

February 1998

# Friends of Warrandyte State Park



## Newsletter

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

### On Full Alert

By Pat Coupar

Most of us look forward to the halcyon days of summer when we can take a well-earned break from our daily work routine. It is a time for holidays, for relaxing at the beach, by the pool or simply spending time at home with family and friends.

For the staff and crew of Warrandyte State Park and all other Parks around the State and Interstate, summer is a time to be on full alert. Due to the effects of the El Nino, conditions in southern and eastern states have been extremely dry all year resulting in a high fire danger for most of the season.

This summer Warrandyte State Park was fortunate to be allocated two additional fire crew, now known as project fire-fighters, making a total of six. It wasn't long before they were called into action. Prior to Christmas they attended fires around Heyfield and in Gippsland as well as Interstate fires around Sydney and the Blue Mountains. By far the largest fire occurred in January in the Alpine National Park. Rangers and fire crew from Warrandyte, in two shifts, spent a week at a time helping to get this massive blaze under control.

Meanwhile Warrandyte was left with a skeleton crew to run the Park. This did not mean, however, that the Park was unprotected. In the event of a fire during this time, crews from nearby depots could be called upon to assist. Fortunately this didn't happen. In fact there have been no major fires in Warrandyte this summer - only several small ones at Whipstick Gully, Yarra Brae, Taroon Reserve and Fourth Hill all of which were quickly under control.

Call ups of rangers and crew continued in February with fires at Anglesea and more recently in a pine plantation at Macedon.

When not called out to fight fires the crew have been busy clearing tracks, maintaining vehicles and

attending weekly fire training sessions. An important task has been completed by crew member and Fowspian, Anna Richtarik, who has mapped all water points in Warrandyte. Each Park vehicle now carries a map of this updated information.

If you think the river level has been low this summer you are right. Melbourne Water claim that the mega litre flow per day has been the lowest since records began in 1891.

As we slip into autumn the indications are that the pattern of weather known as the El Nino is coming to an end. We all hope this is the case. The land has suffered enough at the hands of the \*boy child.

*\*El Nino is Spanish for boy child - so named because the phenomenon was first spotted by a Peruvian fisherman, who noticed warmer than usual waters in the Pacific Ocean some years, especially around Christmas time.*



# “I SPY”

by B.G

## ***Thursday things (February 12th)***

1. Flora Anderson was seen working on a punnet of *Tetradlea ciliata* during a warm, friendly discussion about the likely outcome of the Constitutional Convention. I SPY asks - did anyone ask our indigenous plants and animals if they have an opinion on this?

2. Some of our 'girls', women, ladies, female helpers are back; Cathy Willis (from Metung and Fairhaven) and Jenny Hoskin (from The Prom), were seen helping our new committee member Alison Thom, clear out weeds adjacent to the 'old' hardening-off area next to the Depot lower carpark - on a day of 30°C and high UV.

3. Scott McLeod had a tussle with a barbed wire fence while working. Seen with lacerations to the leg and between the eyes. Very lucky it was not worse. (Scott is a Project Fire Fighter.)

## ***February Friends***

Found working at the market stall were Peggy and Lawrie Safstrom, Kathy Edwards, Anne Warren and Tim Bedford who helped 'set-up'. Neil Doran and two year old daughter Cecilia helped Antony Owen dismantle afterwards. As usual Betty Oke and Neil Tessier were also involved

## ***Ross 'Returns' to Roost***

One of our past 'fledglings', Ross Coupar has been working at the Cardinia (Dam) Depot of the D.N.RE as Project Fire Fighter.

## ***Frogland Frolics (Thursday February 19th)***

Betty Mifsud, Pat Coupar and Alison Thom were planting several rare and endangered species in the NEW Frogland pond, whilst Cathy Willis carted away old plants etc. Cathy has requested that this column does not report that she mistook a one metre length of thick green hose on the dam wall ( below the Folly) for a possible snake.

## ***Water Wading***

During the frogland frolic Ray Clarke was seen standing up to 'over his knees' in the original Frogland waterhole cleaning out certain plants, his hip-high bright yellow waders ensuring he didn't become water-logged.

Helping him was an un-named mature youth (J.R.) who lurched around with green mud oozing on his legs like alien blood.

