

May 1997

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

Park Depot Decisions

By Mike Coupar

At the beginning of this year FOWSP became concerned that plans were being made by the new Parks Victoria to close the Warrandyte State Park Depot. This was based on a statement reported in the February issue of the Warrandyte Diary by the then Acting Area Manager, Stewart Ord, who said "obviously there is going to be a rationalisation of depots and there is no answer for Warrandyte. It is reasonably old in comparison with some other assets within Parks Victoria. We will be looking at where it's best to base an operational crew". Given our hard work of last year to secure a replacement for Ranger-in-Charge, Matt Le Duc, and reasonable staff numbers at the Depot, this was the last thing we needed to worry about during our summer holidays.

We treated the statement seriously because, following the formation of Parks Victoria, we are now dealing with a new Regional Manager and Chief Ranger, with whom we had had no contact. Our anxiety was compounded when we were informed that the new Regional Manager could not see us for at least two months. However, thanks to local MP Phil Honeywood, a meeting was arranged sooner than later.

The meeting took place on the 8th of April in the 'Folly' and was attended by FOWSP Committee members Flora Anderson, Pat and Mike Coupar, Joan MacMahon, Alistair Traill and Cathy Willis. Parks Victoria were represented by Neil McCarthy, Regional Officer for Melbourne West, Annie Volkering, Chief Ranger and Andrew Nixon, Ranger-in-Charge for Warrandyte State Park. Annie and Neil were first given a quick tour of the nursery and 'Frogland' before being presented with a signed copy each of our book 'Discover

Warrandyte' and a newsletter. Various issues were discussed over lunch.

Annie Volkering reiterated her media statement sent to secretary Cathy Willis on the 28th of March, that "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 Chief Ranger Annie Volkering with input from both the staff and key shareholders such as the Friends and the Country Fire Authority". We thanked Annie for the opportunity to have our say. When pressed, Neil McCarthy could not say if the depot would remain at its current location nor how many staff would be based there.

Annie Volkering told us that she and Andrew Nixon would be assessing the WSP Management Plan to see if it requires updating. If so, Annie said that FOWSP would be invited to have some input.

At the end of the meeting our new managers informed us of their general backgrounds and new duties, which seem to carry a large degree of responsibility. Neil McCarthy explained that he manages a big area ranging from Bells Beach in the west to Sugarloaf in the east with over 100 Friends groups and will be kept extremely busy and will not have much time to meet with Friends groups.

Meanwhile, we look forward to our meeting with Annie Volkering so that we can express our views on why the Warrandyte depot must remain at its present location.

FOWSP THURSDAY PROGRAM

MAY 15TH Park Planting Day MORNING ACTIVITY

Meet at the depot 10.00 am

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)

MAY 22ND Bend of Islands (BICA) Tour DAY ACTIVITY

Meet on site at 10.00 am

BICA have kindly offered to show us around their special bushland haven in Kangaroo Ground South. Lunch will be provided.

Leader Carol and Alan Bonny. Meet at the Oxley Bridge, Henley Rd, Kangaroo Ground Sth. (Melways ref. map 24 F1)

MAY 29TH Fiddler Fence Extension MORNING ACTIVITY

Meet on site at 10.00am

Fiddler Fence was our very first rabbit exclusion plot. It has been so successful that it needs to be enlarged. The rangers would welcome our help.

Leader David Van Bockel. Meet at Fiddler car park off Webb St, Warrandyte (Melways ref. map 35 G3)

JUNE 5TH Pound Bend Walk

Meet at the depot 1.15pm

Join us for an afternoon wander beside the river along the Pound Bend walking track complete with bridges.

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

JUNE 12TH Park Planting Day MORNING ACTIVITY

Meet on site at 10.00 am

There are plenty more plants to put in the ground. The location is inside the Pound Bend Tunnel fence, the ground will be soft and no rabbit guarding is required.

