

April 1997

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

Concerns Over Bridge Realignment

By Pat Coupar

Over recent years, with the expansion of the suburbs eastwards, there has been a steady increase in traffic along the Jumping Creek Road. Inevitably, this has led to an increase in road accidents, particularly in the vicinity of the Jumping Creek bridge.

A proposal, earlier this year, by Manningham Council to reconstruct the bridge for safety reasons has met with concerns from various quarters. In short, the proposal is to raise and widen the bridge and install a pedestrian walkway, horse trail and emergency parking bays.

In addition, the council is planning to realign the road as part of its 'Jumping Creek Road Traffic Management Plan', and this is where the greatest concerns lie. The realignment would involve straightening the approach to the bridge by taking out a corner or two. This would not only cut into Warrandyte State Park land, but necessitate the removal of around 100 mature trees. Apparently the road straightening is in keeping with the 80 kph standard required for the new bridge.

One of the corners to go is the edge of the WSP Gravel Reserve where the only known population, in the State Park, of the regionally significant Hoary Sunray occurs. Erosion, run off, loss of vegetation and subsequent loss of habitat for native fauna are other major concerns.

A meeting was held on February 6th at which these and other concerns were raised. Present at the meeting was a representative from the Council's

Engineers Department, several WSP staff, two members of FOWSP, members of the Wonga Park Environment Group and the Wonga Park Residents Association, as well as a botanical adviser. Various alternatives to the proposal were put forward including the construction of a trestle bridge in keeping with the historical character of the area. While appearing feasible, it is unlikely that this seemingly attractive option will be adopted.

As well as their attendance at the meeting, FOWSP has also expressed its concerns in writing to Manningham's Chairman of Commissioners, Mr Adam Kempton. A brief reply has been received from the Chief Executive saying that he had called for a report from Mr Lyndon Webb, Director of City Development.

Meanwhile anyone seeking more information can ring the Council's Technical Service Engineer, Adrian Ashford.

Apart from a number of serious road accidents, Jumping Creek Road is notorious for its road kills of native fauna. This is partly due to the fact that the road dissects a wildlife corridor between The Common and Jumping Creek Reserve. Already there are too many road kills too often. Whether or not the speed limit is raised to 80 kph, the realignment of the road, together with the reconstruction of the bridge, will almost certainly mean that traffic will travel at a greater speed. What chance for our wildlife then?

FOWSP THURSDAY PROGRAM

APRIL 17TH Black Flat Walk

Leave the Depot at 1.15pm or meet on site at 1.30pm

It's a long time since we've been to this area. Come and check out the river bank and see how things have changed since the willows have died.

Leader Ant Owen. Meet at the car park, Tills Drive, Warrandyte (Melways ref. map 23 H11)

APRIL 24TH Yarra Brae Walk

Leave the Depot at 1.15pm or meet on site at 1.30pm

Autumn bird orchids are a feature of this pleasant walk beside the Yarra River - if we are lucky we should see some in flower.

Leader Flora Anderson. Meet at the end of Clifford Dve, Wonga Park (Melways ref. map 24 J6)

MAY 1ST Stocking Removal and Seed Collection MORNING ACTIVITY

Meet on site at 10.00am

We will be hunting for the remaining stockinged plants in the bush on Fourth Hill and The Common

Leader Cathy Willis. Meet at the end of Tunnel St, Warrandyte (Melways ref. map 35 F1)

MAY 8TH A Visit to Karen's Country

Meet at the depot at 1.00pm to drive to the site

Karen Reynolds has kindly offered to show us round her large block of land in Kangaroo Ground. We will test our identification skills and make a plant list.

Leader Karen Reynolds. Meet at the WSP depot, Pound Bend Rd, Warrandyte (Melways ref. map 23 C10)

MAY 15TH Park Planting Day MORNING ACTIVITY

Meet at the depot 10.00am

Our hardening off areas are bursting at the seams with plants waiting to go in the ground. Hopefully, by now we will have had enough rain to plant some of them.

Leader Pat Coupar. Planting area yet to be decided. Meet at the WSP depot, Pound Bend Rd, Warrandyte (Melways ref. map 23 C10)

Festival Success

The Warrandyte festival is over for another year. Once again the 'Friends' tent and display was a great success. The weather over the weekend was fine, apart from a brief hiccup early Sunday morning when a short, sharp shower threatened to ruin the day. It didn't.

