

November 1997

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

Ecosystem first - Visitors second

By Flora Anderson

"Nugget" Coombs, an outstanding Australian, died on 29th October 1997. As a role model he would be hard to beat. His priorities were firmly fixed on the quality of the physical environment, educational and intellectual opportunity, Aboriginal affairs, physical recreation and diversity of artistic and cultural experience. He questioned the pursuit of material possessions and he questioned the application of the values of the market place to universities. His commitment to the public good was legendary.

What, you may ask, has this got to do with the recent Victoria National Parks Association (VNPA) Conference I attended at the end of October.

The theme of the conference was citizens' concern for their physical environment be it State Parks, Public Open Space or Sites of Botanical & Zoological Significance.

With a person like Dr Coombs as role model we will be encouraged to keep on speaking out for what we believe in, keep on contributing to public awareness of processes which are threatening conservation values within our Parks System. A frail Ros Garnet courageously did just that during an hour long recorded interview which was edited and used most effectively for the opening address the VNPA Conference on Friday October 24th.

The message was loud and clear and repeated by other speakers the next day:

"Preserve the functioning ecosystem first. Then consider visitor use." "Commercial involvement is a recipe for plundering our heritage." "Cave Creek disaster, New Zealand,

was a victim of declining budgets." ...Bing Lucas (Vice Chair World Heritage Commission on Protected Areas)

"Here we are chasing after profit instead of protecting the park's integrity." .. South African Park Ranger (quoted by Bing)

"1957, the year of the National Parks Act, was a Year of Fulfilment... Don Saunders (ECC)

We heard about 'stakeholders', 'purchaser/providers', 'vision', 'corporate plans', 'marketing' as well as 'further establishment of a representative system' from Mark Stone and David Weston (Parks Victoria). Both are worried about excessive populations of kangaroos and koalas.

Dr Barry Traill, (Trust For Nature), and Karen Edyvane, (South Australian Research & Development Institute), opened our eyes to the forgotten areas of Box Ironbark Forests, Heathy Woodland, Grasslands and marine life of the waters of Southern Australia.

We gazed into the crystal ball with speakers from the Department of Infrastructure, Leisure Planning Pty Ltd and the Australian Centre for Tourism & Hospitality and, lo and behold, saw that Victoria is heading for an annual increase of 40,000 to its population; that State Parks are coping with 8-10 million visits per annum and that of these only 3% are specifically interested in the flora & fauna.

We got an inkling of how the tourism industry thinks, learned of the Commercial Tour Operators Permit System and, of course, tourism's need for more infrastructure ie. roads, tracks, accommodation.

Continued overleaf

Ecosystem first - Visitors second

Continued:

The crystal ball clouded over/as we glimpsed that public debate on these could be seen as an impediment.

"National Parks have lost their meaning under Parks Victoria "said Professor Jamie Kirkpatrick (University of Tasmania)

Dr Malcolm Calder and Geoff Durham worked hard, dashing from workshop to workshop in order to have a Vision 2000 and beyond ready. This included the major themes and philosophies which the Conference had brought to light. I felt

that it reaffirmed that those present are not prepared to take second best for Victoria's Parks.

Following the workshops we got together again, with a chance at last to ask questions, and to receive the summing up. The fact that the National Parks Act is presently the subject of revision was the major concern. It seemed that not one person in the lecture theatre was having any input!

Doug Humann, who had travelled from Hobart presented an inspiring Summation and finally, Anne Casey President of VNPA, closed an excellent conference.