## ***Juncus Jettisoning***

Joan MacMahon was seen at the same activity removing 'Juncus', whilst in the Folly building Bill Roxburgh continued with his seed sorting. Elizabeth Sevier was working the Coupe area, 'plant culling'.

## ***Coochiemudlo (Island) Correspondance***

Received a letter from Olive (and Andy ?) Walters (Q.L.D.) - Six inches of rain; frogs, birds and butterflies in profusion. There is local opposition to littoral vegetation protection fences on beach-front properties. Letter on the FOWSP noticeboard.

## ***Spyer Spotted***

The 'perpetrator' of I SPY has been trying for two years to set up an indigenous herbaceous area uphill of the Folly building. It now appears that a sub-dominant female rabbit has dug (at least twice) a breeding burrow with the entrance hidden by the plant guards.

This breeding burrow is a very short, small hole which is closed up/covered at night to protect the kittens. The mother only returns to feed them. It is not one of the large, living burrows. All of this was pointed out by Glen Jameson to the I Spy person.

Appropriate steps have been taken.

## ***Glen's Garnerings***

Apart from Pest Animal Control, Ranger Glen Jameson has written the fascinatingly detailed (series of six) articles "Timelines" which have appeared in the Warrandyte Diary (amongst other contributions).

I think his writings reflect true understanding of Nature's processes and deep spiritual feeling for our environment. It's good to know that he is also working in a very practical way to support those themes

## ***S.W.R.?***

Did you know that some of Andy Nixon's responsibilities as Ranger in Charge include overseeing the running of the work centre, Budget Manager and Park Management Planning?

# Poor Showing for Willows

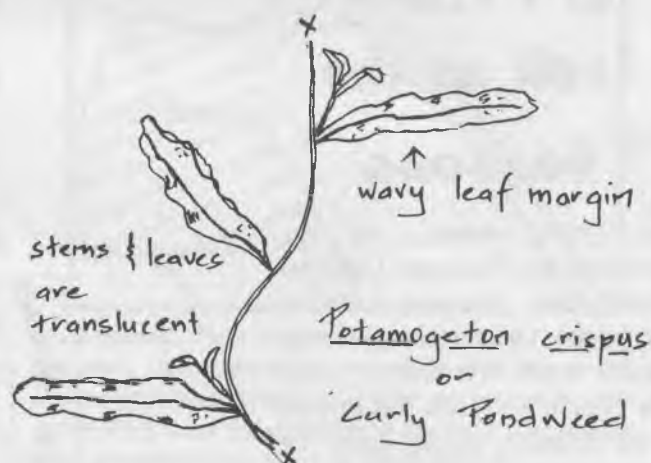
It was not the start to 1998 that we were looking for. Only one couple and three members from one other FOWSP family, who brought with them two visitors, turned up to the first Sunday Family activity of the year. When less than 5% of our membership attends a monthly working bee something must be wrong. The weather was fine - neither too hot nor too cold, school holidays are over and it was not a public holiday weekend, the location was well signposted and easy to find and the task of attacking willows and general weeding was not hard and involved little or no experience. For those that wanted, a relaxing swim was also on the agenda.

Despite problems with flat batteries and blunt drill bits the afternoon was by no means a failure. A number of large willows were drilled and filled on an island in the river just below Galatlys Lane. In addition a stack of weeds were removed from the river bank downstream, these included Purple-top Verbena (\**Verbena bonariensis*), Madeira Winter-cherry (\**Solanum pseudocapsicum*) and thistles.

The highlight of the afternoon was undoubtedly the discovery, by young Daniel MacMahon, of Curly Pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus*). This regionally significant plant was only rediscovered in the Park a few years ago and this is the first record of its occurrence at Pound Bend.

Needless to say it was extremely disappointing to see so few FOWSP members at this first Sunday Family meeting. At our request, despite a heavy workload, ranger Glen Jameson came along to offer his support to this activity. It is one of the main aims and objectives of our group to assist the rangers in the care and protection of the State Park. With budget cutbacks and a reduction in Park staff over the last few years, they need our assistance even more than ever.

As in most groups such as ours it is usually left up to the same few dedicated members, not only to organise activities but to turn up and do the work. The Park is there for everyone and as 'Friends' of the Park we should all try to do our bit to ensure that it's special values are retained. A couple of hours once a month is not a lot to ask.



