

The Trail Mail

Spring 2017

Work for Dole Project Adds New Fence to Bairnsdale Entrance

A new program in partnership with Mission Australia is based on a Work for the Dole arrangement, now carrying out several construction works on the trail.

The latest involves installing a traditional railways style white picket fence at the Bairnsdale entry. It replaces the original treated pine log and post fence from 1998 and will be a highly visible indicator of where visitors unfamiliar with the area can locate the start point.

And it highlights the rail trail to ALL traffic coming and going on the Princes Highway.



Michael Oxer

Update on Nicholson Platform Project.



Michael Oxer

This is not a railway station for trains but a representation of what was once a feature at Nicholson, a platform to receive goods and passengers using the link between Bairnsdale and Orbost. Built thanks to a special grant, it includes a substantial platform area next to the water drink point installed last year. The other very prominent feature is the fourth edition of the trail's small shelters. The bright red earth colour scheme is part of a dreamtime project adding Aboriginal motifs which eventually will link the full length of the trail as the other shelters get repainted. Further landscaping is being done at Nicholson to create a noteworthy stopping point for visitors.

WHAT'S INSIDE

New works at Nicholson and Bairnsdale

Future of the Rail Trail

Valuing Our Business Friends

New Home for the Old Fettler's Hut at Bruthen

The Spotted Pardalote

A Welcome Refuge

Early Train Drivers

The Trail Mail

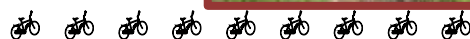
Spring 2017

A Fine Set of Steps - major effort of last Green Army team.

Another new addition to the Bairnsdale end is a flight of sturdy timber steps which replaces a rough short cut track down an embankment which was causing erosion and cutting across a recent revegetation area.

This was one of the last construction efforts by the last Green Army team. The trail has benefited significantly from the five teams which worked along the trail over the last two and half years.

Michael Oxer



Defining the Future of the East Gippsland Rail Trail.

On Monday 16th October a meeting was held at, hosted and facilitated by, DELWP (Bairnsdale) and included senior representatives from DELWP, the East Gippsland Shire, Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, Destination Gippsland, Friends of the EG Rail Trail, and RT Committee of Management.

The objective was to initiate development of a future framework for sustainable management of the rail trail.

Key outcomes of the meeting included:

1. An agreement to pursue development of a strategic business plan, which will be auspiced by the new EGRT committee of management when appointed, with direct assistance by DELWP and with participation by the Shire, and include wider community input.
2. Encouragement for the Friends Association's intention to obtain funding to carry out an economic review of the plan to rehabilitate the Snowy River Bridge (viaduct) for public use, as a necessary step to test the viability of applying for grants to carry out the necessary works for restoration.



The once decaying fettler hut which the CoM several years ago donated to the Bruthen community now stands proudly almost as a 'gateway' sentinel at the eastern end of town.

A great restoration job by volunteers with excellent assistance from the Shire. It has a companion in the former Police Horse Paddock lock-up also restored, as two historic structures from a bygone era.

Michael Oxer

The Trail Mail

Spring 2017

Information Signs on the Rail Trail - a Shire Project Taking Shape.

Thanks to a budget allocation by the Shire several years ago which helped deliver the extensive upgrades to the trail through the Bruthen town precinct, the balance is now being used to get better signs, especially at the eastern end where most of those installed in 2005/6 have weathered badly. (photo right)

distances to the next access point. One proposal is that use of a logo be discontinued in favour of just using the name as the primary identifying element for all new signs and promotion.

The project included a review of the whole trail and a report with recommendations, which are now being considered by the management committee. Essential information is to name all road crossings and indicate



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'Great property, large deck to sit on a watch the sun set. Excellent for dogs heaps of room to run and is totally fenced in. Rail trail a 3 min walk away and nice little general store close by.'

The fully furnished three bedroom house is set on 2 hectares of developing garden with a lock up garage for secure bike storage. The property is pet friendly, linen is provided and the house can be stocked with food if requested.

View local flora and fauna. Kangaroos, echidnas and wombats may cross your path or sea eagles fly overhead.



The Trail Mail

Spring 2017



Driving The Train



Train running crews - consisting of locomotive drivers and firemen, and later electric motormen - were the high profile members of the Victorian Railways Rolling Stock Branch.

Popular with passengers and train enthusiasts alike, locomotive drivers occupied a coveted position. However, to achieve that position they had often spent many years working their way up starting as young apprentices in the workshops.



It was a long day for the steam train drivers. They were expected to be at the engine shed at 4.00 a.m. to light the fire under the boiler and gradually get up the pressure of steam needed to drive the engine.

The morning trains left Orbost at 8.00 a.m. and travelled through to Nowa Nowa, the trip taking 1 hour and 15 minutes if there wasn't a stop. The crew then travelled a further 1¼ hours to Bruthen where there was a crew change.

The driver and the fireman waited at Bruthen for the incoming train from Bairnsdale and then took it over for the return trip to Orbost.

Sometimes it would be as late as midday before the Orbost train left Bruthen and the crews got home to Orbost between 4.30 and 5.00 p.m.