Worth Repeating

Koalas seen as big threat to parks

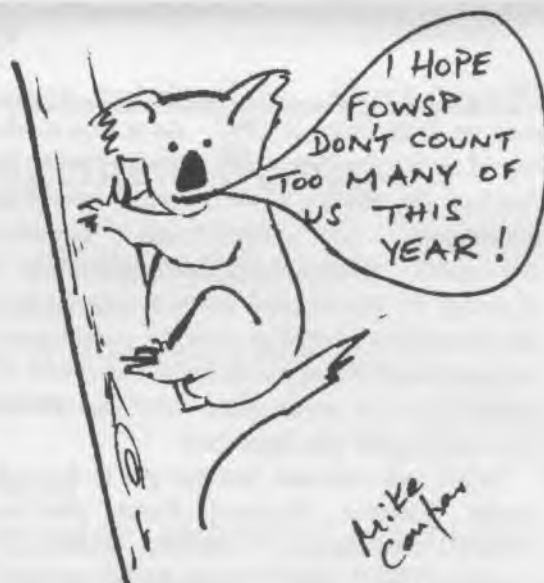
By TIM WINKLER, environment reporter

The Government believes kangaroo and koala overpopulation is one of the biggest issues facing the national park system.

While kangaroo numbers were being brought under control, public distaste at shooting koalas meant a solution to their overpopulation was five to 10 years away, the executive director of parks (flora and fauna), Mr Mark Stone, said on the weekend.

Addressing a Victorian National Parks Association conference on the future of national parks, Mr Stone said issues such as weed control and increased visitors were important but kangaroo and koala control was one of the most significant issues.

"In several places koalas are eating out all available koala habitat, killing trees and devastating the forest environment," he said. "They are a problem at Tower Hill National Park, Mount Eccles National Park, Framlingham Bush, Snake Island and the Strathbogies, just to name a few." Kangaroos had denuded areas of national parks in the northwest of Victoria before, but culls over the past eight years had reduced the population by about 13,000, he said. The population was now under control, and only a few hundred had to be shot each year.



Native grasses had grown back since the population had been controlled, he said. In contrast, koalas were devastating large areas of bush. In the past, conservation officers relied on relocation programs to deal with overpopulation, moving koalas to areas where they were in natural decline.

But koala populations were now growing in those areas and because they could be relocated only to sites with the appropriate species of feed trees, opportunities for further relocation in Victoria were minimal, Mr Stone said.

At Tower Hill, trees planted over the past 25 years had been destroyed by koalas. But a recent meeting of state and federal environment ministers had resolved not to cull them. Contraceptive and vasectomy programs were beginning, but would not take effect for five to 10 years, Mr Stone said.

Source: The Age 27th October 1997

The Last Cry

The Last Cry is the third book written by Fowspian Mick Woiwod. Like his previous books, 'Once around the Sugarloaf' and 'Kangaroo Ground: The Highland Taken', this one too has a local flavour. The foreward to **The Last Cry**, which has been written by Wurundjeri descendant Joy Murphy, eloquently sums up the feeling Mick's latest book.



"When I look at the land around me today, I see and feel the many changes since the arrival of the early settlers. This land that was once dense with trees, animals and birds is now a land showing all the effects of invasion and exploitation.

The history and spirit of the land has been desecrated by its savage misuse, and the beautiful animals introduced by the settlers have unwittingly contributed to the damage. This land can no longer be the provider of the daily food and living resources for the Wurundjeri people and their neighbours.

The Last Cry allows me to look through the eyes of a white man who walks me through a vision of the Dreamtime, a dreamtime of spirit. A compassionate white man who has a certain

affinity with the local indigenous culture and heritage.

Is it too rigorous to attempt to understand the essence of his journey? As a Wurundjeri woman, I find it to be a healing and spiritual journey. It enables me to walk through a process of initiation, to breathe in the Woiworung language and encapsulate the beautiful songlines that form an integral part of this intriguing history and our Dreamtime.

I travel along my own journey, reviving and recreating Aboriginal culture in my traditional way. My Dreamtime is guided by a presence unknown to me, but one who reassures me and keeps me on track. Perhaps it is Bunjil, I hope so.

I've enjoyed this story very much, with its blend of truth and fiction. It has given me a deep sense of inspiration and motivation to continue my journey, taking time out to write my own stories to share with others.