Many, many people stopped by our tent, some for billy tea and damper, others to take a look at our pots of indigenous plants complete with colour photographs of flowers. Pamphlets went like hot cakes and a number of 'Discover Warrandyte' books were sold at their special discount price of \$10. Several new members were signed up and many more 'old' members renewed their subscription.

This year ARRO (Anti Ring Road Organization) shared our space and there was much interest in their excellent display (see advert this newsletter for their next public meeting).

A huge thank you goes out to everyone who gave their time over the weekend putting up and taking down the tent and display, making billy tea, cooking damper and generally providing information on our group to interested people.

The smooth running of the whole weekend was almost entirely due to Betty Oke who organised the roster and made sure there were always enough people on hand. She and Neal Tessier spent most of the weekend at the FOWSP tent. We cannot thank them enough for all their hard work and dedication.



Profile on Andy Nixon - Ranger in Charge WSP



About time some will be saying. Finally an article from the Warrandyte State Park Ranger-in-Charge. Can I use the excuse that life as a ranger is now a busy one ?

But then perhaps it is for us all.

Truly I am quite amazed at what a dynamo of activity Warrandyte State Park work centre is - fire response requirements; capital works programs - Scotchmans Hill, Mt. Lofty; emergency response (to plants, people, and animals!); phone calls; interpretations and community education services; Melbourne Water land purchase assessments; phone calls; road realignments; feral deer control; boundary and fencing issues; commercial activity permits; more bl... phone calls ("Yes sir, of course sir.....we can remove the European Wasps from your child's tyre swing your where? Park Orchards - no problem");....and of course most importantly - revegetation, pest plant management and time with our FOWSPIAN's !

But believe me dear Friends, I'm not complaining. I really do enjoy my work - it's challenging and never dull. It has pretty much been that way wherever I have worked as a National Parks Service ranger - only here at Warrandyte it's a voluminous tidal wave of needs that constantly crashes on our doorstep. I hope that you all feel you are getting a fair share of the park staffs time. Some of you I feel I now know reasonably well, others I am still learning to put names to faces. So perhaps a little bit more about me.

I have been in the 'park management' business for just over 12 years. Previously I worked in the community recreation/youth work field for six years - streetwork, disability services, community development. In parks I have worked in the Dandenongs, Mornington Peninsula, Gippsland Lakes, N.Z. (Tongariro N.P.), Mt. Buffalo/Alpine N.P.'s, H.O. - Alpine recreation issues, and Cathedral range S.P. all prior to Warrandyte. Phew!

I have no claim to fame as a botanist and have a long way to go in learning the extensive Warrandyte plant list. I am reasonably confident with alpine flora (after six years above 1200 metres) and I am a bit of a birdo. There's nothing else I really want to do professionally - I cannot imagine wanting to be a car salesman just to earn \$80,000 a year! (Apologies to any out there).

Lesley, my partner, is a part-time music teacher and with both children now being at school, Jayne preps and Daniel grade four, we now have a few more hours to share during the week. And if I have ever dreamt of a place to visit (other than Warrandyte), it would have to be Antarctica. Not much botanising I know, but what a joy to be in such a wilderness.

Some folk may wonder what interests those of us who work in this field. Many things to many people no doubt. For me it is enshrined in some wise words from John Coulter, ex. Democrats senator who gave an introductory address to a NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service ranger induction. It included:-

*"As humans, we have lived in what was essentially a National Park for 99.9% of our existence. We are in fact so very recent that if a cosmic observer of this diurnal evolution were to blink, our presence might be missed altogether. On the 24 hour 'earth history' clock, the world began at midnight. At 5 pm the next day life emerged and at 11pm dinosaurs roamed the earth. At 11.30pm mammals appeared and at one second to midnight man erupted on the scene. Tomorrow is another day and in that new dawn National Parks and National Park rangers have a vital role to play in proving for all humans an experience of both their origin and their destiny".**

I hope that likewise, as Friends of Warrandyte State Park you also see that your work contributes to the community's well being.

* Ref: JR Coulter, 'National Parks loom large in a cosmic Countdown', Habitat - Australia Vol 14, No 1, Feb 1986. Pgs 32-33 Australian Conservation Foundation

Found at Festival

Man's black and charcoal-grey cardigan

Owner please phone Betty Oke

9 844 3763

Library Update

Angie Stefanatos is now helping Ray Clarke with the 'Friends' library. Already they have been busy with the backlog of sorting and cataloguing.



Publications other than books have been listed and numbered. The list is attached to the end of the library shelving and the publications can be

found on the lower shelf of the cupboard. After using any of the publications please replace in numerical order. The publications are of both historical and current interest and many are worth perusing.