Leader David Van Bockel. Meet at Pound Bend Tunnel car park, Pound Bend Rd, Warrandyte (Melways ref. map 23 A11)

JUNE 19TH Species Enrichment Survey

Meet at the depot at 1.00 pm

We will pool cars to have a look at several sites at Jumping Creek and The Common where rare and threatened species have been planted in the last few years. How have they survived the summer?

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

Plant Sale

The nursery is overstocked at the moment with trees, shrubs, grasses and ground covers. Now that the rain has come at last, it is a perfect time to do some planting.

If you would like some plants for your garden just come down to the nursery on a Thursday morning (see Thursday program to check that there isn't an activity in the Park) or ring Cathy (9844 1841) or Pat (9844 1650).

A box of 40-50 plants can be selected in return for a donation of \$20. If your property borders the State Park and you would like to do some planting along the boundary then plants are free.



Summer's Leftovers

By Pat Coupar

The mornings were chilly, very chilly, but once the sun emerged from behind the forested mountains the temperature climbed rapidly and the days were spent in blissful sunshine.

Thirteen 'Friends' had converged on Sheeppark Flat, near Mansfield, in Victoria's high country for the FOWSP annual Autumn camp. Our site, on a large grassy flat beside the crystal clear waters of the Howqua River, was well-chosen by the first to arrive. Despite being the start of the school holidays, the place was not crowded and there was plenty of room for everyone beneath the towering Manna Gums. Over five days, from Friday April 11th until Tuesday April 15th, some came, some went and some went and came back again.

On the Saturday a party of us, in three four wheel drives, made the long haul up to the summit of Mount Stirling. The narrow serpentine track deteriorated the further up we went - the last section was akin to a big dipper with huge regularly interspersed mud humps which the three fully laden cars handled well. As we ascended, Alpine Ash gave way to Snow Gum, but as we neared the top of the mountain even these hardy trees became wind-shorn and stunted.

After inspecting, and in one case climbing, the three-poled metal structure that marked the summit, it was time for lunch. Turning our back on the grotesque ski resort which scarred Mount Buller's summit and slopes, we choose to eat our lunch overlooking the pleated mountain ranges



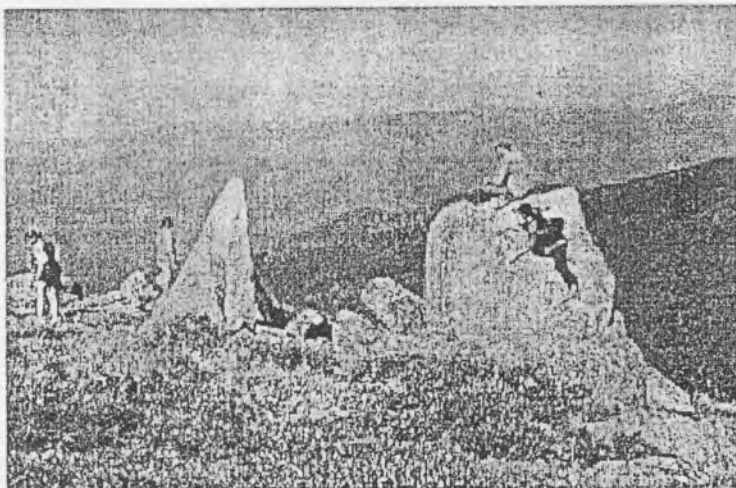
and hidden valleys to the north. Like the brightly coloured grasshoppers so abundant on the summit, we too basked in the sun on the weathered

granite boulders, while Flame Robins and a Richard's Pipit entertained us while we ate. Fresh air, warm sunshine and stunning mountain views are a heady mixture and it was hard to tear ourselves away from it all.

Back at camp, smoke drifted lazily from the slow burning camp fire. After a stroll beside the river to stretch our legs, we settled down to a pleasant evening around the fire under a clear star-studded sky. Port and chocolate were passed around as conversations waxed and waned.

