

February 1997

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

Friends of Warrandyte State Park (FOWSP) Inc. P O Box 220 Warrandyte 3113

Park Under New Management

By Mike Coupar

At a surprise meeting late last year, Ranger in Charge Andrew Nixon and his staff were informed that Warrandyte State Park will now be managed from Westerfolds Park and not from Woori Yallock as before. A reliable source had informed FOWSP about a year ago that Melbourne Parks & Waterways were planning to take over the running of the State Park. However, what has surfaced is a very much grander scheme than ever imagined. The details were released to Staff and the media on December 12th and to Friends groups on the 23rd of the same; in other words just before Christmas! 'The Age' (13/12/96) reported "New group to run parks - The manager of Melbourne Parks & Waterways, Mr Jeff Floyd, will head a new body to manage Victoria's reserves, national parks, rivers and bays. The Minister for Conservation, Mrs Marie Tehan, said yesterday that Mr Floyd's organisation would merge with the National Parks Service to form Parks Victoria. The Government will also set up a database to assess the condition of parks and a \$1 million community fund to help the work of local volunteer groups". It would seem that this is a sensible approach to management whereby there will be, one would hope, an equitable distribution of funds to reserves within the State's wide network of natural assets and to the Friends groups who so enthusiastically assist in the care of these special places.

In the past the Department of Natural Resources & Environment has been poor cousin to Melbourne Parks & Waterways, because it has not been in such a strong position to raise revenue for delivering services. This has resulted in our group winning substantial grants from Melbourne Parks & Waterways for materials to erect rabbit exclusion fences, expansion and improvements to the nursery and 'Frogland' to name but a few. However, the formation of Parks Victoria is somewhat tainted in the eyes of some who follow the State's privatisation trends. An 'Age' reader, Joan Boyd of St Kilda, wrote "Having wreaked his worst on Albert Park, Jeff Floyd is now put in charge of Wilson's Prom and all other parks. Talk about giving Dracula the key to the blood-bank!"

Well, there may be an element of over reaction, but we as a Friends group do need to be vigilant that privatisation/commercialisation trends are resisted in the Parks system. After all, until recently, a major development was on the drawing board for the icon of all Victorian National Parks, Wilson's Promontory. Consequently, at the last FOWSP Committee meeting of 1996 it was unanimously agreed to support VNPA's 'Hands off the Prom' campaign. A donation was sent to VNPA and a submission to DNR & E outlining our concerns.

So what effect will Parks Victoria have on the Warrandyte State Park? Will it be renamed, like the Department itself, to Westerdyte or Warranfolds? We do know that the new Acting Chief Ranger is Jeff Saker of Westerfolds. We have been grouped in the Lower Yarra district of 'Melbourne West' region, Port Phillip. This means that we lose David Nugent, who continues as Chief Ranger of the Upper Yarra district. It is a shame to say goodbye to David as we had developed a good rapport and he had lobbied strongly and effectively to keep staff numbers at reasonable levels in the wake of funding cuts as hinted in his article in the December Newsletter. To David we wish him all the best and look forward to meeting and assisting Jeff Saker.

Andrew Nixon is of the opinion "that nothing much will change in the short term as a result of the new merger". He thought there may be a potential problem for Warrandyte, since it is the only State Park in our district. This might result in the Melbourne Parks & Waterways style of management, which is oriented towards providing for visitor convenience rather than nature conservation. We sincerely hope that the focus towards conservation is maintained, which is the spirit of the National Parks Act. We also hope that the new management is not tempted to close the Warrandyte Depot. In this era of cost cutting and bean counting who can be blamed any more for being paranoiac. Let's hope that the positive aspects of Parks Victoria dominate as the year unfolds, because none of us wish for another difficult year. Welcome back and a Happy New year to all!

FOWSP THURSDAY PROGRAM

FEBRUARY 20TH Koornong Riverbank
Leave the Depot at 1.15pm or meet on site at 1.30pm

We'll help to eradicate some of our old favourites, yellow iris and ivy. Bring a small digging implement if possible. Our weather dependent reward is a swim or a walk.

Leader: Cathy Willis. Meet at Koornong Crs. carpark i.e. Periwinkle Mound (Melway 23 J7)

FEBRUARY 27TH Frolic in Frogland
Meet at the Depot at 10am

Help create another pond. By the way Frogland is looking fantastic.

