

April 1998

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

Willow works at The Island

Joan MacMahon

The natural environment of Warrandyte is currently having a boost thanks to the Waterways and Drainage division of Melbourne Water. They are targeting Basket (or Crack) Willows in the area adjacent to the Stonehouse Pottery on the Ringwood - Warrandyte Rd. (Melway 23 H11).

Don't confuse these problem weeds with the true Weeping Willow which despite growing on the riverbank in various parts of Warrandyte doesn't make such a nuisance of itself.

Crack Willows have grown so extensively at The Island that they've nearly blocked the channel the Yarra tries to flow through. This obstruction leads to erosion and flooding problems.

Another important negative impact of these weeds is their deciduous nature. The autumn willow leaf drop disrupts the natural ecosystem of the river which relies on leaf litter falling year round. Poisoning began in early March. So as not to cause too much disturbance, dead branches will be removed and the stumps and root masses dealt with later.



The current mild weather and lack of rain (and hence low water level) is a boon as it means the work can continue longer than expected. Something to thank El Nino for.

Stop Press/Great News!

Achievement of the "impossible"

After discussion with our Head Ranger Andy Nixon we've achieved what we thought was no longer possible! (Due to the significant staff cuts of the last few years we'd become used to staff being stretched almost, but thankfully not quite, to breaking point.) So, we are thrilled to announce that this year **rangers will be leading five of our Sunday Family Activities.**

To celebrate this coup your committee (aren't we wonderful!) has decided:

- 1) that for each of these events **FOWSP will provide** an afternoon tea or BBQ lunch. - any caterers out there?
- 2) Free plants will be available.

"I SPY"

By B.G

S.W.R Again

The March newsletter referred to S.W.R which everyone knew meant 'Staff Works Responsibilities' - now "on with the motley". Ranger Brian Phefley's tasks include: general works programming; visitor facilities; walking tracks; interpretations and work experience.

Ranger David Van Bockel is responsible for flora management; weed control and revegetation. David is currently on secondment at Woori Yallock.

March Market Members

Manning the Saturday market stall were Trudy Bretnall, Liz Bradbury, Elsa Arden, Gwen Livingstone, Wolfgang Krause and Jessica Nixon (who has just completed a Bachelor of Science in Geography and Environmental Studies and is currently seeking employment). Thanks to you all.

Body Brigade

Meghan Freeman and Julie Fagan were welcome helpers at the nursery on Thursday March 3rd and were soon putting *Crassula helmsii* plants into forestry tubes. They revealed that they were there as part of a community project by the 'Body Shop' staff.

The philosophy behind this is that as the organisation benefits from the community they would like to give something back to the community. Great idea.

Politicians Preferences

Tony Robinson M.P. (the new member for Mitcham) has a favourite plant - Rock Correa (*Correa glabra*). When asked why, he said "because it flourishes in difficult circumstances".

Warrandyte Writer

Pat Coupar, one of our committee members, writes regular nature articles for the Warrandyte Diary. Read one, if you haven't yet.

Pat writes elegantly and her facts are carefully researched. It is said that she writes in the tradition of Crosbie Morrison (for all those who can remember). Personally I find her articles eidetic (look that one up).

Pat Perfect?

Don't embarrass Pat by asking who forgot to take an important article when '4-wheel-driving' and had to drive the long way back. Mind you if you forgot to bring the matches for the campfire why not just use the cigarette lighter in the vehicle and save the drive?

A Slip of the Month

The last two sequential months newsletters were both headed 'February 1998'. The last one should have read March 1998.

Crack in the Park

Is 'crack willow work' a euphemism for drug activity?

Weeds 'n Seeds

A foray of 'Friends' cleared weeds and collected Weeping Grass (*Microlaena stipoides*) seeds inside the rabbit exclusion fence near the tunnel at the Pound Bend Reserve.