For instance, 'Watch Out' number 50 lists and describes numerous venomous snakes, spiders and fish and sets out treatment for bites with advice what to do and what not to do. We should all be familiar with the contents of this little publication

Anyone requiring information regarding Fowsp's extensive library can contact Ray (9844 2351) or Angie (9844 2848).



This month Julie has received three ringtail possums. Two were young adolescents which had been found

abandoned - they are doing fine and will soon be released. The third was an adult male which unfortunately died. He showed no obvious injuries, but had possibly been attacked by a cat - injuries from a cat attack often go unnoticed on the surface mainly because the possum's fur is so thick and the cat's teeth are so sharp.

A number of birds have been found by the roadside including a musk lorikeet and a tree creeper, both of which had to be put down, an eastern rosella which died, and a concussed swamp hen which recovered after three days and was released.

Julie may have thought she was free of problem wombats for a while now Ron has moved on. Not so. Along came 'Wombles', a fully grown male with mange, found in a Lilydale backyard. He was taken to the Blue Cross in Homestead Road, Wonga Park because Julie does not have the facilities to keep a fully grown compulsive burrower. Even the Blue Cross had underestimated Wombles burrowing powers, for the next morning he was gone, having made his escape under some wire netting, surfacing through a thin layer of concrete. Five days later Wombles was picked up again, this time in a backyard in Chirnside Park. He was returned to the Blue Cross to a more secure enclosure where Julie visits him every day. He is reported to be a typical wombat - uncooperative!

Annual Koala Count

Sunday 27th April at 1.00 pm. Meet in the Folly at the WSP depot, Pound Bend Rd, Warrandyte. (Melways ref. map 23 C10)

Help count the koalas at Pound Bend. Short and medium walks available. Wear comfortable shoes and bring binoculars.

There will be activities for children. Bring a plate to share for afternoon tea.

For more information ring Brenda Hunter on 9379 7375

Warrandyte Bird Songs

A tape of bird songs is now available. This one hour audio cassette features, on one side, the 'music of 'Albedo Acoustica' - impressions of a river which was presented over the festival weekend, and on the other, 25 minutes of bird soundscapes recorded entirely in Warrandyte by Brian Laurence

The tapes are available from the FOWSP stall at the Warrandyte market, the museum, Potters Cottage and Warrandyte Information.

For more information ring Jo Laurence on 9844 3694

Wetland Wanderings

By Cathy Willis

Is the beginning of Autumn after a long dry summer a good time to visit a wetland? In the case of Spadoni's Reserve, in Coldstream, it turned out to be an excellent time. This reserve has been managed by Warrandyte State Park staff for some years now, but so far has received little if any attention from FOWSP.

The initial impression was not particularly positive. Model planes from the local radio controlled model aircraft club buzzed like megablowflies overhead, while cow paddocks full of weeds surrounded us. Moving away from the car park the aural and visual pollution faded along a 'hedged walk' of the tall dense Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) inter-woven with Large Bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*) on one side, and thickets of Swamp Paperbark (*Melaleuca ericifolia*) on the other. Weaving down through the paperbarks, off the track, we stumbled into bright light - like reaching the centre of a maze - into an almost dry billabong fringed with reeds. Magnificently flowered Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) stood in front of the reeds and in the centre, bright green wetland species including abundant Spreading Sneezeweed (*Centipeda minima*) hugged the ground. To complete the picture, raptors wheeled overhead - the 'birdos' in the group couldn't decide whether they were Little Eagles or Whistling Kites.

Back on the main track we were lucky enough to spot some Mistletoe Birds in a clump of Grey Mistletoe (*Amyma quandang*) growing on a Silver Wattle (*Acacia dealbata*). The beautiful long silvery leaves of the somewhat rare Grey Mistletoe are a good foil to its deep red flowers. The clever little Mistletoe Birds eat the berries and sit sideways on a wattle branch to excrete the seeds, allowing them to stick onto the branch to germinate.