Leader: Jenny Hoskin

MARCH 6TH Spadoni's Wetland Wander.
Leave the depot at 1pm or meet on site at 1.30pm.

A new venue to explore. This is a billabong with many interesting plants - some not known in the Warrandyte area.

Leader: Pat Coupar. Meet at Spadoni's Reserve, Coldstream. (Melways 274E8)

MARCH 13TH Bradley's Lane Renovation
Leave the Depot at 1.15pm or meet on site at 1.30pm

Let's see how the ferns we planted a few years ago have coped with this hot, hot summer. Afterwards we can explore downstream and then retire to our leader's home for afternoon tea.

Leader: Joan MacMahon. Meet at the end of Bradleys Lane . (Melway 23B12)

MARCH 20TH Gardening Spree
Meet at the Depot at 10am

A chance to do a bit of real gardening as we tidy up the beds around the Depot and the Folly.

Leader: Ben Gotlib, we hope, he hasn't yet been asked (!)

MARCH 27TH Rediscover the Coupe
Meet at the Depot at 1.30pm

Check out the progress and learn what we hope to achieve. We may see a koala or two!

Leader: Neil Tessier.

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY Sunday March 2nd

As well as our canoeing effort which Ross Coupar is organising (see his article), there are local land - based activities. If a stroll along the riverbank somewhere between the Stonehouse Craft Gallery and Anderson's Creek appeals to you, give Bev and John Hansen a call on 98443906. Byo gloves

FOR SALE

Fowspians Lawrie and Peggy Safstrom have an acre block backing on to the river reserve-a great swimming spot-also a Yamaha Electronic Organ and a fold - up - vertically double bed. All reduced for Fowspians! PHONE 9844 3981.



Mount Lofty Update

The Mount Lofty saga continues. The latest news from Lorraine Elliott's office is that the bill, formalising the incorporation of Mount Lofty into the Park, was not passed at the last sitting of parliament for 1996 as expected.

Apparently they ran out of time.

The bill is now listed as the third of the day for the first sitting of the year on March 18th. Until then, as before, we will continue to keep the champagne on ice.

RANGER'S REPORTS

- (1) The end of January has come as we start February with a cool change. The recent fire in the Dandenongs on the 21st & 22nd January kept Warrandyte State Park fire-fighters busy for two days. All fire-fighters involved in the operation were happy for rainfall on Wednesday morning. Locally we have had 5 minor fires caused by persons unknown, which has had all local authorities on guard. Ranger staff have talked to a number of residents regarding fire protection works on the boundary of the park, mainly minor slashing of grass.

Regular patrols will continue throughout the fire season with all staff ready for the next possible out break of fire.

WORKS

Maintenance works continue around the park and at our other reserves. We currently have four Project Fire-fighters employed to carryout fire prevention in the park and reserves. Brett Cherry, Mick Daverington, Craig Mc Grath and Justin Welandar are on board and assisting Colin Bromiley in slashing of firebreaks on vehicle access tracks as well as walking tracks, and involved all other maintenance works in the area.

A new toilet is being constructed at Black Flat picnic area with a new barbecue.

Some small trees and branches from larger trees in picnic areas are to be removed for the safety of the public.

Andy Nixon returns from a month's leave on the 10th of February and staff at Warrandyte look forward to his return.

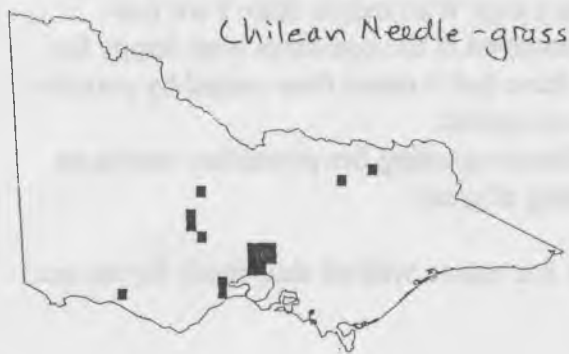
Wildlife observation for the month: David Farrar while at Yarra Brae near the Yarra River sights an Echidna then walks to the water's edge a minute later and observes a second Monotreme, a Platypus. Big Smile!!

