

June 1998

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

A Rangers Lot.....

By Andy Nixon Ranger-In-Charge WSP

Most school children have some sort of romantic notion about the role of the ranger. Looking after orphaned animals, searching for lost picnickers, fighting the oncoming bushfire and saving the campground from imminent destruction, or chasing those nasty and skulduggerous tree-fern thieves. Well in actual fact I have done all that and more. However, the 'more' is more often than not..... paperwork, meetings and budgets, meeting with 'stakeholders' and 'customers', phone calls and planning. The lot of the modern ranger ! Perhaps this new role could be coined 'RANGER 2000' as we move towards the new millennium.

For the rangers role today is in many ways quite different to what it was so many years ago. To use an analogy, perhaps as different as an old style roll eg. damper, the staple bread; toasted or cooked over the open fire of many past bushmen, to that of the more commonly consumed roll of today, fancy focaccia's from the local brassiere - a staple diet of most desk bound, nature conservation agency staff.

So how long ago did it all begin, this important role of protector and curator? According to one certain senior officer of the law, the oldest profession is that of the park ranger. At least this is what one Oklahoma judge claimed. He equated the job with the cherubic guard placed at the Biblical Garden of Eden to protect it from the only two people in the world (*Parks & Recreation, USA, Nov. 1994*). Perhaps this also means that the first person ever found guilty of an offence against a park regulation was a woman, when Eve offered Adam the forbidden apple !

The reality is that the ranger really began back in 1872 with the appointment of men from the United

States of America's military 'Ranger' units to the newly created Yellowstone National Park. The ranger units were a type of 'commando' brigade, made up of men who could handle tough conditions. These units originated many decades earlier during the American War of Independence. Much of the success of this revolution was attributed to the grit, ingenuity, and toughness of the backwoodsman (aka. Daniel Boone type's). They knew the land, how to survive and live off it, and the ways of the Indians. It is believed that it was the French, who in part fought with and assisted the revolutionaries, that gave these backwoodsman the name "range'e" meaning 'row or line of', and/or "ranger", meaning 'to keep back' and that this was derived to describe these men from the back of or row of hills. Today units of Rangers still form part of the modern American Army.

Happily the modern park ranger here in Victoria is not required to venture out on a patrol with the risk of embracing armed conflict. (In a number of the African parks it is a good result when on return from patrol you have 'got rid of' a number of poachers, but lost only one of your own ranger staff). As much as we all grizzle about limited resources and disagreement with the hierarchy, our lot is pretty good. We have one of the best and most advanced park management systems in the world. And the community (especially our friends here in Warrandyte) is right on side. It really is a far more pleasant day for rangers working with Fowspians, pricking out and propagating in the nursery on a Thursday morning, than chasing or being chased by poachers. The rangers lot... not too bad, and Warrandyte State Park....not a bad place to be I reckon.



My Favourite Place

By Alison Thom

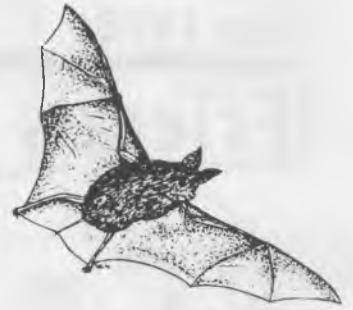
Fourth Hill and the tracks leading to it hold many memories. Long before it achieved State Park status, when blackberries were metres high and wide up Wild Cat Gully, we and many others would arrive, equipped with buckets on Saturday mornings in Autumn. We would go home, purple-lipped, to make jam and delicious pies. The blackberries are now long gone - not even a sign of their former presence and the water in the creek is mostly crystal clear.

Many a breakfast the children and I had beside the creek -pancakes cooked over an open fire taste better than any cooked in the kitchen.

When Fourth Hill ParkCare group met regularly, one of the first projects was to revegetate the highest point of the hill where the water storage used to be. First underfelt was spread over the area and wood shavings spread thickly over the top. A range of eucalypts, wattles and understory plants were planted into the mulch, their roots quickly finding a way through the felt. Growth was phenomenal and now, about five years on, seeing the lush vegetation it's hard to visualise the degraded area it once was.

