

R.M.B. I405,
Jumbuk via YINNAR 3869.

I4th October, 1987.

Dear Members,

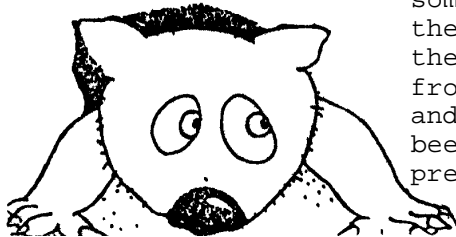
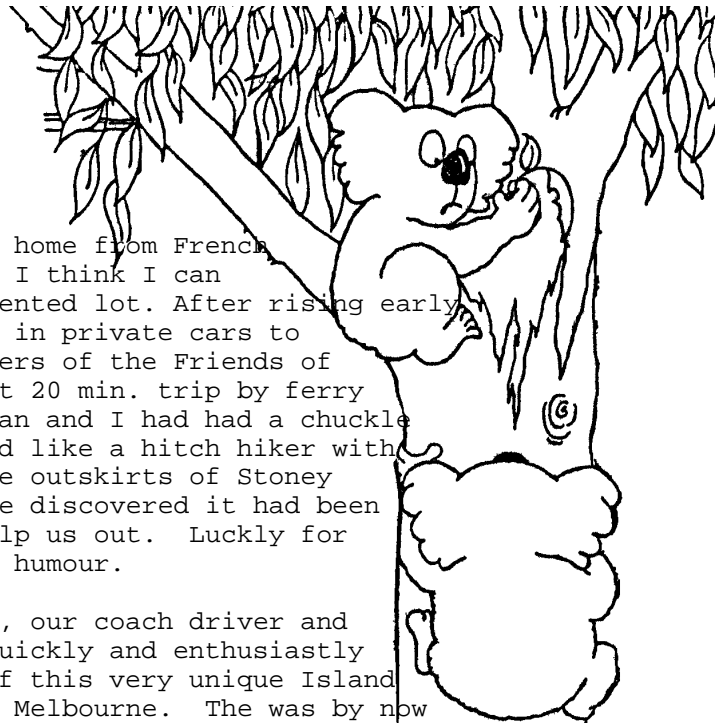
It was a weary group that travelled home from French Island on Saturday 10th October but I think I can safely say we were a happy and contented lot. After rising early and meeting at Morwell we travelled in private cars to Stoney Point where we met some members of the Friends of French Island State Park. The short 20 min. trip by ferry to the Island was most pleasant. Ian and I had had a chuckle to ourselves when we saw what looked like a hitch hiker with a 'Morwell' destination board on the outskirts of Stoney Point. Oh the embarrassment when we discovered it had been non other than our host trying to help us out. Luckily for us he also has a very keen sense of humour.

Under the guidance of Des and Allan, our coach driver and friends group member we were very quickly and enthusiastically being shown some of the treasures of this very unique Island that is situated so close to urbane Melbourne. There was by now clearing and some wonderful views were to be had from several vantage points. The heathlands would have held the interest of many for hours but along with the mosquitoes lack of time were the only complaints. Perhaps I was a little intollerant of the mossies after chasing them for the past four months! The heathlands were past their best but still the teatrees made a splash of colour with the yellows of the wattles and peas adding their bit. A couple of their members are currently carrying out a detailed orchid survey and we benefited from their labours by viewing with ease orchids in flower. Their efforts are being rewarded with some amazing discoveries; we wish them well.

The birdlife is wonderful all over this island, from the water birds on the shoreline and in dams, to the heathland that was a constant chatter and all the way along the roads with both big and little birds taking advantage of the scrub lining the edges. We should now all be able to identify a swamp harrier; how many pairs we saw I must admit to loosing count. Well remembered will be the sea eagle, quietly having lunch near the bus while we stumbled over some interesting rocks beyond the point in an attempt to view this wonderful bird. The pair we viewed are currently nesting on the Island and great hopes are held that they will continue to do so and the area of land will be incorporated into the State Park.

Some very interesting facts were learned and I for one was amazed that the narrow channel of water has isolated this small land mass so well. There are no wombats, wallabies, possums, foxes, european rats or the disease clemidia. What it does have are many very healthy koalas, echidnas, potoroos, snakes, rabbits and cats by the thousands. The story was told of a trapper who a few years ago caught 180 cats in one night, that's a lot of bird hunters. Blue wrens and some finches are now not sighted where earlier this century they were reported to be numerous and breeding. Rabbits also are everywhere and we saw many hopping about even in day light - just shows what two pet rabbits left behind can do.

Over a very homely afternoon tea we had the present situation of land ownership and development plans explained to us. Perhaps some of us found some of the points difficult to follow but we all agreed the essence of the development would seriously effect the island and change it for the future. With guidelines from Des we plan to write to the appropriate authorities and voice our concerns. The friends group has already been involved in stating its case at an enquiry and it is preparing to do so again.



Well our day was all but over but one last stop on route to the ferry to see a family group of Koalas, and were we to be throughly delighted. There sitting just 3mts. from the ground was the most cutest, healthiest mother and ½ grown baby I have ever seen and judging by the reaction of others they felt like wise. The cameras clicked and Ruth moaned, yes she had no film left, a great shame. It was easy to find other koalas scattered in the trees and the excitement was just as great for each. Allan's way of talking to them and their response was lovely to witness.

Well onto the ferry and into cars to head home, my son who can be hard to please was rapt, a truly lovely day among friends. I extend a big thankyou to all on French Island who made our stay so delightful and giving us a fascinating glimps of the beauty and treasure of this wonderful place. An invitation has been extended to the Friends of French Island and hopefully we will see them early next year.

Now to more mundane matters, I am again home from our travels of which the whole Aplin family throughly enjoyed and we are slowly getting back into routine. The next meeting of the group will be on SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8th at 1.30 pm. in the park picnic area. We will be continuing our Koala survey so don't forget your binoculars; our trees are a little taller than on French Island!

We received a letter bringing to our attention the proposed rezoning of large sections of Mathison Park, Churchill from 'Public Open Space' to 'Residential'. A few of us have discussed the matter and feel it would be a terrible loss to Churchill particularly when there is so much undeveloped land available. I am sending a letter off to the relevant ministers and authorities asking that the proposal be reconsidered. If anyone would like to know more please contact Gail or myself, every letter received will only strengthen the argument against the Housing Commission Plans.

Until our next meeting I wish you well and happy bushing.
Regards,

Yvonne.
Tel: 22 2597.

Yvonne Aplin