From Acting Ranger In Charge
David (Frankie) Farrar

(2) WEED PROBLEMS

- Alligator Weed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*) has been confirmed in Warrandyte along Anderson's creek behind the football oval. It was only a small outbreak (about 8 stems) and has now been sprayed according to the guidelines given by the Kieth Turnbull Institute at Frankston. We will continue to monitor the site and further along the creek. It has been described as one of the world's worst weeds and as such we are keen for as many people to learn to identify it and keep an eye out for it anywhere in the Warrandyte area (or Melbourne). A brochure is available from the park office which will aid in identification and provides further information.
- Another relatively new weed outbreak is Chilean Needle Grass (*Stipa neesiana*). It has been confirmed at Pound Bend picnic area and Norman's Reserve. Both these sites have been thoroughly walked and all plants seen were sprayed. It is a weed that is spreading rapidly across Melbourne. It is particularly bad on the basalt country north west of Melbourne. It has the potential to out-compete indigenous plants in grassy environments. This is another plant worth learning, and keeping an eye out for it at Warrandyte. It is only early days for it at Warrandyte and we have the opportunity to prevent it establishing and becoming yet another serious 'Problem Weed'.

David Van Bockel Jan '97.



Current known distribution

Parks VICTORIA

The following statement was issued to Park's staff at the end of last year. See front page article for more information.

Initiatives

1. Victoria's first Comprehensive Park Environmental Data Base.

The environmental condition of all parks will be assessed, providing a sound basis for:

- Planning improvements to, and protecting our precious natural environment.
- Continuous monitoring of the condition of park assets.

2. A new \$1 million Community Environment Fund providing grants for community groups statewide

3. Volunteers and Friends Groups.

On-line information services, including an internet site, will support a major thrust to increase and nurture these invaluable park supporters.

4. A one stop Parks Information Service for the whole state. . . Phone 13 1963.

5. A bush experience for city children at low cost camp sites near to the city.

6. Victoria's first degree qualification in Parks Management - this will establish Victoria as the leading state in the training of park managers.



By B.G.

"Frogland Hots Up"

The "fishbone" water fern (*Blechnum nudum*) and the Musk Daisy-Bush (*Olearia argophylla*) have really felt the effects of the recent heat and are looking very sad.

Don's Bath!

The aquatic plant's propagating facility next to the shadehouse is **almost full** of **rare** specimens, including three species of milfoil. (If you see any ducks please shoo them away.)

Rationalisation

The large "hardening-off" area is bereft of plants for the moment in order to conserve water. All plants have been rationalised to the shadehouse.

Longest Bar?

The new waist - high wooden bar around the shade house will "out - length" the bar of the Working Men's Club at Mildura. The "railing" is being built around the shadehouse and the old sides being replaced. More **physical** help would be **greatly appreciated!** PLEASE see Don Cameron (9844 2389)

Bridge Jump

Manningham Council have all the drawings in for the Jumping Creek Bridge realignment. No contractor yet, but should be starting about May. Apparently **about 100 trees** are at risk of removal. A meeting is to be arranged to consider the impact on the environment and any possible disruption. Contact the Park office (98442659) if you have a contribution to make. (This is yet another example of the human race putting it's own short term interests - the perceived need for moving ever faster over the face of our earth - above those of the natural world. So, more habitat destroyed.)

Busy, Busy, Busy

"Frankie" (David Farrar) rushed in, rushed out. Margaret was busy on the phone; calls coming in all the time. Colin, our only permanent person left in construction and maintenance was busily unloading materials. Everyone very busy.

Brings to mind the hard worked employee "somewhere else" who said to those masters who make the big decisions "I'm doing the work of two people."

The rationalist response was "Tell us the name of the other person and we'll sack him/her!"

Suborder Lacertilia - but not family Scincidae.

There's a blue-tongue lizard living in the hollow log at the entrance to the Ranger's Office.

Driver's - Be Aware!

There's a resident echidna using the road going into the depot.

Alligator Sighted

A noxious weed, *Alternanthera philoxeroides*, "Alligator Weed", has been discovered in Anderson's Creek. Any further suspected sightings should be reported to Paul Hay on 98442659

Stalling? Not likely!