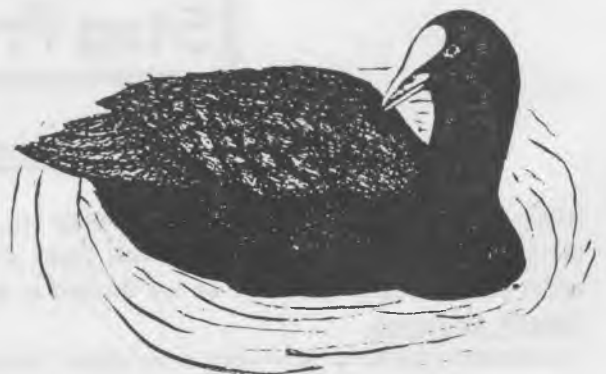
Canopy Uncovered

Watch for the April edition of 'Canopy' - a regular update from Parks Victoria kept in the blue box in the Folly.

Moments from March Minutes

A report of the meeting re concept plan for Mt Lofty; Parks Victoria stakeholders survey; Illegal clearing of native vegetation; FOWSP poster in the pipeline; possibility of a tunnel to avoid sensitive bushland in Park Orchards; 'My Favourite Place' - a new segment for the newsletter.

Note: Full minutes are posted on the Folly noticeboard.



Warrandyte - a land of dusty roads and muddy streams

Vincent Pettigrove

We have all noticed a large pile of sediment that has accumulated at the bottom of a street, or that has blocked a drain following a decent storm in Warrandyte. The area is notorious for having turbid, or muddy, waters following storm events. As a result the Yarra River and other local streams can look very muddy. This sediment can also have a detrimental impact on the fish, water rats, tortoises, platypus and many other organisms that live in our streams.

There are a number of land use activities that contribute to poor water clarity in our local waterways, and there are local characteristics about the Warrandyte area that accentuate these impacts. The predominant soil types in the area are yellow clays and Silurian sands. These clays are composed of very small particles that can be easily eroded. Once these clay particles are washed into a stream, they stay suspended in the water for a long period of time. The turbid, or muddy, colour that frequently occurs in the Yarra River can be produced by small amounts of clayey material being transported into waterways. Not only does the Warrandyte area have clayey soils, we have a hilly terrain and often little undergrowth to prevent soil erosion. Poor land management in Warrandyte can have a substantial impact on the clarity of the Yarra River.

I have recently been involved in a Melbourne Water study to investigate the condition of Andersons Creek. The study was initiated because Andersons Creek often had poor water quality, particularly during storm flows. Our work has helped determine what are

the major sources that contribute to turbid waters in Andersons Creek. Turbid water may be created by a variety of land disturbances, such as housing developments, intensive agriculture and erosion of stream bed and banks. You may be surprised to know that another major source of turbidity we identified was run-off from our roads.

The impact of a road on local waterways depends on numerous attributes of the road, particularly the surface type (whether sealed or unsealed), the provisions for drainage to land, the proximity to water courses, the number and type of stream crossings, the frequency and quality of maintenance, and the volume of traffic. Many of our roads are unsealed, and are in close proximity to waterways. Even the sealed major roads, such as the Ringwood - Warrandyte Road and Harris Gully Road would contribute a lot of sediment run-off, as they have unsealed verges and the road run-off invariably flows directly into the waterway, rather than through a vegetated area which would filter out the vast majority of sediment. Private roads also need to be properly maintained.

Obviously, the impact of our roads on local waterways can be greatly reduced by sealing major roads and sealing drainage lines along major sealed roads. We can all reduce the amount of sediment that is discharged into our waterways from our own blocks by ensuring run-off from driveways, and other areas where there is considerable soil disturbance, is directed to vegetated areas and not directly drained into the waterways.

Pound Bend Morning

In less than one and a half hours all weeds in flower and with seeds had been removed from the river bank inside the rabbit exclusion fence at Pound Bend Tunnel. It was a fantastic effort by the Thursday morning Fowspians.

Many of the plants put in by FOWSP members over the last couple of years had survived the drought surprisingly well. There were even seedlings coming up, amongst these were a large number of Burgan which, according to Ranger David Van Bockel, should be removed.

After the weeding we had a wander through the rest of the fenced area which was very dry and contained a lot of fallen timber. There were few weeds in this section, but after some good autumn and winter rain it might be a different story.