The following day was even hotter - summer's leftover's gratefully accepted. Our group, now minus three, went to visit a tunnel a few kilometres upstream of our camp. Rather like a mini Pound Bend tunnel, it had probably been constructed for the same purpose - that of diverting the river to expose its bed for alluvial gold mining. Along this section of the Howqua deep swimming holes have been formed, so clear you can see the bottom metres below. Lining the river are tussocks upon tussocks of Carex species. Many, unfortunately, having been grazed by cattle - a downside of this lovely location.

The weekend was a wonderful opportunity to wind down and slow the pace of life for a while. We left as we had arrived, in sunshine with a promise to return perhaps in summer when the Alpine flowers are in full bloom and the Howqua swimming holes are just a little warmer.





Rangers Report

The Ranger-in-Charge and Chief Ranger have undertaken an audit of the Warrandyte State Park Management Plan. This provides an overview of the achievements, new directions/strategies given past government and environmental changes, and the challenges ahead for the next five years. The audit will recommend a more intensive review of certain aspects of the plan. This will be undertaken in the new financial year. Consultation will be had with FOWSP and other interested parties.

The Rabbit Calicivirus Disease (RCD) strategy is progressing with Jane Dyke attempting to spend allocated monies rapidly in the most appropriate locations.

Information regarding the fuel reduction program:

- Eltham Copper Butterfly Reserve ecological burn has been postponed until Autumn 1998.

- Scotchman's Hill burn undertaken. A well managed job although not providing the result we had wished for.
- St Andrews Nature Conservation Reserve - completed with a good result.
- Fourth Hill and Hochkins Ridge awaiting the correct weather conditions. Hopefully still to be undertaken.
- Yarra Brae - postponed.

As a result of rationalisation of managed land areas, Warrandyte is likely to lose some reserves north of the river to Parks Victoria Sugarloaf depot, but will probably pick up Glynn's and Longridge Reserves downstream.

Various research projects are underway through tertiary institutions, including macro - invertebrate and fish surveys, rare and threatened invertebrates, mammals and the taxonomic revision of the *Geranium* genus.

Finally, Ranger-in-Charge, Andrew Nixon, is taking long service leave from May 7th. Extra assistance for WSP will come from Mitzi Davidson, seconded to Warrandyte for a ten week period.

Profile on Frankie (Ranger David Farrer)

I started at the You Yangs in 1982 as works crew staff and began training to become a ranger. I was based at the You Yangs for five years. In that time I had two years experience in land protection works, pest plant and animal control and also conducted education tours of Serendip Sanctuary and the You Yangs.

I was leading hand of 14 crew before I left for my first full time ranger position at Daylesford where I stayed for two years. At Daylesford I managed a large area including the Wombat State Forest, Hepburn Regional Park, Lerderderg State Park, and a number of smaller Flora reserves. I occasionally patrolled Werribee Gorge State Park.

I was seconded to Brisbane Ranges National Park and worked there for twelve months with Ranger-In-Charge Chris Worrall. I really enjoyed my time at the Brisbane Ranges.

After that I moved to the Geelong office

and worked in areas such as Fisheries, Land Protection, and ranger duties at reserves around the Bellarine Peninsula. Then a position came up at Anglesea managing the Angahook-Lorne State Park & reserves. I was at Anglesea for five years and loved the place. I have always loved the sea. I intend to end up working or living on the Australian coast someday.

While at Anglesea I was involved in a ranger exchange to Britain and managed a Nature Reserve for the National Trust, on the Brancaster coast, in Norfolk. I was in England for twelve months and loved the experience.

I was able to travel in my holiday time to Scotland, one of my favourite places in the world! I visited relatives in Wales, and journeyed on to Greece and spent a month exploring Turkey. I really had a wonderful time.

I returned to Anglesea and worked for 18 months before the position at Warrandyte State Park was advertised.

So here I am! Working in sunny Warrandyte, the place with a Great Park where the River Runs Through It!

Koornong Latest

By Cathy Willis

The Koornong group has had a fairly quiet few months since the January break. Where are all of our semi-regulars?