Eve Scopes and Dianne Williams had a good morning on Sat. Feb 1st looking after our Warrandyte Market stall. They sold some books, a new member joined and great interest was shown by passers-by.

And this time every plant was appropriately labelled. Good work and thanks to Cathy Willis.



Library News

By Ray Clarke

The 'Friends' library has a wide range of reference and topical books. However, it appears to be very much under-used. The loan register shows that only five people have taken out books in the last six months.

Diane Silveri has checked the library contents recently and found that all books are accounted for with the exception of five that have been missing since 1994.

We have over 100 books catalogued as well as many journals, magazines, manuals, tapes, videos and more recently CD Roms. These are classified under the following categories:

100	ARAmphibians & Reptiles	6
200	B Birds	9
300	BF Bush Food	3
400	EDEducation	7
500	ENEnvironment	16
900	F Fish	3
600	FL Flora	54
1300	FR Fire	3
700	IS Insects & Spiders	8



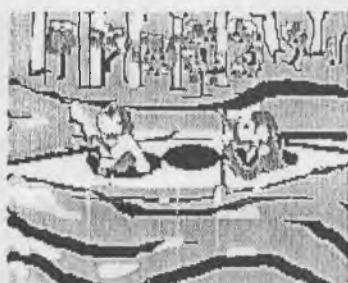
JM	Journals & Magazines	25
800	M Mammals	7
MAP	Maps -	2
1000	R Revegetation	6
1100	T Technical	12
2100	TA Tapes	12
1200	W Weeds	8

A more detailed list will be kept in the library itself.

Members are encouraged to borrow books, but are asked to observe the following rules:

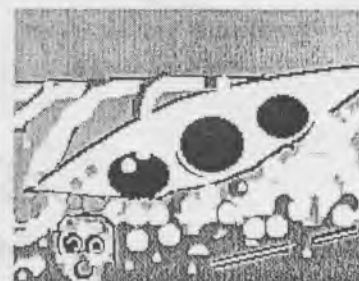
- Books marked on the spine with a red dot are either particularly valuable books or reference books required for regular use by the Rangers. These may be used on site, but not taken away.
- Books that are borrowed must be entered in the register which can be found on the library shelf. The books should be returned after a period of two weeks. If the member wishes to keep them longer the register should be marked "extended loan" which will allow a further two weeks loan. Failure to return the books will result in a tap on the shoulder by the librarian.
- Members will be expected to replace any books that are lost or damaged.

We will be continuing our 'Book of the Month' reviews in the newsletter and any contribution will be gratefully accepted.



FOWSP canoe river clean up.

As part of clean up Australia day on Sunday March the 2nd, FOWSP will be participating in a clean up of the river by canoe. FOWSP will be bringing along the Friends canoe, as well as the park canoe, but if you have one please bring it along, however if not canoes can be hired from Adventure Canoes on Castle Hill rd (Ph. 9844 3323). The planned route this year is to remove rubbish from some of the areas higher upstream of the river that run through the state park. The starting point is at Bouchiers road (Melway ref. Map 24 C4.) and will finish at Jumping Creek Reserve or Black Flat for a Barbeque. The meeting point will be at the Folly at Pound Bend (Melway ref. 23 D10) at 1.00pm where we will organise a car pool and canoes. If there is anything else you would like to find out please don't hesitate to call the contact person, Ross Coupar on 984401650.



Book of the Month

Victorian Koorie Plants

By Beth Gott and John Conran
(Yangennanock Women's Group,
Hamilton Victoria 1991)

Review by Joan MacMahon

This is the second book we have reviewed on the topic of Aboriginal plant use. (See Mike Coupar's review in our October newsletter). This little book (only 71 pages) is a treasure house of indigenous knowledge. It is one of an increasing number of publications bringing to the general public information which was, until recently, restricted to a few academics and a small number of elderly Victorian Koories.

The text was written by Dr Beth Gott who, at the time of publication, was Honorary Research Associate (Botany) in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Monash University. The line drawings were done by Dr John Conran, who taught at Monash University before moving to the University of Adelaide. He has also provided illustrations for the Flora of Australia.

