

Parks Victoria Wilsons Prom Post Bushfires Return Famil

Early in November, Parks Victoria organised a famil to Wilsons Prom post February bushfires. This was a return famil after an earlier trip was conducted in March. The aim of the famil was to educate the tourism industry on the effects of the catastrophic fires and show how the park has regenerated.

This was my first trip to the prom for about 15 years after camping down to Tidal River for many years with my mum and dad.

The main take away message from the trip was that there are definite positive and negative effects of fire. The negative effects are well known:

- loss of life
- loss of infrastructure
- economic impact
- loss of business

The positive effects of fire on our natural environment though are lesser known. Unfortunately fire is a natural part of our environment with many native species relying on fire to reproduce.

One of the plant species that has responded so well after the fires are the Grass Bushes. The Grass Bushes were one of the first plant species to start rejuvenating after the fires and now, 7 months down the track, they have started flowering. This only occurs after a significant disturbance, such as fire. The sight of all these grass bushes flowering was really unexpected and beautiful.



Grass Bush 30 March 2009



Flowering Grass Bush 11 November 2009

Another plant species that responds well after fire are the Spider Orchids. Again, Spider Orchids only flower after a significant disturbance. Before the fires went through the Prom in February it was thought that there were only 30 Spider Orchids in the park. After the fires, a further survey found 400 Spider Orchids were present. Wilsons Prom is now considered a significant sight for this Orchid.

Fire also helps to:

- reduce monoculture ecosystems, therefore increasing diversification within the park
- provides an opportunity to control pest and weeds more effectively without the dense foliage
- opportunity to survey the land for further culturally diverse spots from both Aboriginal and White Settlement

Wilson's Prom was 'lucky' this year. Majority of the fire burned through north of the park and stayed clear of the developed Tidal River, resulting in reduced damage to infrastructure. Of all the walking tracks within the park only a couple of tracks or parts of tracks will be closed at Christmas, with almost all open early into the New Year.

The family down to Wilson's Prom was a real eye opener highlighting both the positive and negative effects of fire. Wilson's Prom still brandishes the visible scars of the February fires but the park is truly ready for the upcoming busy period. Time to take my family down to the park to enjoy and experience Wilson's Prom as I did as a child.