



Friends of Ralph Illidge Sanctuary

Newsletter

JANUARY 2026

INCORPORATION No. A0039532W)

(ABN 87 326 610 054)

44 Halfords Road, Naringal East VIC 3277

*“Do not let all people say,
And say it to your shame,
That all around was beauty here,
Until the time you came.”*

Meeting and Working Bee: Sunday February 1st. Working bee to begin at 11am and committee meeting at 1pm.

Hello friends of Ralph Illidge Sanctuary,

Happy New Year and we hope you all had a safe and lovely Christmas.

Lots of news to share and we look forward to catching up again soon.

With all of the added tourists in the region lately, we have also had lots of visitors at the sanctuary. This is wonderful.

Unfortunately it has not translated in terms of donations and has led to trampling of important vegetation. We absolutely love

visitors and want people to be here and appreciate this very special piece of the world. We just hope to spread the message for people to stick to the tracks and also that everything we do is run by volunteers, so encourage the public to put even \$2 in the donation box. Emily Dillon from Trust for Nature is still in the process of organising a QR code specifically for the Friends group so online donations come directly to us instead of being distributed amongst all of Trust for Nature. In the meantime, a Go Fund Me page has been set up online which you are also encouraged to share.

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/protect-the-ralph-illidge-nature-sanctuary>

Our current priorities are insurance and vital maintenance so we can keep the sanctuary open to the public and open to volunteers to look after it.

Some of you may be aware we have had black-faced monarchs flying around the sanctuary! They are usually only seen east of Melbourne, around Gippsland and into NSW. Thanks to Perry Cho for the photographs and we hope other photographers and bird watchers can be respectful and stick to the tracks. We understand the excitement but we have seen endangered orchids trampled, so please watch your step and be quiet. As many will know, our adult Powerful Owls, more than 30 years old, were found shot at the end of last year. It was tragic and devastating for everyone and then such a surprise to spot a juvenile male Powerful Owl! We love that people are excited about that, but we think increased noise from people trying to find it, and people

going off tracks may have scared it off. We would love to see Powerful Owls at the sanctuary again and in the meantime, hope the little guy finds a mate for himself.

Similarly, we have had great coverage in *The Standard* due to a local photographer sharing photos of the birds with them, but there have been some discussions about whether this kind of coverage might be damaging. The increased number of photographers visiting to try and capture this birdlife has contributed to trampled vegetation, including some precious orchids (small sickled greenhood), and potentially scared the Powerful Owl away. We love having visitors and want people to appreciate and enjoy (and also donate so we can keep caring for the sanctuary!) but this topic may require some further discussion and consideration.

Last year, we contacted Trust for Nature about the need for surveillance cameras at the entrance of the property and a proper gate, boundary fencing repairs, signage for specific boundaries ie. “No admittance – Private Property” “No shooting – trespassers will be prosecuted”. The gate issue became even more apparent when the chain put up at the entrance on a Total Fire Ban day was removed and people entered the property illegally. We look forward to a response on this.

We are also waiting to hear from Trust For Nature about urgent building maintenance issues ie. Septic system, powerboard replacement and gutter eaves and roof replacement

We were very excited to have special guest, Pluto, a taxidermy platypus from the South-West Victorian region, that has now been

gifted to the sanctuary for display. He was sent back to Trust For Nature for some TLC and we eagerly await his return.

Deer continue to destroy the sanctuary and the extension, spreading noxious weeds, ringbarking trees, flattening vegetation. We are awaiting a response from the TFN Board of Directors to make decisions regarding vermin control across the state. Many foxes and cats have also been sighted and photographed at the sanctuary. It would be sad to see more species such as the potoroo, southern brown bandicoot, mallee fowl and rufus bristlebird perish or become more scarce due to inability to control these invasive species and the damage they cause.

We have closed the sanctuary on Total Fire Ban and Catastrophic Fire Ban Days. Please share safety messages with the community. We also recommended that on ANY day, visit the sanctuary with another person and carry a phone that has reception.

A huge warm welcome to our two new members Donna Crebin and Wilma Trew. We look forward to connecting with existing and new members in 2026!

We will have a working bee and meeting on February 1st. We will work on track maintenance at the working bee so please dress accordingly, bring gloves and secateurs.

We would also like to extend a special thank you to Emily Dillon from Trust for Nature for her dedication and advocacy for the sanctuary in 2025 and we look forward to working with her in the future! .

If you have anything you would like to share or messages you want to send, please connect to our new Facebook site!

<https://www.facebook.com/share/1BE4TxDD2p/>

Please enjoy looking at the attached photos to this newsletter, generously provided by Perry Cho.

HOPE TO SEE YOU ALL AT THE WORKING BEE!

**BECOME A MEMBER OF THE FRIENDS OF RALPH
ILLIDGE SANCTUARY INC.**

The group meets at the Sanctuary on the third Sunday of each month from 11am to work on special care projects. Everyone is welcome to attend these activities. You do not need to have any special skills or interest to be involved and the time you spend is up to you.

Memberships contribute to the support of the Friends Group in many ways, such as purchase of maintenance tools, production of printed information, materials for special projects such as signs and many other activities. Your membership and support provides protection for wildlife, flora, fungi and so people can continue to visit this very special sanctuary.

'FORIS' Membership Fees

Family \$50 Single \$30

You can become a member by contacting a committee member, coming along to a working bee, emailing illidgesanctuary@hotmail.com , filling in a form at the sanctuary and placing it in the donation box or paying online.

Please pay online with your name on the transaction and ensure you email or call one of our committee members to ensure you receive our newsletter and any other benefits.

BSB 063 533 Acc 00904081

President	Vice President	Treasurer	Secretary	Newsletter/social media
Phillip Baulch	John Keogh	Kerrie Smith	Georgina Bedford	Amy Marshall
0497388635	0427662340	0408037355	0428536828	0431769417

GROUP STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

1/ Under the direction of the Trust of Nature, to be responsible for the management of the Ralph Illidge Sanctuary.

2/ To provide opportunities for members of the public to become involved with the Ralph Illidge Sanctuary.