This story will grow in the mind of the reader. May the spirit of Bunjil be with you one and all along the journey of the Dreamtime."

Joy Murphy 1997

Editor's Note: I read this thought provoking book while on holiday in Southern Queensland. I was engrossed from beginning to end. There are many poignant passages in the book and the overwhelming desire to change history. But that cannot be, instead through Mick Woiwod's words we must face the truth. (P.C)



The last couple of months have been a very busy time for Julie and Trish, our local wildlife carers.

Julie has taken in a total of 19 Ringtail Possums, all of them pouched babies, and many of them having been attacked by cats. In addition, there have been four Brushtail Possums.

Three Eastern Grey Kangaroos have also been found, one of which was a young animal - it's mother discovered dead in a dam at Hurstbridge.

Birds have featured strongly this month. They include: 2 Wattle Birds, 1 Eastern Rosella, 1 Crimson Rosella, 1 Galah, 1 Magpie, 1 Rainbow Lorikeet (flew into a window) and 2 young Swallows.

A young koala was found in a car park near the river in Yarra Street Warrandyte. Julie estimated it to be around six months old and just

out of the pouch. An attempt was made to locate the youngsters mum and in fact an adult was found in a tree in the car park, but on closer inspection it was found to be a male. Perhaps it was dad.

The snake season is well underway and Julie has already received a number of calls about snakes, including one from someone who had discovered a snake in their bathroom. However, Julie is not permitted by law to deal with snakes, instead she refers them to a licensed snake handler. I get the impression she doesn't mind in the least leaving the snakes to someone else.

With the drought conditions look set to continue, Julie would like to pass on a reminder. Think of our wildlife, especially on those hot days, and leave a shallow dish of water out for them, but please make sure it is somewhere out of reach of the dreaded enemy of all native wildlife - cats.

Fish of the Yarra

A Green Wedge Seminar talk by George Paras

Report by Pat Coupar

When it comes to studying native fauna, fish are somewhat overlooked. George Paras works as a ranger at the La Trobe University Wildlife Reserve. For as long as he can remember George has had an interest in fish, particularly the native species and his depth of knowledge on the subject was revealed in this excellent talk.

The fish of the Yarra River can be classified into three groups: indigenous, native and exotic, but like the river itself the division between these categories becomes a little murky.

There are a surprisingly large number of indigenous fish living in the Yarra, sadly many of them do not make it above the man-made barrier of Dights Falls. There are jawless fish like the strange parasitic Pouched Lamprey - a rare species which is threatened in Victoria. At the other end of the scale (excuse the pun) is the Short-finned Eel which is commonly found throughout the Yarra and has the remarkable ability to crawl across wet grass.



Bats

A Green Wedge Seminar talk
by Lindy Lumsden

Report By Sharon Mason

Lindy Lumsden is one of Australia's leading experts on bats and we were most fortunate to have her as a speaker at our Green Wedge Seminar. She described many species from the two major groups of bats - fruit bats and insect-eating bats using both Australian and overseas examples including the infamous vampire bat. Her talk was accompanied by some excellent colour slides.

A few years ago Lindy did some research on bats feeding amongst pockets of trees on farmland near the Barmah Forest in Northern Victoria. She trapped and placed radio transmitters on many individuals of two species of bats.

One of these was the Lesser Long-eared Bat which is found in Warrandyte where it is considered a common species. One of the reasons this bat is so common is its ability to use a wide range of roost sites during the day. Such sites

George told us about several species of Galaxids - the southern equivalent of trout and salmon - that occur in the Yarra but, as its name suggests, the Climbing Galaxid, is the only one that can migrate upstream over Dights Falls.

Other indigenous fish that George described were Yarra Pygmy Perch, River Blackfish, Mullet, Tupong and Goby, but it seems that in most parts of the river these fish are rare.