## "I SPY" Continued

### F.F. (Frankie Farrer)

Ranger Frankie has included in his S W R.

- Project Fire Fighter Co-ordinator
- 'other' fire issues
- Conservation Reserves
- Fauna

### Minutes Minutia

The December '98 committee meeting dealt with items such as

- Submission to Manningham Planning scheme
- Request to grow 6000 plants for Mullum Mullum

Creek Reserve

- need for a scanner
- recycling of T7 pots
- response to questionnaire
- Green Wedge Seminars
- Jumping Creek Bridge- conservation area signage
- land relinquished from Alpine National Park for commercial development

### Noticeboard Notes

A complete copy of the notes is displayed on the Folly noticeboard.

## Animal lovers wanted

We'd *love* to see a greater emphasis in our newsletter on the 'seldom seen' animals which make Warrandyte and surrounds their home eg. Brush-tailed Phascogales, Sugar Gliders, antechinus and bats.

We hope in the near future to organise some field surveys which will shed light on the distribution of these little known local residents. Are their numbers stable, rising or declining?

Some of you may have interesting anecdotes relating to one or more of these nocturnally active members of our fauna. You might enjoy seeking out the known facts about your favourites and sharing them with other members.

So *please*; phone, drop us a line, or (*better still*), write an article we can include directly in our newsletter. You could even include a sketch. Go to it!

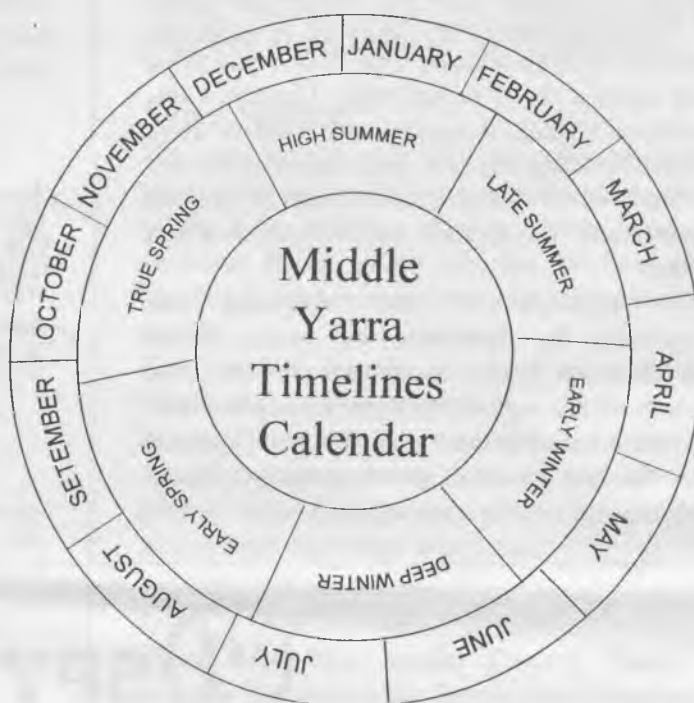


## A fresh look at the seasons

For your interest, we are reprinting the Timelines Calendar which Glen Jameson used to accompany his series of six articles in the Warrandyte Diary. The final in the series was printed in the February edition under the heading 'Mists along the River' and describes a typical day in late summer. (Mind you many would argue there's no such entity as a 'typical' day in Melbourne!)

It makes a lot of sense to organise the seasons on the basis of regularly occurring natural phenomena, rather than the date-based scheme we inherited from our Northern Hemisphere forebears.

## Calendar for the Middle Yarra



## Well done Margaret

Margaret Burke, our former co-ordinator, is one of five local residents (all women) to be honoured with an Australia Day award.

As many of our members know, Margaret is devoted to raising awareness within the local community of the importance of actively caring for our bushland remnants.

She's heavily involved in her own street's conservation group - The Osborne Peninsula Landcare, as well as a recently formed net-working group which focuses on the greater Warrandyte area. This Land Managers Group, by pooling of resources, will be able to achieve results which the capacity of individual budgets wouldn't allow. An excellent initiative.

She is also a member of the Parks Victoria Advisory Council - the body concerned with grant money allocation.