We started the year with some fairly easy maintenance weeding at 'Triple Tree Fence', where the continual run off from adjoining properties helped the pre-Christmas plantings of grasses to flourish. Some of the rare semi-aquatics have also spread over summer. Whilst weeding, we were rewarded with the presence of numerous brilliant Firetails coming down to drink in the last available puddles. With help from the Park with weed spraying, this area is really taking off and is well worth a look.

The 'Ivy Patch' needed even less weeding. This was due not only to the dry conditions, but also our regular follow ups last year. It is great to see the bare patches we included in fences, but didn't plant into, regenerating once the grazing pressure was removed.

The Park is currently "fixing up" the access road into the bottom riverside gate. This was fast

becoming a 4WD only road, and was also getting too overgrown to allow fire truck access. Coincidentally we decided, in April, to start work on the same area by clearing ivy around the carpark. A beautiful old Manna Gum - full of nesting hollows - was being strangled, Poa tussocks were suffocating, it was time to move in and clear some space for them! Clearing continued in May, along with digging out numerous Angled Onion bulbs just beginning to shoot. We will continue this work over winter, and hope to be able to enlist FOWSP's help with planting come Spring.

As the orchid season approaches we will take the time off to go hunting for the early leaves, woody weed pulling as we go. We will also schedule another "drill and fill" Pittosporum day in the next few months, along with regular follow ups of previous work sites.

So all you "old" Koornong helpers, and any new ones, don't forget the first Wednesday of the month. See you there!



The swamp hen found last month was actually a Dusky Moorhen which has now been released at

Banyule wetlands in Heidelberg.

Over the last few weeks Julie has received two Tawny Frogmouths, both hit by cars. One has already been released, but the other was more seriously injured with a broken wing and is still under care.

Two more adult ringtails possums have been found this month attacked by cats, one died and the other was fortunate to survive the attack mostly unscathed, and has since been released.

Kangaroos have featured strongly this month. Julie received a call to attend one that had been hit by a car on Jumping Creek Road, but when she arrived at the location the animal had gone - presumably recovered and hopped back into the bush.

Another kangaroo also hit by a car, was found in Johansons Road near The Common. Although he was still able to hop around, his cheek bone

had been severely crushed and the unfortunate animal had to be put down.

The third kangaroo, a male, was found near Dudley Road having been chased by four dogs. He was suffering myopathy - a potentially fatal condition of the muscles brought on by stress. The roo was taken to Healesville where he has been receiving massage and therapy to his paralysed muscles. Although it is still early days he does seem to be responding to the treatment.

Remember Wombles the fully grown male wombat with mange? Most of his hair has now regrown and he has left the Blue Cross and been released in the Dandenong National Park. This Park is nearer to where he was originally found than Warrandyte.

Since we began Julie's column several months ago, it has become increasingly obvious that the greatest threat to our native wildlife comes from the two C's - cats and cars. But they are not the real villains however, it is the thoughtless drivers and thoughtless cat owners who must take the blame for the unnecessary injuries and death of our precious native fauna.

Wet, Wild and Willing

By Flora Anderson, FOWSP delegate

Wet, Wild and Willing was the title of the Eighth Biennial Friends Conference held over the weekend of April the 19th & 20th. The venue was Lord Somers Camp, Somers, half way between Point Leo and Sandy Point on Western Port Bay, adjacent to the Coolart Wetlands.

What a lovely situation! With the whole of Mornington Peninsula's wineries and art and craft galleries within reach, plus local plants and birds to be discovered. We thought we were on to a good thing, but the Conference consumed most of our time and outside diversions were confined to a stroll along the beach before breakfast and a tour of the Coolart Wetlands on Sunday morning.

Attending the conference were representatives from 37 Friends Groups, one Landcare Group and several members of the Parks Victoria Grants Program.

Saturday was devoted to speakers, who covered a variety of subjects relating to wetlands as well as Friends Groups issues. Sunday morning's programme offered tours or workshops while the afternoon was taken up by the business meeting.

