All About the Field of Mars Reserve

Wildlife Refuge and Wildlife Protection Area

+ Ryde Hunters Hill Flora and Fauna Preservation Society Inc.

- Active involvement in environmental issues in the Ryde - Hunters Hill area since 1966
- preserving the Field of Mars Reserve as a sanctuary for flora and fauna
- interest in wider environmental issues

Our Story:

Ryde Hunters Hill Flora and Fauna Preservation Society had its beginnings in 1965, when local residents had learnt of earlier alternative proposals and wished to preserve the bushland now known as the Field of Mars Reserve.

Worst fears were realised at the time of official inauguration early in 1966, when Ryde Municipal Council revealed plans to use the Field of Mars as a major garbage tip.

After intense campaigning by members of the Society and local residents, in September 1966 Ryde Council agreed to use an alternate tip site, and allowed the Society to develop the Field of Mars Reserve as a flora and fauna sanctuary.

Over the first few years, members of the Society held weekly working bees to restore damaged estuarine areas and develop nature trails so members of the public can enjoy the natural wonders of the reserve.

In 1972 the Visitor Centre opened as the base for the Society and for community involvement. The reserve was proclaimed a "Wildlife Refuge" in 1975 and is now classified as a Wildlife Protection Area.

The Field of Mars Environmental Education Centre [originally "Field Studies Centre"] opened in 1986.

Volunteers of the Society share in management of the reserve by working co-operatively with the City of Ryde Council.

Ryde Hunters Hill Flora and Fauna Preservation Society Inc.

Interested in maintaining a healthy local environment? You are invited to join us.
We are an active environment group and, since 1966, we have managed the Field of Mars Reserve in partnership with Ryde Council.

As a member you will be able to:

- Meet friendly, like-minded people
- Help keep the Field of Mars Visitor Centre open and chat with visitors
- Have early notification of special events
- Read what's happening in the Society's bi-monthly newsletter "Wallumetta"
- Learn about the bush - its plants, birds, animals, topography and geology
- Hear interesting guest speakers on environmental issues
- Assist bush regeneration and maintenance
- Add your voice to the Society's environment campaigns and lobbying

To send applications and correspondence, email rhhffps@gmail.com or post to:

RHHFFPS
PO Box 552
Gladesville,
NSW 1675

Further information is on our website:
rydehhffps.org.au

Natural Importance of the Field of Mars

The Field of Mars Wildlife Refuge is the largest remnant bushland reserve within the City of Ryde. It contains much variety in its natural environments, with plants and animals living in indigenous plant community groups:

- **Turpentine-Ironbark Forest**
- **Sydney Sandstone Complex**
  - Ridgetop
  - open forest of scribbly gum, angophora and banksia
  - Low + gully woodlands;
- **Coastal Swamp Forest**
  - Paperbarks and reedland
- **Estuarine Complex**

Open scrub and low open forest, with mangroves and saltmarsh.

It is interesting to observe the diversity of habitat and ecology as one walks along the trails through these different zones.

Some threatened species in the reserve deserve special attention for preservation. These include Epacris purpurascens var purpurascens, Pimelia curviflora var curviflora, waratah; and boronia.

The Wildlife Refuge is also environmentally significant for its place in the Sydney region. Adjacent to the Lane Cove National Park, it is a part of a much larger bushland network in the Sydney Region. It is the base of an important wildlife corridor through the City of Ryde via adjoining bushland reserves.

Cultural Heritage of the Field of Mars

The area was occupied by aboriginal people known as the Wallumede-gal. Evidence of their lifestyle is present in and around the Wildlife Refuge, including middens, axe and spear grinding grooves, and remnants of flint and other rocks used for tools, which would have been brought to the area by trading with aboriginal people from other places.

In 1792, the first land grants in the Ryde area were made to marines. Governor Phillip named the area 'Field of Mars', to reflect the military association with these new settlers. Today's Field of Mars Wildlife Refuge is the remnant of a district which once extended from Dundas to the Lane Cove River.

In 1804 an area of public land for use by local settlers was set aside as a 'traditional English common'. The Field of Mars Common covered most of what is now the City of Ryde.

By 1874 the Common was known as a place of undesirables – hence the second largest creek being named "Strangers Creek" - so it was resumed as Crown land, and most was later cleared for allotments, streets and cemetery.

In 1887, the remaining 85 acres were set aside for public recreation. This is today's Field of Mars Wildlife Refuge. It remained a source of building materials for local residents, grazing land, refuge during depression years and a popular place for swimming, fishing and prawning until 1954 when the estuarine area was used as a garbage tip.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Name. _____

Address: _____

_____

Postcode: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Annual Membership *		Mail cost**	$
Individual	$15	(+$10)	_____
Family	$35	(+$10)	_____
Concession	$10	(+$10)	_____
Donation			_____
Total Payment Attached:			_____

* renewable yearly on 1 January.

** Add $10 if hard copy of newsletter is to be sent by mail via Australia Post

Payment: by cash or direct deposit to Bendigo Bank account: RYDE HUNTERS HILL FLORA AND FAUNA PRESERVATION SOCIETY INC, BSB 633-000, Account number 190716589

Please tick if you are interested in being an active member by helping with our:

☐ Visitor Centre ☐ Bush Regeneration

☐ Events ☐ Management Committee

Are there any special skills you can offer?