Soon we hit the Yarra, a smaller river here, with sadly eroded banks. Tree Violets (*Hymenantha dentata*) dripping with ripening berries lined the path. We were on the look out for two eucalypts, the Buxton Gum (*Eucalyptus crenulata*) and the Yarra Gum (*Eucalyptus yarraensis*) known to grow here, but neither of

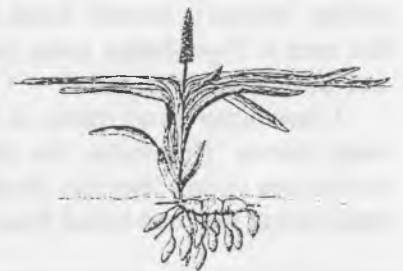
which has been recorded for the Warrandyte State Park. The Buxton Gum, widely planted for its ornamental juvenile foliage, is very rare in the wild and only occurs around Buxton and at Spadoni's. It is so rare that it is a Flora and Flora Guarantee listed species and, as such, a plan to ensure its survival has been prepared. According to botanist David Cameron, the original parent population has died out and the small population of 18 mature trees that now exists are 'back crosses' with the much more common Swamp Gum (*Eucalyptus ovata*). Seedlings grown by members of the Knox Environment Society and planted by them and WSP staff (with assistance from a Melbourne Parks & Waterways grant), are now a couple of metres high and healthy. Hopefully they will ensure the survival of this isolated population.

Yarra Gums initially confused us, but eventually we were confident that the graceful spreading-crowned eucalypts we were admiring were indeed they.

Continuing on the circular walk we remarked on the size of the Swamp Paperbark trees by a large channel. Thatch Saw-sedge (*Gahnia radula*), Tall Sedge (*Carex appressa*) and various rushes (*Juncus* spp) appeared in the lighter spaces and Water-ribbons

(*Triglochin*

procera) lay in the water, their leaves flowing in the slow current. Standing on a bridge gave us a good view of several Swamp Lilies (*Ottelia ovalifolia*) and Floating Pondweed (*Potamogeton tricarlinatus*).



Heading back along the channel edge, amongst the weedy grasses and hoof prints, were treasures such as Small River Buttercup (*Ranunculus amphitricus*) and a small Sedge (*Carex chlorantha*), both considered uncommon in the Greater Melbourne area. Yet here they were growing happily in such a seemingly insecure site.

It was an inspiring afternoon, seeing so many significant plants species surviving in a area with many competing past and present pressures. 'Friends' have a role to play in becoming familiar with nearby reserves such as Spadoni's and utilising our resources and skills to protect them and their species.

Fauna Notes by Ranger David Farrer (Known as "Frankie")

I have been working in Warrandyte State Park for four months and during this time I have observed a variety of wildlife.

Have I been lucky? Well, I do not believe so. The way I see it, is that I have taken time over the years to make observations while working in various parks. I've been interested in wildlife since the age of eight.

It is difficult being a ranger in the current busy and ever changing climate and maintaining an awareness of the environment you are in. For example, while on patrol in the park, you tend to be at times in enforcement mode or thinking of other issues. This is not a good situation to be in if you want to observe fauna or flora.

So, I tried consciously over my Easter weekend patrols to be more alert and observe a variety of fauna.

Easter observations:

Jumping Creek picnic area; I noticed two Tawny Frogmouths in a tree in the car park. Then I talked to a gentleman named Steve who had just caught a 2lb carp and three roach. He was all smiles, "dinner is served". Steve explained that he had seen a Tiger Snake swim towards him, turn, and head down river.

I saw many small birds in the scrub. Some were Brown Thornbills, the others were little brown jobs I can't identify. On the way out I was reminded of the road-killed Tuan I recently found

opposite the entrance gates. I have only seen road-killed Tuans, and hope to see a live one someday soon.



Pound Bend picnic area; On my way there, near the Stonehouse, I saw a Collared Sparrowhawk shoot by and head into some

trees on the river.

Near the Tunnel I checked the fishing licences of two young guys who had just caught two attractive Macquarie Perch, both of which were well over the legal size of 25 cm and weighed over a pound.

In the picnic area near the river I saw a large Blackwood that appeared to be a feeding tree for Sugar Gliders. The tree was heavily marked by these volplaning masters. Koalas were in the trees above. As always.

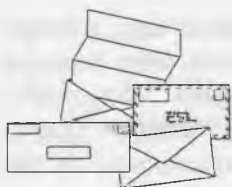
Earlier Fauna Observations

On my first day on the job I saw a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles and now see them regularly in the district.

My best sighting to date has been a platypus and an echidna, not far from each other, near the river at Yarra Brae during my second week. Also, in another reserve I saw a pair of Powerful Owls.

Other observations include: a large Tiger Snake next to the Folly heading for Frogland; a Little Falcon on the wing at Stane Brae, and a Darter in the Yarra at Jumping Creek.

Well that's quite a few observations over a short period of time. I'm waiting to see a wombat somewhere soon. I can't wait!