In simple format this book presents 50 of the 700 or more Victorian plants used by Koories. It has a short but illuminating introduction which is followed by five sections based on plant usage for food, medicine, fibre, implements and adhesives.

A whole page is allocated to each plant species. It is headed by the Koorie name (where known) as well as botanical and common names. The drawings are excellent. There is a brief description of each plant, its distribution,



followed by the really interesting information about how the Koories used them.

For instance the roots of many of our remaining Warrandyte plants were eaten (usually cooked first). Can you picture yourself patiently digging for the tubers of Milkmaids, Bulbine, Chocolate, Pale Vanilla and Fringe lilies, Small-leaf Clematis, Yam Daisy or Water Ribbons? Roots were the most important of the plant foods as they were available most of the year. In contrast, fruits were only available seasonally. Local Aborigines, the Wurundjeri people, would possibly have eaten the fruit of wattles, mistletoes, Wild Cherry, Native Raspberry, Kangaroo Apple and the local Beard-Heath.

Food plants are thought to have made up about half the diet. The rest consisted of fish, shellfish, snakes, lizards, grubs, possums and kangaroos. It was a marvellously healthy diet since "--when the Europeans arrived 150 years ago, the people they found were healthy and well nourished."

I found this booklet an easy and interesting read, full of intriguing insights. For instance it explains why the European settlers noticed how open and absorbent the soil was. For the explanation you will have to borrow this little volume from our library as, unfortunately, it is now out of print.

ANOTHER DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday Feb23rd

WALLOP SOME WILLOWS!

As part of our continuing campaign to help improve the health of the Yarra and its inhabitants we're going to do some willow attack work. We'll meet at **Stane Brae at 2pm** (note the later start). Proceed through the gate at the end of Stane Brae Crt. and drive through to the river. (Melway 24C9). This is a most beautiful part of Melbourne and yet it is seen by relatively few people. Bring your bathers and some afternoon tea. We'll probably finish with a short walk upstream.



Worth Repeating

Aussie weed swamps Britain's marshes

By MICHAEL HORNSBY in London

A plant imported from the Antipodes is invading ponds and marshes all over Britain and smothering native flowers that cannot compete with its vigorous growth.

British botanists are so alarmed that they have asked the United Kingdom Department of the Environment to ban the planting of the Australian swamp stonecrop, *Crassula helmsii*, anywhere in the wild.

This would put the plant in the same category as other notorious aliens such as Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed, which were brought to Britain in the 19th century and have now taken over many river banks.

The swamp stonecrop was imported as an ornamental plant before World War One and became commercially available in the 1920s.

It was first found growing in the wild in Essex in the 1950s and has now been recorded at some 550 sites in England and Wales and about 10 in Scotland. The number of new sites is believed to be doubling every two years.

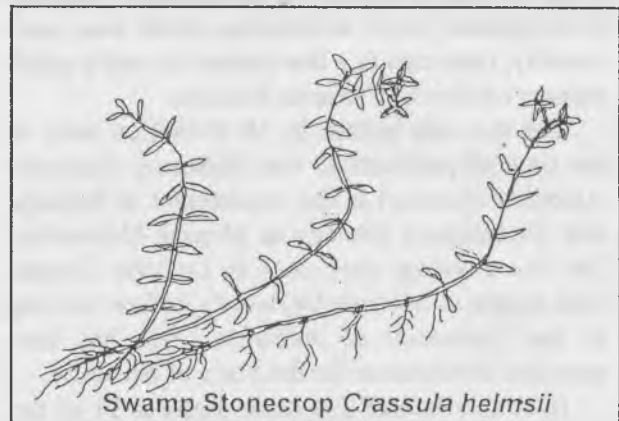
A freshwater ecologist at English Nature, the Government's chief conservation adviser, Ms Mary Gibson said: "We want the plant placed on

schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, which would make it illegal to introduce it to the wild. We cannot prevent people planting it in domestic gardens and ponds. All we can do is try to raise awareness of the problem."

The plant grows all year, forming dense ground-hugging clusters with green-yellowish leaves, and putting out small white-petalled flowers up to 15cm high in summer.

A senior botanist at the Institute of Freshwater Ecology at Wareham, in Dorset, Mr Hugh Dawson, said: "The plant is amphibious. It can grow on land and in water up to nine feet deep. It is easily spread because tiny fragments carried on shoes, the feet of wildfowl and the bodies of fish or fishing gear, or drifting along drains and canals, can re-shoot and colonise new areas."