# My Favourite Place

By Cathy Willis

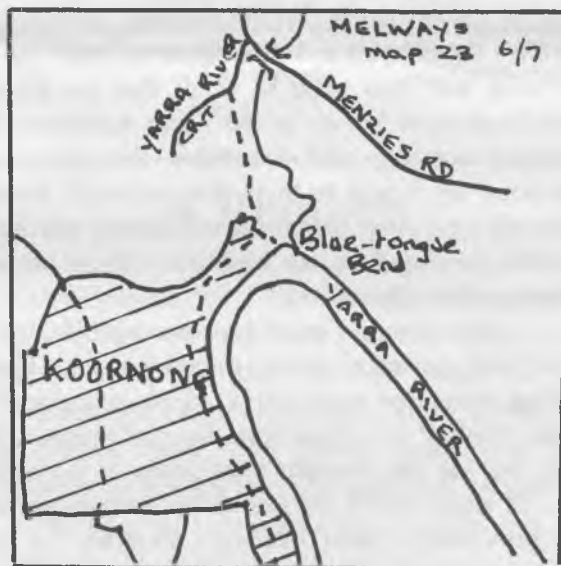
I always like to approach my special place from the south. The way lies along the northern end of the Koorng river track. With tussock grasses and mosses clinging to the cutting at my left shoulder, I am level with the skyward branches of the stately Manna Gums on the opposite bank of the river. Water cascading over the rapids way below echos up to my ears in small crescendos. Little birds call in the Burgan on the cliff. All truly music to soothe the soul!

A small sidetrack riverwards leads me sharply down to a rocky seat overlooking Blue-tongue Bend, where Pigeon Bank Creek surrenders itself the much mightier Yarra. Sitting on my rock on a hot afternoon the fragrance of aromatic River Mint wafts up to me. Straight ahead, upstream, Manna Gums lean over the river in a white armed avenue. On the rocky ledges in the river Cousin It Sedges (my name for *Carex polyantha*, a sedge with no common name) sit like little creatures hiding under outrageous green wigs. Often raucous cockatoos wheel overhead, and I always hope to see the platypus that has been sighted in Pigeon Bank Creek.

Time disappears watching the eddies whirl slowly around the bend, as though the water wishes to spend a little longer at this beautiful spot before it rushes down through the rapids on its long journey to the sea. Parallels with my own busy life.

The nearest house is only about 100 metres away, the road not much further, but it feels "away". This is one of the beauties of Warrandyte State Park, that a short walk from suburbia can take you to another place altogether.

I can't decide whether a golden summer's evening or an early winter's morning with mist hanging over the water is the best time to sit and be still here. Find out for yourself. But if you should arrive and see a figure sitting quietly on the rock, come back another time - okay?



*My Favourite Place is a new segment we are featuring this year. All members are invited to write in and tell about their favourite place. It does not have to be part of the Park it can be anywhere in the local Warrandyte area, it can even be your own block of land.*

*A few lines is all we ask, but up to a full page would be great if you feel really inspired.*

## Worth Repeating

### Call for farmers to assist virus

By Tim Winkler, environment reporter

Calicivirus will fail to control rabbits effectively unless landholders immediately make rabbit control a priority, experts said yesterday.

The former national rabbit calicivirus program coordinator, Mr Nick Newland, said traditional control methods, such as burrow ripping, fumigation and poison baiting were essential if the benefits of calicivirus were to be realised.

Mr Newland, also a member of the Anti-Rabbit Research Foundation board, called on the Federal Government to make rabbit reduction a priority.

"To get rabbit numbers down for as long as possible ultimately requires national coordination ... at the moment we're not getting that."

He commended the Victorian Government for committing \$10 million to a rabbit busters program, but said other states had been slow to respond.

In the meantime, the foundation will help circulate 100,000 copies of a booklet launched yesterday to educate farmers, national park managers and all landholders about the importance of continuing traditional control methods.

"There is a tendency for landholders to sit back and wait for calicivirus to do the job. If they think the RCD is going to solve the problem, be the silver bullet, it's not going to do that," Mr Newland said.

The booklets show landholders how to identify the virus in the organs of rabbits, how the disease works and how to maximise its effect.

Latest reports indicate the disease continues to be very effective in Victoria's northwest. Burrow ripping programs have had outstanding success along the Wimmera, Avoca and Loddon Rivers, but in the south of the state, particularly Gippsland, the impact of the disease has been patchy.