Not so the exotic fish like Brown and Rainbow Trout, Tench, Roach and Redfin. Probably the two most serious threats to the native fish population are the ubiquitous Mosquito Fish, which eat the eggs and young of native fish, and European Carp which destroys aquatic habitat by filter feeding from the mud.

There are a few introduced natives too like the Murray Cod, Maquarie Perch and Australian Bass (although there is a chance that this fish is not a deliberate introduction, but found its own way into the Yarra and established a natural population).

According to George there are ways to reduce or even reverse the decline of native fish in the Yarra - not the least is to get rid of the unnatural barrier known as Dight's Falls!

include cracks between beams in garden sheds, underneath the bark of farm trees and cracks in the wood of old fence straining posts, often only one to two metres above ground.

Radio tracking revealed that it was the males using the above mentioned roost sites which were often only one to two kilometres from where they were caught. Females, however were caught up to 12 kilometres away from their roosts.

Lindy found that females with young chose to roost in old dead ringbarked trees with verticle slits. These females flew every night to the same small patches of vegetation where they were trapped. It was found that one mother travelled from the roost area to the foraging site and back again a number of times each night to suckle her young twins. In addition she would move them every night to a new roost site in another dead tree.

The Lesser Long-eared Bat was just one of many species that Lindy covered in her extremely well-illustrated talk. She spent much time at the end of her talk answering the many questions that followed.

A Gathering of the FOWSP and BICA Clans

By Mick Woiwod

Sunday 7th August last saw a large gathering on Mt Lofty across the river to celebrate the long-awaited handing over of its superb 88 hectares of open space to the people of Warrandyte and ourselves. Among the motley of FOWSPians present ('Friends of the State Park' to those who don't know) were a smattering of local pollies (Sheryl Garbutt, the Hon. member for Bundoora this side of the river, and Wendy Smith, the member for the Sylvan hills opposite representing the poor unfortunates on that side, plus of course a scatter of stalwart BICAins among the scores of rugged up FOWSPians who hosted the occasion.

Our group was met on the heights of Lofty by Mike Coupar of Flying Colours fame who drove us direct to the smoke-wreathed water's edge below in his family's 4 wheel drive. Old Barak of the Wurundjeri* would have been proud of the scene; the August air was crisp, with rain in the offing, yet the sun still managing to shine through, the Yarra he'd hunted so long rimmed in marvellous gold from the best show of silver wattle we'd seen in years. And then there was meat on the fires and the welcome sound of popping champagne corks to invite us in; scarves and colourful hats were the order of the day.

What a day! Eight kilometres of the ELZ'S southern boundary was at last safe from the hovering developer despite the wounds to the land we'd all witnessed up river to our east as we'd driven in. Mike Coupar, always the quiet one, was soon on his



feet waving a bottle of Windy Peak champagne he'd been waiting many a long year to share with the victors of the twenty year campaign. Then there was Flora Anderson, another of the victorious Fowspians, joyfully telling all of how it had all been

accomplished, then Andy Nixon the Chief Ranger with the signage that would tell the world that the land ought now to be considered sacred.

Across the river the Bend of Islands looked magnificent! Who'd have thought that close on fifty homes ringed the opposite shore! Barely hide nor hair of a single one of them to scar the hillside. Then, with rain still threatening yet not daring to ruin the celebration, there was the obligatory walk along the river. Time for the frail and feeble like us to beat a hasty retreat. Again Mike did the honours to the crest of Old Lofty. Once more secure in our chariot of pollution we performed a victory circuit of its superb ridge line to see if we pick out our humble abode among the gum trees. Eventually we found it; not more than a hundred metres away as the crow and the eagle fly, yet in our marvellous flying machine some 28 kilometres distant by road and, as if to drive home to us the frailty of we mere mortals, as we passed through Old Barak's Wonga Park in full flight, the rain and hail pelted down to the accompaniment of a grand display of thunder and lightning.

* William Barak, born on the banks of Barngiong (Brushy Creek) opposite 1823, died Coranderrk, 15 August 1903

Source: Bend of Islands Conservation Association Inc. Newsletter.