Sunday Family Activity

Mount Lofty Walk

with
Ranger David Van Bockel

This is a fantastic chance to learn about Warrandyte State Park's newest addition. See:

- The haunt of the Wedge-tailed Eagle
- Some of the best riparian vegetation in the Park.
- One of Warrandyte's few wetlands
- The start of the dramatic Warrandyte Gorge



Along the way we will map willows and other woody weeds. The walk will be followed by a barbeque: bread, sausages,

onions, and billy tea provided by FOWSP. A selection of free plants will be available at the end of the walk to all members.

Date and Time: Sunday April 26th at 1.00pm

Place: Meet at Wittons Reserve at the end of Reserve Rd (Melways ref. map 24 K6). This is the end of the walk where we will leave some cars and then drive to the start of the walk at Lower Homestead Rd.

Cartoons

You may have noticed several cartoons in this month's newsletter. These are the work of Richard Thiel, a self-employed commercial artist specialising in graphic art and illustrations. **Kullatoons** is the name of his business.

Cathy Willis met Richard several years ago when they were both studying horticulture and met again at the VNPA annual picnic where Richard kindly offered his services to FOWSP. We are delighted with the results and look forward to featuring more of Richard's work in forthcoming newsletters.

Did you know?

Greening Australia run lots of interesting workshops and FOWSP members are eligible for a significant discount. (You pay only \$10 instead of \$30). Even that \$10 will be refunded if you write an article on the workshop for our newsletter.

Forthcoming workshops: 7th May 'Developing your propagating skills'. 23rd May 'Assessing and monitoring the return of fauna through revegetation'. For more information and bookings phone the training co-ordinator on 9457 3024

My Favourite Place



By Ray Clarke

The sun is rising behind Warrandyte township and lighting up a lovely stretch of the river, with a hint of mist rising from the surface. It illuminates the trunks of the magnificent manna gums on the steep north bank. Black duck and mallards are sitting on logs preening or skittering round on the water looking for food.

Across the river on a rock, a darter is craning its long neck and spreading its wings to dry while a white-faced heron flaps downstream looking for a quiet place to fish. The river babbles over the rock bars.

This is the stretch of the river track from the bridge to Stiggants Reserve, and is much used by joggers, walkers, people exercising dogs and bike riders. From each person passed, the least one gets is eye contact with a smile (a grimace from joggers) and the most is a chat with friends or strangers. These people see wood duck feeding on any green grass, the immaculate black-headed males leading their females, all with well tailored frock coats. In the trees are magpies, white cockies and noisy miners, and the air is fresh with a nip in it. Having absorbed all this, and having done a few stretching exercises, I head for home with an edge on my appetite for breakfast before starting the day's work.

Rebirth of the FMT

By Cathy Willis

It was in 1994 that the then Ranger-in-Charge (RIC), Matt Le Duc, first proposed the formation of a Flora Management Team (FMT) for Warrandyte State Park. Discussions were held around the Folly table one lunchtime and the FMT was born. It was to comprise two members of staff and two from FOWSP, and its main objective was "...to achieve ecological management of the flora of Warrandyte SP..."

Ranger David Van Bockel and Pat Coupar had been quietly working towards this aim for some time, so were essential to the team. Matt and Margaret Burke (our coordinator at the time) made up the four.

An early decision was that protection of threatened species should be top priority. With nearly 40% of WSP's flora considered to be locally vulnerable, endangered or extinct, the FMT set itself to turning the tide.

The FMT opened up lines of communication between FOWSP and staff. We learnt about works programs and were able to structure our activities to complement these. We began to "grow to order" for revegetation projects rather than propagating plants somewhat haphazardly as we had at times in the past. Staff learnt about our research projects and gained information from our observations on walks and activities.

Much was achieved through combining staff management skills and wider knowledge with FOWSP's local knowledge, identification and propagation skills, and time. With grant money obtained from Melbourne Parks and Waterways, rabbit exclusion fences were built to protect "hotspots" of significant species. Species teetering on the brink of extinction in our Park were identified, propagated and replanted. The right plants were available for revegetation at the right time.

Despite these successes the FMT fell apart due to

staff and FOWSP changes. Matt left and Margaret resigned as coordinator. Stephen Anderson, acting RIC, briefly resurrected it for a while, with myself as the fourth member, but then Stephen moved on too. The team seemed doomed to fail through lack of continuity.