Sherryl Garbutt M.P, Shadow Minister for the Environment, in her opening address to the Conference, made the following points, which echoed our own concerns perfectly. (I couldn't help thinking that it would have been an entirely different address if the Minister herself had been able to attend!)

- Friends Groups should be included in local processes.
- Commercial proposals for Parks could have detrimental effects.
- Making money out of Parks is not on, eg. outrageous development proposals for Wilsons Prom and the 2 Apostles.
- Secrecy surrounding these proposals is unacceptable. Documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act reveal that Heatherlie quarry will be reopened.
- Flora & Fauna Guarantee Act is inoperable as indicated by the failure to protect the rare orchids of the basalt plains grasslands.

The first speaker was Jeff Floyd, Chief Executive Officer Parks Victoria, who tried to justify the formation of Parks Victoria, saying that "protecting the environment" and "managing

visitor pressure" would now be high priorities. During question time I made the point that these were already priorities within the previous National Parks Service. Some other issues he touched were :

- A "One stop Grant Shop".
- One centralized phone number for all Park enquiries.
- Budget for Parks Victoria 100 million dollars per annum.
- An increase in grants commitment.
- Friends Network will be encouraged to grow and other environment groups should be included.
- Mobile phones for Rangers.

It was obvious that delegates were very worried about the maintenance of biodiversity and so question time was fiery. Mr Floyd finished by extending a welcome to us to discuss issues over a cup of coffee any time.

Scott Seymour, Melbourne Water, was next. His talk was on water quality was very helpful, practical and concise. He spoke about types of wetlands; the impacts of management disturbance; biological indicators of water quality; availability of test kits; effects of golf courses on wetlands and the importance of a dry phase to keep out invasive bull rushes (*Typha* sp.) and reeds (*Phragmites australis*).

I asked Scott about the degraded banks of the Yarra at the Mt Lofty wetland. He promised he will meet us on site to discuss the matter. He said that this is Melbourne Water responsibility.

David Young, Parks Victoria, spoke about Environmental Management Plans with the conservation of biodiversity as their priority. His work has been concentrated on Metropolitan Parks, but I was left unsure as to whether the same process will now extend to all Victorian Parks. Government policy will dictate this, I should think.

Best Friends Award went to Carl Rayner, Friends of Organ Pipes and Sam Bruton, Friends of the Great South West Walk, both worthy recipients. Sam's bridges are worth seeing, if you are ever down that way.

Tony Brindley told us about the practical aspect of creating wetlands. There was an

Continued on next page

Wet, Wild and Willing continued.

opportunity on Sunday morning to visit his property, "Boogoolum", but you must ask Alistair and Carol Traill about this as I attended the Flora Information System workshop instead.

Felicity Faris, Threatened Species Network Victoria, gave us an insight into the many threatening processes relevant to riparian and aquatic environments. Some are already listed on the Flora & Flora Guarantee Act, but as yet no Action Statements have been written. No wonder Sherryl Garbutt calls the Act "inoperative". Felicity asked us to fill in sheets she had prepared, giving her ideas as to how we could help and what action we thought responsible authorities should take.

Tim Winkler environment writer for the Age newspaper spoke on "Affordable Publicity for your Group". He gave advice on how to compose a fax, or a letter on issues requiring publicity. Conciseness, clarity and news sense being the key needs and the ideal length - five paragraphs, no more than one page. We also need to be aware of what sells newspapers! Tim receives hundreds of letters and fax messages per week and only gets one or two published. No excuse to give up though. Local newspapers are often the best bet. Lou Hollis from Friends of Tower Hill told how she used the local press to stop communication masts being erected on Tower Hill.

Networking and socialising are very important at these conferences and we took full advantage of the opportunity. Alistair was able to find a few more speakers for the FOWSP series of lectures soon to be publicised. All groups were able to speak about their activities, their hopes and their fears on Saturday night after dinner - a very good session. We were well received and felt encouraged. Time was the problem.