No (free) Way

By Ray Clarke

On Sunday the 12th of October about fifty people gathered on the banks of the Mullum Mullum Creek with a raised umbrella in one hand and a glass of champagne in the other.

This occurred near Yarran Dheran Reserve in Donvale and the occasion was the launching of the 'No (free) Way' campaign by the Koonung Mullum Forestway Association. The intention is to join with the Anti Ring Road Organization (ARRO) and all others who would be affected by the further extension of the Eastern Freeway, the



Ringwood Bypass and the Ring Road - to speak with one voice, to fight the proposals which would desiccate some of the most valued and signifi-

cant areas in our district.

The President, Iain Murray, introduced Jason Torrance from England who told us of the organization which achieved the downfall of a widespread road building plan. He stressed that "It can be done".

More information can be obtained from Iain by phoning 9898 2220

Wildflowers and Unwelcome Hitchhikers

By Cathy Willis

Flora Anderson mentioned Ironbark Road, Diamond Creek as a possible destination for a FOWSP wildflower walk at a committee meeting one night. No one present knew exactly where she was talking about, but if Flora said it was worth a visit I was eager to be led.

Two full cars headed off on a warm windy morning. The 'Melways' came in handy as we wended our way around Diamond Creek - not always in the right direction as it turned out. Pulling up on the roadside we stepped out into a sea of bright yellow Hoary Sunray. Just on the verge of the road we discovered a wealth of wildflowers, Flora had certainly hit gold here. A car pulled into the driveway we were meandering over and, obviously used to floral admirers, welcomed us onto his land if we wished to explore further.

However, the reserve across the road beckoned. There is no sign and I don't know who manages this land, but what a gem. Grey Everlastings, a truly unworthy name, dominated the hillside above where we entered the reserve. Jenny Hoskin was madly recording plant species as we called them out to her. Yellows, oranges, purples, pinks, and reds, all emerging from beautiful Silver Top Wallaby Grass tussocks and overtopped by the golden Grey Everlastings. Flora pointed out some plants not so familiar to Warrandyte walkers. One of these, the Showy Parrot Pea, which has typical orange-yellow "egg and bacon" type flowers, but silkier greener foliage than our Grey Parrot Pea. The small herbaceous Bent Goodenia bore brilliant large yellow flowers on long stalks. We also saw several

plants of the Hurstbridge form of *Grevillea rosmarinifolia*, in both its green and red flowered colour forms. This plant is under threat due to hybridisation with garden plants.

Flora had promised lots of orchids, and was a bit concerned that so far we had only seen a few Wax-lips and Pink Fingers. Not that anyone was complaining! As we rounded the hillside relief spread across her face, we had entered serious orchid territory. Wallflower Orchids, several different Greenhoods, Mosquito Orchids, a huge colony of Helmet Orchids (not flowering unfortunately), all at our feet by the edge of the track.

A side track took us up the hill to wide long views. Ray Clarke pointed out the Mt. St. Leonard's fire tower in the distance, and I realised we were up quite high.

Echidna diggings were evident in a few spots and Jenny discovered bull ants were also present where she sat to record Rock Fern, Kangaroo

Grass and Milkmaids. Unfortunately the one she sat on took exception and stung her in a tender spot. Obviously not satisfied with this prompt retaliation, it turned up marching aggressively down her thigh as we drove the winding road home. I managed to pull over as Jenny flew out of the car, but the ant was never seen again. I just hope it isn't lurking under the seat somewhere...



Free Plants

Due to weather and other circumstances we have excess stock at the nursery. Many of the plants are in good condition, but need to go in the ground. We have a variety of native grasses and sedges plus a few wattles and other shrubs. If anyone is interested in obtaining free plants contact either Pat Coupar (9844 1650) or Cathy Willis (9844 18841).

Your Committee Needs You!