The good news is that the FMT lives again! Current RIC Andy Nixon, Joan MacMahon and Ant Owen have joined David, Pat and myself to form a team of six. Our first meeting was held early in March, with future meetings to be held at about two monthly intervals. Rebirthing can be a difficult experience, and our recent meeting reflected this. A few years on, and with three new members, some re-evaluation was necessary.

Difficult questions emerged:- is it feasible to move towards ecosystem management rather than species management in a Park as fragmented as Warrandyte? Should we commit to broadacre revegetation works with all the preparation and follow up they require? What effort and funds should be put into the conservation reserves that come under Park management and what to do about threatened flora only surviving on private land? These sorts of issues are bound to keep resurfacing on the agenda.

Some concrete decisions have been made. Firstly, we need to seek outside help to evaluate our flora management system to find out if we are on the right track. Secondly, we will continue to manage the threatened species as top priority. In addition, a list of revegetation sites to receive FOWSP assistance and Park funding this year was agreed to. This has already resulted in a successful weeding morning at Pound Bend Tunnel, and work has begun on producing the right numbers and species of plants required for this years planting season.

The FMT has its work cut out to set priorities within a tight budget knowing some things just won't get done. But by pooling our resources and working as a team we hope to be able to report many good outcomes for WSP in the future.

FOWSP Brochure



FOWSP now has its own brochure. At last we can provide interested members of the public with information on our group. As well as details about our aims and objectives, it contains information about the nursery, Thursday and Sunday meetings, the market etc.

There is a membership application form, a map of the depot and various contact phone numbers.

The brochure will be available at the monthly market stall, the community centre and the Jumping Ck and Pound Bend information shelters.



Cats are usually the main culprits for attacks on our local wildlife. However, it is not feline, but canine

attacks that feature strongly this month.

Julie has received three koalas all the result of dog attacks. One adult male which was found near the Mullum Creek has recovered and been released at One Tree Hill Reserve in Christmas Hills where it was considered to have a better chance of survival. Unfortunately the female koala and her baby, attacked by a dog in a backyard, both had to be put down. An injured fully grown wombat, also the result of a dog attack, was passed on to the Blue Cross, but subsequently died.

Cats, however, are to blame for all seven Ring-tail Possum deaths. Julie actually had a total 14 ringtails brought in. Apart from the seven that were found dead, one is still in care, four had to be put down and two were released.

Julie has also received quite a menagerie of birds with one Eastern Rosella and one Kookaburra both put down; two tawny frogmouths - now at another shelter; one dove

which has been released and, surprisingly for this time of year, a baby Sacred Kingfisher which has been transferred to Healseville Sanctuary.

Other animals to come in during the last couple of months are an echidna which was hit by a car in Jumping Creek Road and released after two weeks, and a dead Eastern Grey Kangaroo.

Now for some good news. Remember Cory the young koala, he is over 12 months old now and weighs a healthy 2.5 kilograms. Keep it up Cory.

Julie has another foster carer, called Trish - that's two Trish's now, as well as Hamish from Currawong Bush Park has also obtained a carer permit.

Where would our sick and injured wildlife be without these dedicated people.



A Hot Day's Doings

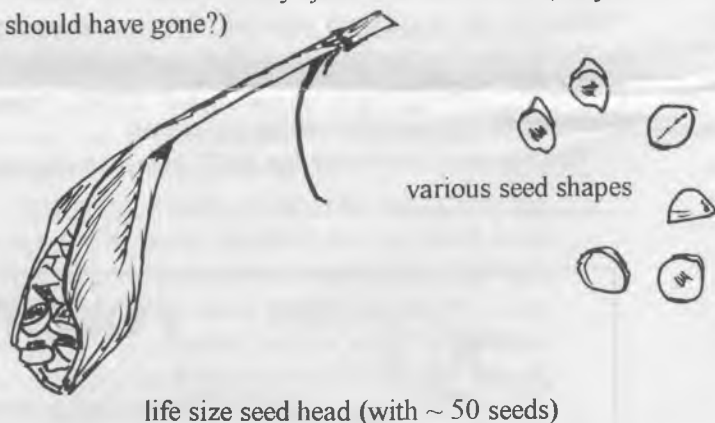
Joan MacMahon

You might recall this recent Feb 26th (a Thursday) was the hottest Feb 26th ever recorded. Whatever it's place in the record books I shall remember it as one of those hot, horrible, windy days when it's hard to take your mind away from the threat of a bushfire and you wonder yet again whether the joy of living close to nature is really worth the summer stress. At midday, after a pleasant morning spent helping out in the nursery, I decided to go home and act as 'fire warden' for the rest of the day. Maybe I'm just a worrywart though, since four other Fowspians (three of whom also live in Warrandyte) cheerfully headed off to Black Flat for a spot of 'Yellow Iris' removal. (Maybe they knew something I didn't?)