Letters to the Editor

Neighbours of Scotchmans Hill are understandably anxious about the changes occurring to the block. The boundaries have been delineated and work on rehabilitation has begun. Some neighbours are losing their main property access and others have invested minor works on land that isn't theirs. Like a few of us in Warrandyte, they have enjoyed benefits of the land manager's inaction on encroachments on public bushland boundaries and they consider changes made maybe long ago, almost theirs as of right.

I think living next to public bushland is a

fantastic privilege, an ever-changing, never-ending wealth of experiences that even includes almost exclusive use of it (because people are naturally spread thinly in it), and for me there is a pleasurable duty to know about the bushland and help look after it, but I also understand the predicament of people faced with changes to 'their' bit and the way things were.

I think it would be worth Parks VICTORIA, and FOWSP focusing on the neighbours' concerns, and doing all we can to alleviate problems caused by the changes, creating genuine support for rehabilitation of Scotchmans Hill.

Anthony Owen

Interstate

Almost Paradise

By Pat and Mike Coupar

There were a few reminders of Warrandyte, like the bright yellow rush lily and the funnel-shaped pink convolvulus that dotted the heathland. But mostly it was different, very very different to our well-known and loved Warrandyte bushland.

More often than not our holidays are spent camping in National Parks, usually in Victoria. This time we went interstate to New South Wales and it was interesting to compare and contrast similarities and differences between the two States.

NSW has a total of 76 National Parks. It does not have State Parks as such, but instead has State Recreation Reserves of which there are six. In addition there are 14 Nature Reserves and 11 Historic Sites.

Apart from New England, all the National Parks we visited were on the north coast. The Parks themselves were stunning, particularly Yuraygir which, the brochure told us, protects the longest stretch of undeveloped coastline in NSW. This claim was undisputable. Not only are there pristine beaches fringed by pandanus and casuarina, but the foreshore and hinterland stretching as far as the eye can see is a wonderfully diverse assortment of ecosystems including heathland, swamps, lagoons, open sedgelands and best of all, pockets and ribbons of coastal sub-tropical rainforest. This rare littoral rainforest is now so depleted that the largest strip at Iluka has been awarded World Heritage status by the United Nations.

But even this paradise has its blemish. It is called Bitou Bush, a sub-species of the South

African plant we know in Victoria as Boneseed. We were horrified to see, in places, swathes of this naturalised noxious weed and even more horrified to learn that it had been planted deliberately to 'stabilise' the dunes following sand mining which was finally phased out in the late 1970's. Various methods of control have been tried including aerial spraying. However, it is hoped that a new biological control using the caterpillar of a moth may be effective (previously a beetle had been tried without much success).

A volunteer group called 'Dunecare' is active along the coast and we noticed some planting of native species in areas where the Bitou Bush had died.

Away from the Bitou Bush on the coastal fringe the biodiversity increases dramatically. In the heathlands masses of red and yellow bell flowers - these were Christmas Bells which like the grass trees they associate with, flower profusely after fire.

There were several things we particularly liked about the camping areas (known as rest areas). All were very spacious, each site had its own steel bbq and most had a table and bench; wood was supplied - off cuts from local saw mills bought by the Parks to discourage campers from cutting down the trees! Camping fees for the Parks we stayed in ranged from free to \$10 per night (plus in one case \$7.50 entry fee).

One revegetation sign we rather liked read 'regeneration area please assist by not entering' - a slightly more subtle approach than 'keep off'.

These are only personal impressions of places we visited. However, they may be of interest if any Fowspians are considering a trip to this area. If anyone would like to share their experiences of visits to National Parks either around Victoria or Interstate the editors would welcome your stories.



Mount Lofty - A Further Update

We can now report that the bill incorporating 88 hectares of Mount Lofty into the Warrandyte State Park was passed by the Legislative Assembly in the Lower House on Wednesday March 19th. However, the bill is yet to be passed by the Legislative Council in the Upper House.

FOWSP was informed of this latest development in a letter from Lorraine Elliott, member for Mooroolbark. Lorraine says she "anticipates that the bill will have a smooth passage through the Upper House".

Meanwhile the champagne stays on ice, but we hope to be opening it fairly soon.



by B.G

Coupe/Coop Etymology

"And an answer came directed in a writing unexpected..... and *verbatim* I will quote it". (The Banjo)

This came from Neil Tessier:

"A Study in Etymology.

The word commonly used by timber workers to describe a "group of trees" is a stand. Thus you can have a stand of messmate, woollybutt, ash etc. Stands are located in the "bush". The bush being the place where logging is taking place.

The then Forests Commission adopted the term "coop" to refer to the area within the bush allocated for logging.

