
### Office Bearers:

President	Deb Maeder
Secretary	Julia Greenhill
Treasurer	Beth Harnett
Committee	James Bowler Patsy Jones Penny Parrish
CHCA reps	Beth Harnett James Bowler Julia Greenhill
Public Officer	Julia Greenhill 62 341516 or <a href="mailto:juliafg@bigpond.com">juliafg@bigpond.com</a>
Web site	<a href="http://www.fosbr.org.au">www.fosbr.org.au</a>
Web Manager	David Edwards

### Other Meetings

General meetings with speakers and field excursions are held when appropriate during the year, often at short notice. They are advertised where possible and open to everyone. Please let the Secretary know if you would like to be on the mailing list for any such events

Birds visiting our rivulet at Quayle St. See Don Knowler's article over page.



### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

To the Secretary,  
Friends of Sandy Bay Rivulet Inc,  
79 Queen St, Sandy Bay , 7005.

I wish to **apply/renew** my membership of the Friends of the Sandy Bay Rivulet Inc. I enclose \$10.00 **cheque/money order/cash**. My contact details are:

Name: .....

Address .....

.....

Email address: .....

Telephone number : .....

Date : .....

## *Birds of the Sandy Bay Rivulet by Don Knowler\**

A white-faced heron hunted galaxias in the Sandy Bay Rivulet, at the point where it crosses Errol Flynn Beach and merges with the Derwent River.

Jollytails, spotted mountain and climbing galaxias .... the heron was having a field day but I was less interested on this spring day in the natural history of the rivulet than its place in man's modern, and ancient, history.

Errol Flynn beach is dominated by a large artwork proclaiming "1909", the year the Tasmanian destined to become a Hollywood film legend was born in Hobart. A plaque with the art work tells beach users that Flynn lived nearby and attended Albuera Street Primary school just up the hill from the rivulet's winding course as it leaves the bay and snakes towards Mount Wellington.

No doubt he learned to swim at this very beach and I also like to think that a young swashbuckling Flynn would have explored the upper reaches of the rivulet, and revelled in the sights and sounds of its wonders to be found there. His father, after all, was a biology professor at the University of Tasmania.

It's a wonderful journey to the past to wander the streets adjoining the rivulet in Sandy Bay, and then join the course of the rivulet itself in the Waterworks Valley and on past the Waterworks Reserve and into the foothills of the mountain.

Did Flynn watch the hunting herons, as I did on this day. Did he see them stab in a flash at not only the small, silver galaxias but also bigger eels, and croaking brown froglets.

Flynn might be a Hollywood legend, an icon in the lexicon of the silver screen, but the rivulet has its place in a different kind of history, one far removed from popular culture.

It played its role in the development of one of the most significant scientific theories of the Victorian era, if not the most significant: that of evolution.

Charles Darwin on his five-year voyage of the Beagle called in at Hobart town in 1836 and used the course of the Sandy Bay Rivulet to travel to the summit of Mount Wellington. Darwin was not so much interested in living things at this time but in geology and was

fascinated by the structure of rocks dissected by the rivulet's winding path. The rocks, and the birds singing along the rivulet's course, were all part of the magical mix that would help Darwin later formulate his ideas.

The rivulet in its lower regions, those between the suburb of Dynnyrne and the coast, firmly belongs to man's modern world, and suburbia has tried to tame it and constrict it in the straitjacket of culvert. It shouts in protest during storms when it roars through the suburbs of Sandy Bay and Dynnyrne. It is only in the Waterworks Valley that the rivulet can be seen in its natural state, especially beyond the Waterworks Reserve where its riverine appearance would still be recognisable to the first humans to see its beauty, the Mouheneener and Nuenonne people of 40,000 years ago.

I'm a birdwatcher and for me it is the birds that tell the story of the rivulet, not just its ancient natural history but its character in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The bird song beyond the Errol Flynn Beach indicates we are in suburbia, with most of the sounds emanating from feral, introduced species: blackbird, starling, sparrow, goldfinch, greenfinch and laughing dove.

With luck in the lower reaches dramatic native birds will make an appearance, grey shrike-thrushes, butcherbirds and yellow wattlebirds, or even the white-faced heron.

At the Sandy Bay Road, where the rivulet slowly begins to break free of its chains of concrete culvert, common birds of the Australian environment make their impact: the pinging, metallic alarm call of new holland honeyeaters can be heard, along with the abrupt "egypt, egypt" of the crescent honeyeater.

The next bridge up from the Sandy Bay Road, the one on the Jersey Street cul-de-sac, reveals more native birds, superb fairy-wrens and grey fantails among them. Here the rivulet begins to show its natural state and it is clear that residents with properties bordering it have planted native vegetation along its banks. Viewed southwards from the narrow bridge, the stream bumbles between dolerite rocks, and honeyeaters bathe in rock pools sheltered by native grasses and shrubs.

It is on the stretches south of the Sandy Bay

Road that the work of the Friends of the Sandy Bay Rivulet, and supporting local residents whose properties border the brook, becomes evident, with saplings of gum and wattle sprouting up after each working bee.

The rivulet along these stretches has also been known to play host to platypus and, when it enters the Waterworks Valley beyond the Southern Outlet that crosses its reaches, mammals such as Bennett's wallabies, pademelons, potoroos and striped bandicoots, bush-tailed and ringtailed possums can be found. At night, the cries of boobook and masked owls ring out.

The calls and songs of the birds are the rivulet's connection to the past. Errol Flynn would have heard the raucous "song" of the yellow wattlebird; the angry grunt of the white-faced heron when it is forced to take flight by intruding children or dogs on the beach.

And when he walked the Huon packhorse trail that once followed the rivulet from Sandy Bay through the Waterworks Valley to below the Springs on the mountain, Darwin would have heard the nervous chatter of the green rosella and the chuckle of the yellow-throated honeyeater, Tasmanian species found nowhere else on earth.

The comical native-hens, strutting with tails thrusting into the air, would have crossed both Darwin's and Flynn's path, masked lapwings would have swooped if they came too near to nests and young.

The character and landscape of the stream, especially since Darwin's time, has changed dramatically, but the wildlife largely remains in place. Birds especially, because they are so obvious by sight and sound, are our living link with history and the Friends of the Sandy Bay Rivulet are not only preserving what's left of the precious waterway, but the birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and fish that, along with Homo sapiens, also make it their home.

*\* Don Knowler writes the On the Wing column for the Mercury and is also a member of the Friends of the Sandy Bay Rivulet. He has also just finished a book about roadkill, Riding the Devil's Highway, which is being published next year.*