Ref: *Orbost Historical Society Newsletters;*
Museum Victoria; engineersaustralia.org.au

Next Issue: Freight on the Line

In 1957, diesel locomotives replaced steam locomotives on the line.



In an interview with Don Johns, who drove the last train into Orbost on the morning of 21 August 1987, Don told May Leatch:

“You started off as a cleaner, then became a cleaner qualified to fire, then a fireman, then a fireman qualified to drive, then a driver. It was a lot of learning on the job. Some blokes did 6 to 8 weeks in a signalling school in Melbourne learning about signals.”

Don also noted that:

“Diesel driving was a lot more boring than steam. There was not so much to do because you only had to move the throttle up and down. Steam was more interesting. There were more people around. There was the driver and the fireman, and then when we pulled up at a station and clean the fire and take water etc, we'd interact with the station staff. That was all cut out when the diesels came. A lot of people lost their jobs then.”

Ron Hayward (**below left**), who drove the first diesel into Orbost, was there to see the end of an era on Friday 21 August 1987. The last train left at 4.45pm under the control of driver Bill Buckley (**below right**).



The Trail Mail

Spring 2017

A WELCOME REFUGE

The Bairnsdale U3A walking group has a cycling branch using the Rail Trail or associated quiet roads to suit those not confident in traffic. Last week we planned to be adventurous and travel Nowa Nowa to Burn Rd and return. Weather not looking great, but the Bairnsdale forecast for clearing showers gave us hope for a suitable day.

The showers has obviously cleared eastwards, at Nowa Nowa it didn't really look like the sort of weather to start a ride, however a group always gives courage.

We cycled along to the shelter at O'Grady's bridge-good to sit down, eat our snacks and convince ourselves the rain was easing. We pressed on.



Sue Peirce

Then surprise - another shelter has been built at Partelli's Crossing. This gave the opportunity for lunch, to shake ourselves off and watch the weather.



Rain still coming down -so we pulled the pin, turned around, put our heads down and agreed to meet at the O'Grady's shelter - seriously muddy bikes at this stage.

Shelters along a trail are always appreciated - but never more than when it's wet.

These are a great asset for our trail.

Back in Bairnsdale- home to light the fire and feel virtuous and thank the shelter makers.



TIM BULL
Member for Gippsland East

Proudly supporting
**Friends of East Gippsland
Rail Trail**

143 Main Street, Bairnsdale, 3875
5152 3491
tim.bull@parliament.vic.gov.au

Funded from Parliament's Electoral Office and Communications Budget



Sausages, salads, soft drink, bread provided.

Next Meeting

When: Sunday Dec 10. Meet at the jetty at 11 am and we can walk to the trail to view the new shelter at Nicholson - and the new walk linking trail and horse paddock planting.

Followed by BBQ at 12 with the meeting at 1pm.

Where : Nicholson Jetty

The Trail Mail

Spring 2017

SPOTTED PARDALOTE

Every Spring I wait and listen for the amazing song sung by the Spotted Pardalote. If I am lucky, I will hear it. And this year I have been lucky. I have both seen and heard it whilst riding on the East Gippsland Rail Trail.

The Spotted Pardalote is a tiny bird that is most often high in a eucalypt canopy, so it is more often detected by its characteristic call. The song of the Spotted Pardalote is a tinkling three or four note call seemingly repeated ad infinitum. The structure varies markedly around the country. Pairs also make soft, whistling “wheet-wheet” calls to one another throughout the day, which carry for quite a distance.



The wings, tail and head of the male are black and covered with small, distinct white spots. Males have a pale eyebrow, a yellow throat and a red rump. Females are similar but have less-distinct markings.

The spotted pardalote (*Pardalotus punctatus*) is one of the smallest of all Australian birds at 8 to 10 centimetres in length and weighing approximately 6 grams. It is also one of the most colourful and is sometimes known as the diamond bird or diamond sparrow.



Whilst it is moderately common along the east coast, the south-east, and the south-west corner of Australia, it is elusive and sightings are not common.

It is largely sedentary, but may undergo local seasonal movements away from higher elevations in autumn/winter.

The Spotted Pardalote forages on the foliage of trees for insects, especially psyllids (**see left**), and sugary exudates from leaves and psyllids.



The Trail Mail

Spring 2017

Spotted pardalotes breed between August or September to December or January—generally earlier in the year in northern parts of their range and later in southern areas. The Spotted Pardalote builds its nest in a long horizontal tunnel dug into the soil of creek banks, the embankments of railway cuttings, quarries or similar suitable sites, and sometimes they even excavate tunnels in rabbit burrows, or potted plants in gardens. The nest itself is spherical, made from strips of bark, and built in a chamber at the end of the tunnel.

Pairs breed once a year, producing a clutch of 3 to 4 round shiny white eggs 16 mm long by 13 mm. The eggs are incubated for 19 days until they hatch, with nestlings spending another 21 days in the nest.



nest hollow of the spotted pardalote

References:

Australian Birdsong - Graeme Chapman 2005 – 2016 Ornithogist

Birdlife Australia

Birds in Backyards

Wikipedia

Janice Preston



Spotted on the trail near Prestons Road Newemerella, this little echidna was happy to pose for a photograph.