Coop is defined in dictionaries as an enclosure for fowls. Thus the ladies parlour at the local pub is also known as the hens coop. The Forests Commission adopted the spelling coupe to distinguish their coop from ALL other coops when it was realised that timber workers were turning up at the local pub during working hours and ladies were found wandering in the bush.

This explanation was given to me by my late father-in-law Chris Harrison.

P.S. *Coupar* is still under review. Sorry Pat."

This came from H. A. Guiillaume:

"The word was originally spelled *copse* or *cop-pice*. It first appeared in print in the English language in 1538 to designate a small wood or a thicket grown for the purpose of periodical cutting. During the 18th century it was re-introduced with the spelling *coupe*.

It is taken from the Old Norman-French word *copeiz* (newly cut wood) and the verb *coupar* (to cut) and ultimately from the Low Latin *colpus* (substantive) and *copare* (verb) meaning to cut by striking in opposition to the classical Latin *se-care*, to saw."

Bouquet

A bouquet to the person who carefully cleared the ground in a large circle around the barbecue at the Folly. Fire safety is an ever present priority.

Thoughts on Tuans



By Ant Owen

Recently two dead Brush-tailed Phascogales, also known as Tuans, were brought home to a Wattleblossom Rd. address by a cat. The habitat of these infrequently seen marsupials is generally dry open forest ridges, and there are a couple of

known populations in the Warrandyte area.

A cat might go a couple of kilometres per foray and may even pick up carrion. A territorial Tuan might move through uncharacteristic corridors like the vegetated banks of the Yarra in search of new territory, but there is also suitable habitat close to the cat's house, which to me suggests two things:

- the high conservation value of the bush blocks right in the middle of town.
- it's time again to work on reducing the harm cats cause.

Anti Ring Road Organization (ARRO)

Public Meeting

'No Ring Road Through the Green Wedge'

Wednesday April 30th 8.00pm
The Great Hall Monsalvat, Hillcrest
Avenue, Eltham

Speakers include: Jason Torrance Anti freeway campaigner from Britain and Nick Low: Senior lecturer in Planning, Melbourne University
Also live music and visual displays

Further information Fia Clendinnen 9844 3454 & Mark Gardner 9844 3799
ARRO P.O Box 126, Warrandyte 3113

Worth Repeating

Along came a spider White-tails: mistaken identity or arachnophobia?

By DAVID LANGSAM

*Spider! Spider nasty bite
In the bed-clothes you're a fright,
Were you framed or were you not
When charged with causing flesh to rot?*

Even a not very life-like drawing of the white-tailed spider faxed from the Museum of Victoria was enough to make me jump when I returned to my office.

Four of the little monsters (up to three centimetres) have visited in the past couple of weeks, apparently rising from their winter snooze and on the hunt for a tasty morsel around the house or in the garden. They did not survive their encounters with this mild-mannered arachnophobe.

Knowing that a friend spent months with a rotting ankle - blamed on a white-tailed spider - put me on the alert for the native bug with the big reputation.

My friend was cured only after intensive therapy, including several ineffective courses of antibiotics, followed by an eight week treatment of corticosteroids, which stopped the spread of the flesh rot but produced dire side-effects.

Finally, several weeks of therapy in a hyperbaric (decompression) chamber at the Alfred Hospital increased blood oxygen levels to fight the disease, which generally takes the form of a non-healing ulcer and is sometimes known as Necrotising Arachnidism.

According to Dr Ian Millar, head of the Alfred's hyperbaric services, surgical removal of the affected area has been tried in the US, with evidence that surgery has further spread the decay.

But the advance publicity may be worse than the spider's proven bite. *Lampona cylindrata*, to give the white-tail its formal name, is on the move in Melbourne's warm(ish) spring weather, but both the Museum of Victoria and the Australian Venom Research Unit at Melbourne University agree that there is not enough evidence to convict the spider of causing the gangrenous flesh-eating disease.

The museum takes about 10 calls a day about spiders, of which 90 per cent are about the white-tail. The Venom Research Unit receives about 1000 calls a year, primarily from doctors and researchers.

I thought I had been bitten by one last year when a small bite on my calf became itchy, leading to an

enlarged lymph node reaction. A year later there is still a five millimetre discoloration.

Did you see the spider, asked Graham Milledge, curator of arachnids at the Museum of Victoria. Er . . . well . . . no. Did your friend? No.

Dr Millar says that of the patients he has treated for suspected white-tail spider bite, one or two did positively identify the spider. He says it is rare for people who are bitten by spiders to see their attackers, but he stressed that most victims don't get Necrotising Arachnidism. More typically, the spiders leave a small trail of painful blisters.