Mild weather enhanced the visit to the Coolart wetlands led by Ranger Brian. Three beautiful Yellow-billed Spoonbills, a Great Egret and Australasian Grebes all obligingly appeared. Other delegates went with Friends of Local Koalas Land and Wildlife who led a tour of their projects.

I decided to break off from the Coolart tour (not an easy decision) to join the workshop run by Michelle Arundell and Fiona Young from the Arthur Rylah Institute at Heidelberg. Michelle is the Manager of Flora Research and Fiona, Coordinator of the Victorian Flora Information System. I must confess I am computer illiterate, but now am on the first rung of the ladder to

understanding what the Flora Information System is all about.

The Victorian Data Bases (all the information gathered by the Flora Group under Paul Gullan) Herbarium records, Field Naturalists' records, Willis and Beaglehole records and private consultants' records. Friends Groups are encouraged to contribute information, eg. species lists, quadrat studies etc. A free service is available (plant list print outs etc.) to community groups, but consultants have to pay.

The business meeting, after Sunday lunch, was the last session of the conference. The Draft Parks Victoria/Friends of Parks and Reserves Guidelines was presented and comment was invited, discussed and eventually passed. Issues raised included: will staff reductions put more pressure on Friends Groups?; low morale among Park staff; quality of contracts questioned; if indigenous plantings are required they should be specified; Pest Plant Enquiry - we should write to MP's and the Minister for Conservation asking that the Committee's recommendations be implemented otherwise nothing may happen and the enquiry a waste of time and money.

A vote of thanks to those responsible for organising the Conference rounded proceedings and we all wended our way home, tired out, but glad we had come.



Yellow-billed
Spoonbill

Editors Note: The Draft Parks Victoria/Friends of Parks and Reserves Guidelines to which Flora referred will be published in next months newsletter.

Still Worrying About the Weather?

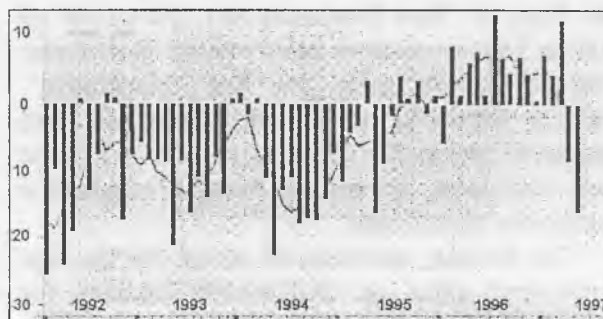
By Mike Coupar

Since the report in the March Newsletter, our local rainfall has continued to be below average. Even the Warrandyte bush has suffered. For instance, large patches of the seemingly resilient Burgan have succumbed to summer and autumn's desiccation along some banks of the Warrandyte gorge. So what is our fate according to the long range forecast? To help answer this it should be appreciated that the Australian climate tends to be chaotic and hence difficult to predict. The following summary by the Bureau of Meteorology illustrates this fact:

“For the three month January to March period, above to very much above average rain fell over much of the country. This included most of Western Australia, northwest Northern Territory, northern Cape York Peninsula and a very large area encompassing the southeast quarter of the Northern Territory, most of northern and eastern South Australia, the southwestern half of Queensland and the adjacent area of northern New South Wales. Below to very much below average rain fell in southeastern Queensland, southern and central Victoria and northeastern Tasmania”.

At last Victoria has experienced a significant share of rainfall. This started on Saturday the 3rd of May with more than 40 mm recorded in Warrandyte up to Wednesday the 7th. It is reassuring to know that the Bureau of Meteorology was predicting average rainfall two months ago and even more so to know that its Seasonal Climate Outlook for April to June is similar. The forecast indicates “no significant bias towards either wetter or drier than normal conditions over most parts of the continent”. The Bureau base their prediction on

Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) trends and recent rainfall patterns. The chart below shows monthly values of the SOI, where each bar represents the relative pressure difference between Hawaii and



Darwin. You may have noticed it when Rob Gell presents the forecast on Channel 9. The value of the SOI for March 1997 was -8, a drop of 21 points from the February value of +13. Normally a fall from positive to negative values is a prelude to dry conditions. However, the Bureau stress that large fluctuations in the SOI are fairly common during autumn and hence there is no cause for alarm.