Pat and Mike Coupar had been eyeing this patch and casually working away at it during summer swimming sessions.

I gather the first thing the four did was have a swim! Glen Henke had the good sense to spend the rest of the session working from the water. After first bagging up the seed heads, the corms and leaves were cleared from

a stretch of bank nearly 10 metres long. Great work, which was followed by yet another swim. (Maybe I should have gone?)



Glen provided some interesting information about these plants. The flowers, which are quite attractive, aren't long lasting once picked - a pity, as if they were people would be tempted to pick them and so minimise seed production. As well, he'd heard the leaves are good for basketry.

Worth Repeating

Helping to preserve endangered butterflies

By Tracey Reeve

In a world of developing technologies, the Museum of Victoria's method of counting the endangered Eltham Copper Butterfly population is surprisingly simple. Researchers tramp through suburban reserves hitting small bushes with big sticks. The butterflies are disturbed and fly away, allowing them to be counted. Complex?

No, but it is effective, according to Dr Alan Yen, the museum's environment program head curator.

"With an estimated population of only 1000, we need to keep a close eye on their numbers," he said. "But we're not just interested in watching their numbers decline, we aim to see the population increase."

The endangered Eltham Copper Butterfly is found in only three Victorian regions Eltham/Greensborough, Castlemaine, and Kiata in Western Victoria. Population counts have been conducted annually at five local sites for the past three years, at the Pauline Toner Reserve, Yandell Reserve, Hohnes Hill and at the eastern and western colonies in Diosma Rd. Dr Yen said the butterfly numbers in the area had dropped a few years ago, but were beginning to stabilise. Volunteer groups assisting include the Friends of Eltham Copper Butterfly, the Eltham Copper Recovery Group and the Friends of Yandell Reserve. In the heat of the day, the volunteers and museum staff use sticks and branches to hit the small bursaria plant, the



butterfly's habitat, and watch keenly for disturbed butterflies. At night, they crawl on their hands and knees by torchlight to spot the larvae which come out to feed on the sweet bursaria bushes. Dr Yen said the project would be ineffective without the help of volunteer groups.

"With limited funding available, this simple form of counting allows volunteers to assist us in preserving the species," he said. "In addition to counting, the volunteer groups have spent hours removing weeds from the reserves and replanting bursaria bushes. "With their help, we can preserve the Eltham Copper butterfly's environment, preserve the current population and increase their numbers."

Anyone interested in helping to protect the Eltham Copper Butterfly can call Banyule Environment Volunteers Co-ordinators on 9480 4680 or Friends of Yandell Reserve on 9432 0163.

Source: Diamond Valley News February 11th 1998

That was a fun weekend

This year's Warrandyte Festival (March 28th and 29th) was a great success, as was our display. Much interest was shown in our plant display, our 'wildflower garden' raffle was popular, many plants were given away, much billy tea and damper was consumed, we gained some new members and 'old' members took the opportunity to pay their subs. As well the Sunday evening concert and fireworks were truly excellent. Who'll take bets on whether it really was Paradiddle's swan song?

Our festival activity is a great chance for members who find it impossible to attend our other activities during the year to make a real contribution to the smooth running of the weekend. Thank you to all who helped and particularly to Betty Oke for roster organisation and general overseeing. (Hope she doesn't mind this public thanks.)

We'd also like to thank Jan and Ron Day of The Soil Shop and Nursery for lending us yet again their hay bales. We'll be sending them a note of thanks and a copy of our book. By the way their nursery (just off the Warrandyte-Heidelberg Rd) has an interesting range of plants at very good prices.



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FOWSP Membership Renewal Form

all subscriptions ^{were} ~~are~~ due in February* !!!

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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