Source: The Age 17/12/97

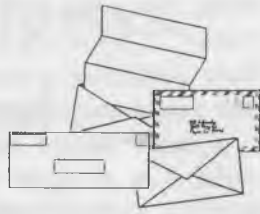


## Letters to the Editor

After reading Joan MacMahon's article on Antechinus Swamp in December's Newsletter, I thought I would go out and have a look. What a haven for birdlife! In one small area I saw Crimson Rosellas, Wattlebirds, Red-browed Firetails, Thonbills, a Golden Whistler singing directly in front of me, a Yellow Robin, White-throated Treecreepers and Grey Fantails; all in a short space of time!

It was also great to think that the Brown Antechinus (now known as the Agile Antechinus in Victoria) possibly still inhabited the area. It concerned me though to think that our small ground mammals (and other fauna) are continually declining and disappearing from our bushland without anyone realizing what is being lost.

Most people I meet love our wildlife, but it is difficult to care about something you know nothing about, or even know of its existence! I realise FOWSP is so busy with the vital revegetation work, but has any thought been given to surveying for such small faunal species as the Antechinus and thus providing a local Recovery Program for any



threatened species or has this already occurred? With urban development surrounding the park, with its cats and dogs, it is vital that the local community are aware of the wildlife present in the park and the possible threat their domestic animals can be. Only if these people gain an understanding and respect for these locally threatened species, is there any hope of stopping the population decline.

I was browsing through the Threatened Species Network on the Internet (<http://www.nccnsw.org.au/member/tsn>) and found some useful information on what community groups can do to save threatened species. I've enclosed some notes from this Internet Site including some pointers on community awareness and education, if you are not already aware of this information.

Unless we can create local Action Groups to save species from local extinction, educating the local community and making them feel apart of the management of the park and its wildlife, the list of Threatened Species on a State and National level will only rise.

**Ann Williamson**

**Editors Note:** We were delighted to receive Ann's letter with her thought-provoking comments and suggestions. The information included with her letter is available from Fowsp secretary on request.

## Frogland Morning

A very productive morning was spent a few weeks ago cleaning out the top pond. Some indigenous plants had just done too well and needed thinning out. Ray Clarke donned the waders and, together with Cathy Willis, did a great job clearing out the excess.

Meanwhile others were busy weeding and planting around the new pond.

We didn't see or hear the resident Tiger Snake, however a frog was spotted in the pond.



## Exhibition of Local Artists

FOWSP member, Melanie Coupar, whose drawings appear every month in the Warrandyte Diary and also our newsletter, is among several local artists to have their work featured at the Potters Cottage Gallery. Called "An Exhibition of Emerging Artists", the exhibition is sponsored by the Lions Club of Victoria and runs from the 12th to 29th of March.



## Fridge Request

Does any member of FOWSP have a fridge that we could purchase for the Folly. Milk goes off very quickly on these hot days and we would all appreciate somewhere to keep our lunch cool on a Thursday morning while we are working around the nursery,

In addition, as some seeds need chilling for several weeks prior to sowing in order to germinate, our own fridge would be very useful.

If anyone thinks they can help please ring a member of the committee.

## A Reminder

Subscriptions for 1998 were due last month. If you have not paid yet you can renew your membership at the FOWSP stall at the Warrandyte Festival (March 28th & 29th).

Please help your group save time and money by paying your subscription as soon as possible. No reminders will be sent out this year.

## First Aid

A well equipped first aid kit has been donated to FOWSP. It will be kept in the Folly and brought along to all Thursday and Sunday activities.

## Cleaning Roster

A roster for cleaning the Folly every other month is pinned up on the noticeboard in the Folly. So far only one name is on the list - the ever reliable Ray Clarke. If you are one of the people that use the Folly regularly please consider adding your name to the list.

## Did you know?

Greening Australia run lots of interesting workshops and as a member of FOW.SP you are eligible for a significant discount. (You pay only \$10 instead of \$30. Even that \$10 will be refunded if you write us an article for our newsletter. Smacks of bribery doesn't it?) Next month we'll include a list of forthcoming workshops. In the meantime you can phone the training co-ordinator on 9457 3024



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## FOWSP Membership Renewal Form

**\*all subscriptions are due in February\***

NAME:.....

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Please circle      Single \$15      Family \$20

Please post with your cheque made out to FOWSP, to  
Membership Secretary, FOWSP, PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113