The SOI affects ocean temperatures, and here there is a more optimistic indicator that we have seen the end of the Victorian Big Dry. According to the Bureau "the present pattern of ocean temperatures off Western Australia will increase the potential for northwest cloudbands during the mid-autumn to early winter. These cloudbands usually stretch across the interior of the continent from northwest to southeast and are a significant source of rain for parts of South Australia, northern Victoria and western New South Wales".

Feel better?

Common Boundaries

Date and Time: Sunday May 25th 12.30 pm to 4.00pm.

Place: Meet at the first car park on the left, Haslams Tk, off Johansons Rd, Warrandyte. (Melways ref. map 24 A3)

The rangers would like our help to construct two fences. One is to protect an area where some special orchids grow, the other is to prevent access and damage to the vegetation by vehicles and horses. No expertise is required, but your assistance would be most welcome.

Bring a plate to share for afternoon tea.

For more information ring Ranger David Van Bockel on 9844 2659



by B.G

Soup of the Season

The first Folly Thursday 'cool weather!' soup was prepared by Neal Tessier, 24th April. The roster is on the Folly noticeboard.

Cleanliness is next to.....

A bouquet to Ray Clarke for his effort early April giving the Folly a well needed clean-up and sort out.

Stone Tool

Further to the 'second aboriginal artefact'. It was a stone tool brought to Ranger Brian Phefley's attention by a visiting Koori.

The stone was found at a local midden and is on display in the information shelter at the Pound Bend Reserve.

Winnowing

Bill Roxborough has done a great job winnowing much of the seed we collect. He often attends and sorts seed on non-FOWSP days.

Take Your "Rubbish" Home?

Judging by evidence found in-situ we need to build a proper toilet block in the middle of The Coupe (near the depot). Elizabeth commented that in line with Park Policy people should take their rubbish home with them!

Dry Up? Dam Low

The dam nearest the Folly is so low that Jenny, Aaron, and Garth were able to plant halfway down the wall. The lack of rain lingers on.

Double A Rating (mid-April)

'Ant' and Asta Owen led a good party of people on a walk in the Black Flat area and reviewed the prior burning of dead willows on the Yarra Bank.

Deadline Date

Deadline for the newsletter has been brought forward to the last day of the preceding month.

All contributions welcome.

Stirling Activity

The FOWSP weekend at Sheeppark Flat was quite stimulating, (not including the tent-shadow display).

Thanks go to the Four-Wheel Drivers who enabled us to rest and refresh our souls at the top of Mt. Stirling (near Mt Buller). Let's keep Mt. Stirling 'sterling' clean. Thanks again to Ross Coupar, Neal Tessier and Mike Coupar.

Potential Visits?

Should we visit the Helmeted Honeyeater site, C.R.I.S.P. and Candlebark?

Resource

For \$10 deposit and \$2 per week researchers/genuine students can 'access' the Student Resource Folder for the Park. Phone (03) 98442659.

Hovering

FOWSP membership is hovering at 200.

Stop Press

We have just received word that Mount Lofty is now officially part of Warrandyte State Park. The long-awaited celebration can now take place. Details on the acquisition of Mount Lofty, it's history and it's future and our grand celebration in next months newsletter.

Coming Soon

FOWSP and other local environment groups, in conjunction with Manningham Council, are preparing a series of talks and slide nights on the fauna and flora of the local area.

The talks will take place at the Warrandyte Community Centre at 7.30 pm on the first Thursday of each month.

The first speaker is Peter Brown who will talk on 'Possums' on July 3rd. More information in next months newsletter.

More About Alligator Weed

One of the world's worst weeds

By Joan macMahon

As promised in last month's newsletter here is some more information on this absolutely awful plant.