Source: *The Age* March 1996



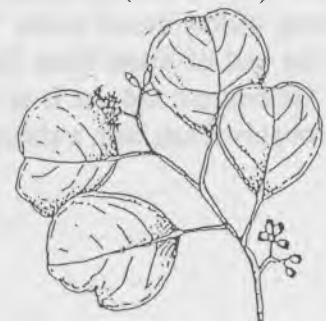
Editors Note: Swamp Stonecrop (*Crassula helmsii*) is found in scattered occurrences along the river and creek banks throughout Warrandyte State Park. In its natural habitat it poses no problems. However, where the plant has been introduced into 'Frogland' it has become troublesome, outcompeting other less aggressive semi-aquatic species.

YET ANOTHER DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Sat.22nd / Sun 23rd March

The Great Warrandyte Festival Weekend

This is always a marvellous event with plenty to see and do. As usual we will have a great display and make people welcome with heaps of those Aussie classics - billy tea and yummy damper. We do need quite a few people to spread the load so if you can help for a few hours please let Betty Oke know (98443763) - she doesn't want to be rostered on all weekend!



Walking

By Fia Clendinnen

In the Andes of Ecuador there are a group of poor people who live to a great age. Through health and sickness they put their faith in two doctors: Doctor Left Foot and Doctor Right Foot. Along steep and narrow paths, these people walk everywhere: to their fields, to market, to visit friends and to go looking for their special health-giving herbs that grow in the wild.

A few weeks ago I walked the length of Mullum Mullum Creek. The walk was organised by the Maroondah Bushwalking Club, as part of the Mullum Mullum Festival. All day, Doctor Left Foot and Doctor Right Foot went through their repetitious act, all 21 kilometres of the way. By the end they were pretty fed up, while I was still as fresh as a daisy.

For a while I walked next to an elderly gentleman called Jack. In the morning, as we set off his clothes were neat and his manners were impeccable. By late afternoon there was a dazed, disbelieving look in his light blue eyes. His hat was skew whiff, his shirt had come untucked and there was mud on his trousers. But the jokes! The more tired he became, the funnier he was. It's hard to laugh when you're puffed.

The creek took no notice of us as we slogged along. As they say in politics, the creek and the humans had different agendas.

Mullum Mullum Creek starts off as a sort of open drain in Croydon. At the end of a very long day it's a fully-fledged creek. In Warrandyte Mullum Mullum Creek joins the Yarra River. We traipsed down to the exact spot.

To get there we had to cross a boggy lowland. There was no path any more and for the first time our leader seemed uncertain. We trailed after him, trying vainly to keep our feet dry by stepping on grass tussocks. "It's like walking on bodies," said one lady. What an imagination! To me it felt exactly like walking on grass tussocks.

I glanced behind. There was Jack, precariously balanced on one foot as he looked for the next dry place. There was a look on his face. "Come on, Jack" I cried, rallying him, "You can't give up now. We're nearly there."

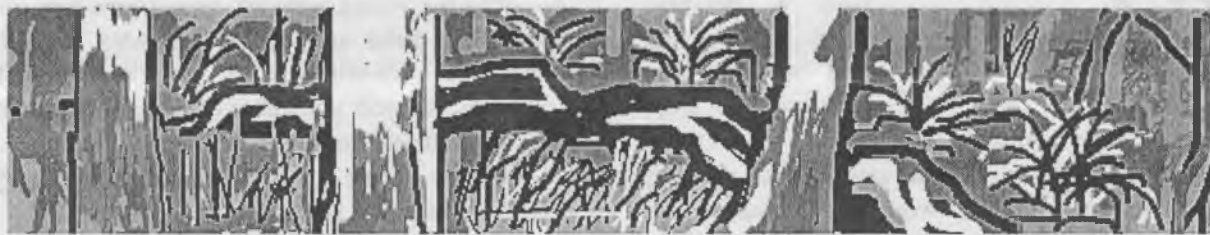
It's a beautiful valley and it's the traditional home of the Wurundjeri Aborigines. Up on the hillside is an old homestead, said to be one of the oldest houses in Victoria. A man called Major Newman built this house, he was a friend of John Batman. But the remaining Wurundjeri elders would like to see this house pulled down. For them it's a blot on the landscape. Back in the 1800's Major Newman sold poisoned flour to the local aborigines.

