

# Field of Mars Reserve Wildlife Refuge and Wildlife Protection Area



## Ryde Hunters Hill Flora and Fauna Preservation Society Inc.

- Actively involved in environmental issues in the Ryde - Hunters Hill area since 1966
- preserving the Field of Mars as a flora and fauna sanctuary
- interest in global environmental issues

### Our Story:

Ryde Hunters Hill Flora and Fauna Preservation Society had its beginnings in 1965, with local residents concerned about the future of the Field of Mars bushland.

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

As a result of 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.

The Visitor Centre opened in 1972 and is the base for the Society and community involvement.

The reserve was proclaimed a "Wildlife Refuge" in 1975. The Field of Mars Field Studies Centre [now the "Environmental Education Centre"] opened in 1986.

Volunteers of the Society undertake extensive bush regeneration projects by working co-operatively with 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.

### With us you can:

- Bushwalk
- 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
- Help in the Field of Mars Visitor Centre
- Read what's happening in the Society's bi-monthly newsletter "Wallumetta"
- Meet friendly, like-minded people
- Join our management committee

Send applications and correspondence to:

RHHFFPS  
PO Box 552  
Gladesville,  
NSW 1675

For further information  
visit our website:  
[rydehffps.org.au](http://rydehffps.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 aboriginals known as the Wallumedde-gal people. 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 *	Discount**	\$
Individual	\$25 (-\$10)	_____
Family	\$45 (-\$10)	_____
Concession (Students/Pensioners)	\$20 (-\$10)	_____
Donation		_____
<b>Total Payment Attached:</b>		_____

\* renewable yearly on 1 January.

\*\* Less \$10 if newsletter is sent by email or collected in person.

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?