What does it look like?

It's a soft, low growing herb with opposite pairs of lance shaped leaves. It has the ability to produce roots from all leaf nodes (as does Wandering Jew). According to David van Bockel, who has been monitoring the Ruffey Creek outbreak in Doncaster, it actually looks rather like a cross between Wandering Jew and one of the knotweeds.



It's botanical tag is *Alternanthera philoxeroides*.

Apparently it looks almost identical to Mukunu-wenna, (*Alternanthera sessilis*), a leafy green vegetable popular in parts of Asia,

(especially Sri Lanka). Consequently some members of our local Asian communities have been mistakenly cultivating it in their vegetable gardens. This explains why of the hundreds of outbreaks documented in Victoria most are in people's backyards.

Distinguishing features:

Alligator Weed

- flowers between November and March
- the flowers are on stalks up to 7cm. long
- has soft, hollow stems

Mukuna-Wenna

- flowers most of the year
- the flowers nestle close to the stem
- has harder stems

What if you should discover an outbreak?

The first thing to do is to leave it alone! This plant is so difficult to control it needs to be treated by experienced people, so **don't** attempt to pull, mow, mulch or put it in the rubbish.

Contact the experts at the Keith Turnbull Research Institute on (03) 97850111. This applies whether you find it on public or private land since as one of 14 State Prohibited Weeds D.C.N.R. has overall responsibility for it's control.

Counting Koalas

It was a warm and sunny day for the FOWSP Annual Koala Count at Pound Bend. Spotters concentrated on Track A which followed the river and then went around the back of the Orchard. A total of 15 koalas were counted which included eleven females, two males and two adolescents, these figures were similar to those of 1995 along the same track..

The favoured tree for the koalas along the river was the Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) while on the ridge, Red Box (*Eucalyptus polyanthemus*) was the preferred tree.

Many thanks to those who gave their time to count Warrandyte's koalas and a special thank you to Brenda Hunter who, as always, did a great job organising the day.

Any sightings of koalas in and around the Park should be recorded. Either contact Brenda on 9379 7375 or ring the Park on 9844 2659.



Calendar of Sunday Events

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

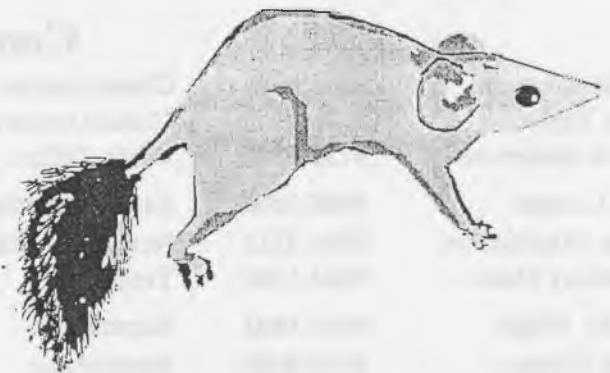
SEPTEMBER 21ST Timber Reserve Treasures

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



Brush-tailed Phascogale (Tuan)

Run Rabbits Run

Following the release of Rabbit Calicivirus Disease (RCD) in the Park the Department of Natural Resources and Environment has employed a Rabbit Management Program Co-ordinator. Jane Dyke has a Bachelor of Science from Monash University with majors in Botany and Zoology and is a member of the Committee of Management for Hochkins Ridge Flora Reserve in North Croydon. In her new position she is responsible for writing a Five Year Strategy for integrated rabbit control at Warrandyte State Park and on adjacent private land.

Her first task has been to contact a large number of neighbours of the Park via a letter drop to encourage residents to participate in the Good Neighbour Program. This has resulted in a grant application being submitted in conjunction with the nearby Yarra Valley Park for funding for rabbit control works. This will be followed up with a community information meeting which will answer questions on RCD, use of poisons and the long term results of rabbit control.

If you have any queries or suggestions please contact Jane at the Park depot on 9844 2659.

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Cathy Willis	9844 1841
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