The meeting of the waters - another miracle. The water purled, the willow leaves rustled. It was quiet and muddy.

For a little way the waters of the Yarra insisted on defying gravity and flowing up Mullum Mullum Creek. An unnecessary show of dominance, I thought.

"Do we get a certificate?" asked Jack. And no one answered him. We laughed and went home.

Footnote: Our group was allowed to walk in Tikalara Park by special permission of Melbourne Parks and Waterways.



An Unwelcome Orchid

By Pat Coupar

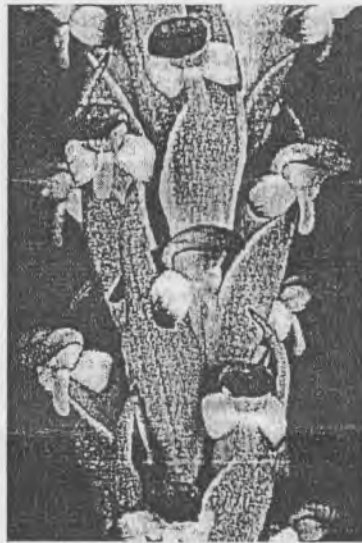
Will we, one day, be pulling out orchids from the Warrandyte State Park? It is not beyond the realms of possibility because one of the most recent weeds to be identified in Victoria is an introduced orchid.

The plant is well known in Western Australia and South Australia where it is widespread, but so far in Victoria it has only been recorded from the Lower Glenelg National Park, Baccus Marsh and the Cottlesbridge/Hurstbridge area which is only a few kilometres north of Warrandyte.

The orchid is called *Monadenia bracteata* and was introduced from South Africa as a garden bulb. From gardens it made its escape via dust-sized seeds light enough to be carried miles by the wind. The seeds also travel by water, in soil and on clothing and tools. A single plant can produce many thousands of seeds which can remain viable for up to seven years.

So why has this particular orchid gone feral? One of the reasons is that no fancy insect pollinator is required - this orchid pollinates itself. And, it would seem, it is not too fussed about the mycorrhizal fungi it associates with.

Resembling a sort of cross between an onion orchid and a leek orchid, *Monadenia* produces up to 50 tiny brown flowers on a 30cm high stem. Like other terrestrial orchids, it grows from an



underground tuber which lies dormant for many months of the year, making finding this weed a matter of timing. In early Spring a rosette of narrow, tapered leaves appear before flowering commences in October.

It is too late now to look for *Monadenia*, which incidentally has been given the rather unimaginative, but nevertheless succinct, common name of African Weed Orchid. However we will be issuing a reminder and updated information on the orchid in late winter or early Spring when its leaves will be starting to show.

Already *Monadenia* is a major environmental weed in Western Australia and South Australia. Armed with knowledge, let us hope we can fight the advance of this unwelcome orchid in Victoria before it is too late.



Sick and injured animals do not take a holiday. Julie Pryor has had several new admissions over

the last couple of months.

A total of seven ringtail possums of varying ages have come in. All were found injured as a result of attacks by cats or other possums. Four of the possums died from their injuries, two were sent to another shelter, and one young female, named 'little poss', is still being cared for by Julie. An orphan brushtail possum was also found.

Four young birds, all orphaned, were brought to the shelter. These were: a butcher bird, a chestnut teal duckling, an eastern rosella and a

tiny rainbow lorikeet only about two days old - all have since gone to another shelter.

Ron the young wombat, now 10 months old, is still with Julie and by all accounts still biting everyone. Unable to burrow underground, Ron has not enjoyed the hot weather and is at times fussy about his bottle.

Joey is a three year old kangaroo who has been with Julie since he was little. Although he can jump the fence to freedom if he wishes, it seems he prefers to stay where he is and has now become a resident at the shelter.

Good news of Clive the koala, whose rescue was reported in our last issue. He has now been released at Wonga Park close to the Yarra Brae section of Warrandyte State Park. As well, two ringtail possums have also been successfully released.