Dr Mark Harvey, of Western Australian Museum, and Dr Robert Raven, of the Queensland Museum, defend the white-tail, arguing a case of mistaken identity. Like Milledge, they say there is little evidence of a white-tail spider link to Necrotising Arachnidism and that other causes, including bacterial infection, possibly from rotting food remaining in the spiders' fangs, are more likely than the venom or digestive juices of the spider. They suggest a specific bacterium, *Mycobacterium ulcerans* is a more likely culprit.

Milledge says white-tails are active at night and, when they hide between the sheets, in linen cupboards, curtain folds or clothing, they are just attempting to approximate the natural habitat of loose bark and leaf litter.

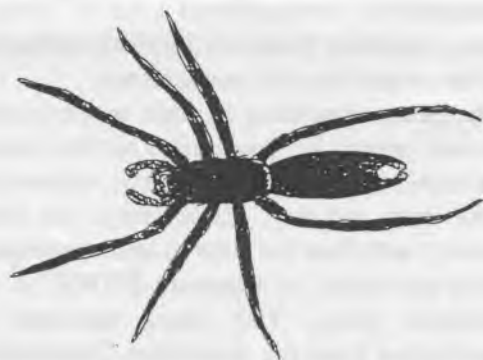
A vagrant rather than nesting spider, white-tails prowl for food at night, often the small black spiders that form webs in windows. Milledge says the white tails are timid, but less expert observers describe them as trying to claw their way out of jars and rearing up to attack.

Once trapped, disposal can range from squashing to washing down the sink in hot water. Insecticide doesn't work it blocks their respiratory system but they can recover.

If you positively identify a white-tail spider that has bitten you, see your GP and ask the doctor to call the museum's venom research unit. Take the remains of the spider with you and ensure it is correctly identified.

Source: *The Age* November 1996

Editor's Note: White-tail Spiders are very common in autumn as well as spring often entering houses.



All About Alligator Weed

The how, why and where of this new threat to Victoria

by Joan MacMahon

This is one of the world's worst water weeds and has recently been detected in both Warrandyte and Doncaster. It has been causing serious problems in New South Wales for several decades and **must not** be allowed to gain a permanent foothold in Victoria. Any infestation, no matter how small, must be destroyed.

Alligator Weed is a summer growing perennial which multiplies rapidly in water and forms a dense mat of interwoven, hollow stems that may extend 15 metres from the shore. These floating masses can readily support the weight of a person. During wet weather, when swamps and creeks overflow, it spreads to adjoining land. Once established there it can spread very quickly, crowding out most of the ground flora, including pasture species. Left unchecked, it can choke entire rivers and wetlands with consequent damage to ecosystems, wildlife habitats and agricultural income.

Originating in South America, Alligator Weed is causing problems in countries as far apart as India, Thailand, Burma, New Zealand and the United States of America, (where it threatens the viability of the soybean industry).

It came into Australia about fifty years ago in

ship's ballast which was dumped near Newcastle. It now infests about 2000 hectares of damp pasture land at nearby Williamstown and is actively spreading to other locations. A recently detected and explosive outbreak near Griffith, in Barren Box Swamp, is threatening the local rice growing industry. The whole Murray-Darling basin is at risk since the Barren Box Swamp drains into the Lachlan River.

Despite much research and on ground treatment, most of the N.S.W. outbreaks remain uncontrolled

There are a number of features of this plant which exacerbate the difficulty of dealing with it. These are:

- [1]: It is similar in appearance to a popular Asian vegetable.
- [2]: It grows readily from stem fragments.
- [3]: It is difficult to treat with herbicides.
- [4]: Physical removal of large infestations is impossible.

In next month's newsletter we will provide an illustration of this menace and details of the preferred course of action should you discover an infestation.

FOWSP has its 'Say' about the EPA

By Mike Coupar

In a surprising move, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) commissioned a market research company, Quadrant Research Services, to find out how it can improve on its performance.

Four groups consisting of eight people in each group were invited by Quadrant to air their views. The groups, which met separately, represented interests from industry, the country, the broad community and from the conservation movement.

I was nominated to represent FOWSP in the conservation group. This group consisted of representatives from the Australian Conservation Foundation, Environment Victoria, Beaumaris Conservation League, Koonung Forestway, Yarra

Valley Landcare, Residents Action Group and Friends of Watkins Bay.