Ever thought you'd like to try a stint on the Friends Committee? Be more involved in all that 'behind the scenes stuff?' We're looking for some additional members, so please don't be shy. We look forward to seeing you at our A.G.M., Sunday November 23rd.

"I SPY"

by B.G



Market Members (October)

Stall helpers were Ian Hodgson, Dianne Williams, Neil Doran, Tony and Vivien Honeyborne and Donata (2 years old).

Andrew Acting

Andrew Nixon is 'filling in' for David Nugent (Chief Ranger, Yarra Ranges National Park Area) for two and a half months.

Botanical Buff

Joan MacMahon is putting the botanical and common name on each plant handed out at the market stall.

Silveri Silviculture

Diane Silveri led a tree planting activity at One Tree Hill (Christmas Hills) in early October.

See C.F.A.

A 'suspect' fire was put out by all three Warrandyte C.F.A. units in the Whipstick Gully area near the entrance to Tunnel St. Just under one hectare was burnt at about 3 PM on Saturday the 25th of October.

Summer Crew (Fire) Start

Two people, including Justin Welander, will start for the summer season on the 10th of November. Others will start on December the 8th.

Major Matters

Should the rubbish bins be removed from the Folly?

Koala Cub?

An unsuccessful attempt was made to re-unite a baby Koala with it's mother in a tree over 15 metres high. If the baby is not returned to its mother's back within 12 hours the mother may reject it.

Flora's Foray

Two carloads of people (total of ten) visited the Ironbark Road Roadside Reserve in Eltham/Diamond Creek to view orchids. Jenny Hoskin took detailed notes of all plants on this successful trip. The 'everlastings' (due to the dry) were not in the profusion of previous years.

On the return trip "Cathy W. led us back the 'scenic way'!"

Committee Meeting Minutes (October 8)

Samplings; -letters in re. new planning schemes

-direct seeding bus tour

-Cricket Club re. free advert. on '98

calendar

-HOOP (Hands Off Our Parks) contact

point

-letter to Neil McCarthy re. inadequate funding for Scotchman's and Lofty, with copy to Member for Warrandyte Phil Honeywood.



The Fowsp Files

By Mike Coupar

In early October The Age revealed that the Victorian Police have been keeping secret files on aboriginal, ethnic, religious, peace and - shock horror - **conservation groups**. According to the newspaper, the groups have been spied on and infiltrated by undercover agents. Individuals have also been targets of police attention. So what is happening in what we imagine to be easy-going, she'll be right, tolerantly multicultural Victoria?

Many 'Friends' are members of other conservation organisations. So, for your information the **Australian Conservation Foundation** is on the police files, as is: **Earth First, Ecology Action Group, Eco Defence, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, the**

Wilderness Society, World Wildlife Fund and many more. The reason given for this ASIO-like activity is that it is to protect the groups from being infiltrated by radicals and anarchists.

Well, we have all formed our own opinions as to these goings on by now. Or have we? For instance, is FOWSP on the police files? If so, are we a threat or are we doing such good work that we need protection!! As far as The Age can tell neither FOWSP nor our affiliate the Victorian National Parks Association are on file. However, the **Friends of Merri (Ck?)** is on file. This makes me wonder if our police friends are starting to get interested in weeding and other such green activities. Come to think of it - who is the Newsletter's 'I Spy'? Could its author 'B.G' be an undercover policeman? After all, he does ask a lot of questions. So unless you want to be noticed, my advice is to beware of any member who asks you more than a polite 'how are you'.



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A Feast of Bushland Management Seminars

Land Management with Alan Noy of Indigenous Design

Date: Thursday, November 27th

Heritage with Murrundini of the Wurundjeri Tribe

Date: Thursday, December 11th

Time: 7.00 to 10.00pm

Place: Currawong Bush Park, Reynolds Rd., Warrandyte (Melway ref. map 34 H6)

Bookings essential (no charge) - Phone Donna Stoddart (9840 9307)