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| **SPEAKER** | **TOPIC** |
| **Dr Amy​ Coetsee-** **Threatened Species Biologist****Zoos Victoria** | **Biography** As a child in the UK, Dr Amy Coetsee dreamed of a career in conservation. But she never imagined she’d grow up to research octopus saliva. After having studied this unlikely topic for her Bachelor of Zoology (Honours) at Aberdeen University, Amy travelled to Australia. Falling in love with the country, she decided to stay and undertake a PhD at the University of Melbourne on the reintroduction biology of the Eastern Barred Bandicoot, a species classified as extinct in the wild. Today, Amy is a Threatened Species Biologist at Zoos Victoria, where she continues her work on the Eastern Barred Bandicoot. Focussing on habitat requirements, threat mitigation and island releases, Amy’s work has contributed to this marsupial being well on its way to recovery. In case you hadn’t guessed, Amy is passionate about conservation. She has published 13 scientific papers and actively engages communities to care for threatened species and fight their extinction. One of 60 Superstars of STEM, Amy works to inspire everyone to uphold Zoos Victoria’s commitment that no Victorian terrestrial vertebrate species will go extinct. A busy mum of two, Amy finds calmness in the glorious chaos on daily walks through scenic places with her dog. STEM is an approach to learning and development that integrates the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. **Presentation Brief** When the Christmas Island Pipistrelle bat went extinct in 2009, Zoos Victoria vowed that no terrestrial vertebrate species will go extinct on our watch again. Zoos Victoria is now actively involved in preventing the extinction of 27 threatened species. Of these, the Eastern Barred Bandicoot is likely to be the first mammal removed from the threatened species list in Victoria. After a 31 year recovery effort, the Eastern Barred Bandicoot story is one of hope that shows when we work together and invest in our threatened species, we can make a difference.   |
| **Steve Meacher President of the** **Friends of the Leadbeater Possum**  | **Biography**Steve is an environmental educator and lives in Toolangi, on the edge of the State Forest. He is president of Friends of Leadbeater’s Possum Inc.**Presentation Brief**Leadbeater’s Possum was described in 1867 but only a few specimens were identified and it was presumed extinct. Since its rediscovery in 1961 it has been recognised as endangered but this was revised to Critically endangered in 2015 owing to threats from logging and fire. FLbP is the applicant in a case in the Federal Court, alleging that logging in Central Highlands forests, home to LbP and Greater Gliders, has been conducted unlawfully. The hearing was in June and written submissions were completed 13 September. We are now waiting for the Judge’s decision. We regard these animals as “Flagship” species; if our case is successful in protecting forests it will benefit all other species that share the habitat, preserve the major sources of water for drinking and irrigation and help to retain the Carbon stored in the world’s most Carbon-dense forests, contributing to action to mitigate the climate emergency. |
| **Shannon Hurley****Nature Conservation Campaigner at the Victorian National Parks Society** | **Biography**Shannon works as a nature conservation campaigner with The Victorian National Parks Association - a community focussed nature conservation organisation that has been at the forefront of nature conservation campaigns for more than 65 years. They work across advocacy and campaigns, citizen science and hosts one of the largest bush walking clubs in Victoria. Shannon previously worked for Parks Victoria in a variety of ranger, project management and environmental planning roles which took her to some of the most beautiful parts of our state. When she is not working on the current campaign to protect our lesser known, but highly important forest of the west of the state, she is working to protect our oceans, is an avid scuba diver and underwater photographer.**Presentation Brief****New national parks for Victoria’s central west** Right now the Victorian Government has an fantastic opportunity to make our state proud by creating new parks for the protection of our forests and the enjoyment of all Victorians. Many of these unique and precious forests in the central west of Victoria also have plans to be logged. Hear what you can do to help protect these forests for good and about the incredible natural values their forests harbour, some species found here and nowhere else on the plane.  |
| **Marc Freestone****Marc is a PhD Candidate working with the Orchid Conservation Program at the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria and the Australian National University.** | **Biography**Marc is a PhD Candidate working with the Orchid Conservation Program at the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria and the Australian National University. His project is investigating the cultivation of Leek Orchids, a large genus of native orchids with many endangered species that have so far proven extremely difficult to grow in captivity. Marc's research is funded by the Hermon Slade Foundation and the Threatened Species Recovery Hub of the Australian Government’s National Environmental Science Program. **Presentation Brief**Australia is an internationally significant botanical hotspot - over 90% of our 20,000 native plant species occur nowhere else on Earth. Among our most beautiful plants are almost 2000 different species of orchids, each of them wonderfully delicate and fascinating. However, our orchids are in danger. Dozens of species are teetering on the brink of extinction, driven there by land clearing, introduced pests and now climate change. But our endangered orchids have one thing going for them - people.In Melbourne, a dedicated group of orchid enthusiasts and scientists have mobilised to create the world's largest endangered orchid breeding program at the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria. For the first time, populations of many endangered Victorian orchids are increasing. This talk will highlight the progress being made with orchid conservation in Australia, the challenges that still remain and how the community can be involved.  |
| **Maxwell Campbell****President of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria.** | **Biography**Current President (5 years) of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria. Maxwell is an experienced naturalist, macro photographer and microscopist with a special interest in video microscopy and is heavily committed to the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems. His major interest is Invertebrates and their symbiotic relationships. He has been a biologist, educator and active naturalist for over 50 years.  **Presentation Brief** Max will discuss aspects of biodiversity and its importance to conservation and regeneration. The critical importance of invertebrates has been grossly under estimated as there is an over-emphasis on vertebrates, which as a whole, comprise a minute fraction of all animal life. |
| **Cam Walker****Friends of the Earth** |  |