The meeting took place on Wednesday, March 12th and lasted about an hour and a half. After defining the meaning of 'environment' (not as easy as it seems!), we proceeded to tell our market researcher in no uncertain terms that the EPA has been resting on its laurels. We stressed that improvements must be made in respect to inspecting and in convicting offenders; in setting standards of purity and safety; in monitoring; in working with other instrumentalities (e.g. Parks Victoria); in undertaking more research and in being more active in providing information/education. To name but a few faults!

Needless to say the EPA is vastly underfunded, receiving only about one third of its New South Wales counterpart. Quadrant will prepare a report on the responses from the groups. What happens to it after that is anyone's guess.

Calendar of Sunday Events

APRIL 27TH Koala Count

Time:- 1:00 - 4:00 PM

Lots of sharp eyes needed for our Annual Koala Count. Bring the kids and a pair of binoculars for a close up view of koalas. Followed by afternoon tea. Bring a plate to share.

Leader: Brenda Hunter

MAY 25TH Common boundaries

Time:- 12:30 - 4:00 PM.

Help the rangers construct two fences on The Common. One to protect some special orchids from rabbits and kangaroos. The other to prevent access and damage by vehicles and horses. Followed by afternoon tea. Bring a plate to share. Tea, Coffee, milk and hot water supplied.

Leader: David Van Bockel

JUNE 29TH 4th Hill Extravaganza

Time:- 9:30 - 12:30 PM.

Rediscover Whipstick Gully! See how well our plants have grown and add a few more. Come to the Air-shaft to see one of Warrandyte's most successful revegetation fences. A little handweeding should keep the site in check. Followed by a nature walk. BBQ provided, with meat, bread and BBQ supplied, BYO salads and drinks.

Leader: David Van Bockel

JULY 27TH Frog Day

Time:- 1:00 - 4:00 PM

Come to learn about our local frogs in 'Frogland' We will listen and look for frogs, dip net for tadpoles and other aquatic invertebrates. Plus general 'Frogland' maintenance. Followed by afternoon tea. Bring a plate to share.

Leader: Jenny Hoskin

AUGUST 31ST Koornong Riverwalk

Time:- 1:30 - 4:00 PM

Follow up on the previous weed control along the River Track. Admire the highlights of the year's work. Small digging tools will be useful. Followed by afternoon tea. Bring a plate to share.

Leader: Cathy Willis

SEPTEMBER 21ST Timber Reserve Treasures

Time:- 10:00 - 1:00 PM

A wildflower walk through the reserve to look for orchids, some of which will be flowering. Followed by an inspection of Pittosporum Gully Fence for some maintenance weeding. BBQ provided, with meat, bread and BBQ supplied, BYO salads and drinks.

Leader: Brian Phefley

Note: this is not the last Sunday in the month

Parks VICTORIA Media Statement

The creation of Parks Victoria to manage the State's network of parks was to ensure a coordinated and well-resourced approach to park management. By amalgamating the expertise of the former National Parks Service and Melbourne Parks and Waterways, Parks Victoria is able to draw on an even wider skills base to protect and enhance the natural heritage of our State.

On announcing the creation of Parks Victoria, the Minister for Conservation and Land Management, the Hon. Marie Tehan MP, emphasised "This will result in a stronger focus on conservation, driven by state of the art environmental management systems and ensure our parks system in well-placed as we head into the new century."

Parks Victoria is committed to having a Ranger In Charge and a team of staff based in Warrandyte State Park to ensure that the park and its visitors are well serviced.

A review of the office and depot facilities currently at Warrandyte will be undertaken over the next few months to ascertain their adequacy and appropriateness. This review will be headed by the new Chief Ranger, Annie Volkering, with input from both the staff and key stakeholders such as the Friends of Warrandyte and the Country Fire Authority.

Annie Volkering will meet with the Friends of Warrandyte within a week of commencing her role, with the objective of listening to and discussing the concerns of the Friends Group.

Calendar of Sunday Events

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Friends of Warrandyte State Park Inc.
P.O. Box 220
Warrandyte, 3113

Committee

Mike Coupar 9903 9567
Ron Taylor 9844 4285
Flora Anderson 9722 1776
Pat Coupar 9844 1650
Joan MacMahon 9844 3213
Anthony Owen 9844 1344
Cathy Willis 9844 1841
Julie Bishop 9844 4661

Contact person
Contact person
Public Officer
Newsletter editor
Newsletter editor
Treasurer
Secretary
Membership

Jenny Hoskin 9808 9231
Alistair Traill 9722 1518

Market

Betty Oke 9844 3763



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