In recent years things that are memorable include a bat survey, when a group led by ranger David Van Bockel set up bat traps one evening

and returned the next morning early to find several small creatures - the first time I had seen a bat at close quarters. Then there was the possum prowl spotlight walk with ranger Stephen



Anderson when we saw, in Wild Cat Gully, a Powerful Owl clutching its prey. More recently there was the sighting of a wallaby drinking at the creek. The seasonal change of flowers is always interesting. Some Springs the orchids are prolific, others not so much. The white of the Christmas Bush along the creek is followed by the cream of Sweet Bursaria. The clean new bark of Manna Gum trunks in January stand out against the blue-grey foliage of Silver Wattles.

Crossing Anderson's Creek is sometimes tricky. After heavy rain the stepping stones are submerged, but they usually appear again the next day, not always as secure as previously!

Sometimes a bus load of school children will be grouped near the creek learning something of the history of the diggings and taking a turn with an exploration of the tunnel.

It is rare that we meet anyone as we enjoy our morning walk - occasionally a horse rider, but last weekend a young family was breakfasting at the picnic table near the car park. It seems strange to us that more people don't visit this special place.



Coming Next Month

National Parks of East Gippsland

A slide show spectacular

Come with us on a journey of one of Victoria's most pristine places. Visit unspoilt, deserted beaches, crystal clear rivers and old growth forest. See some of the unique flora and fauna of the region. Discover secluded camp sites.

When: Friday July 31st 6.00pm onwards
Where: The Folly

The evening will begin with a BBQ which will be followed by the slide show.

Witton's Gully Fern Hot Spot

The gully which runs between Witton's Reserve and Clifford Drive is full of surprises, not the least - nine species of fern.. Most of the ferns are in small numbers and many are showing signs of stress from the prolonged drought. Some were dead. However, most of those that remained were producing healthy new growth.

The gully is an interesting mix of indigenous vegetation and weeds. Dense Burgan (*Kunzea ericoides*) grows up both sides forming a closed canopy at the tapering ends of the gully. In the middle, where the gully is wider, Swamp Gum (*Eucalyptus ovata*) becomes the dominant overstorey tree, while grasses, sedges and groundsels occupy the lower levels. One indigenous species which is completely at home in this poorly drained environment is Hooker's Fescue (*Austrofestuca hookeriana*) - a bright green tussock-forming grass with a flower spike up to almost two metres. It is an uncommon plant



in the Melbourne region, in fact the Flora of Melbourne only has it listed for two sites (Kilsyth and Croydon).

Most of the ferns were growing along the banks of the somewhat eroded drainage channel which flows only after heavy rain. The attraction of ferns is somewhat akin to that of orchids, so it was with great delight that Fowspians recorded the following species:

Rock Fern (*Cheilanthes austrotenuifolia*)
Common Rasp-fern (*Doodia media*)
Small Rasp-fern (*Doodia caudata*)
Mother Shield-fern (*Polystichum proliferum*)
Common Maidenhair (*Adiantum aethiopicum*)
Rough Tree-fern (*Cyathea australis*)
Soft Tree-fern (*Dicksonia antarctica*)
Tender Brake (*Pteris tremula*)
Austral Bracken (*Pteridium esculentum*)



Once again
Jumping Creek
Road has been the
scene of many
deaths over the
last couple of

months. The animals involved were eastern grey kangaroos, swamp wallabies, ring-tail and brush-tail possums and one dog. In addition several injured eastern greys have headed off into the nearby paddocks.

A number of possums have been brought to Julie since our last report, most were dead either from cat attack, road kill or electrocution. One mother and baby, however, showed no signs of trauma and Julie thinks it is possible that she may have ingested something poisonous.

Two birds, a sulphur-crested cockatoo and a tawny frogmouth, were handed in - both unable to fly. These have been passed on to another shelter.

An elderly koala found at Pound Bend by the Park rangers had to be put down. Koalas generally live to around 14 years. As they age their teeth wear down until they simply cannot feed anymore. According to Julie there is probably quite a big population of aging koalas

around Warrandyte at the present time. This is due to the fact that a large number of two to three year old koalas were released in the Park around ten years ago and they are now reaching the end of their life span.

Julie had an unusual animal brought in to her this month - a green tree frog. It had apparently come down from Sydney in a box of Chinese cabbages. Julie contacted Gerry Marantelli from the Victorian Frog Group who promptly sent someone out to collect it. The frog was duly returned to Sydney.

Finally, do you remember Ron the antisocial wombat with the biting habit? Julie passed him on to 'Wormworld' at Bass about 18 months ago? Well some good news - Ron has just been released along with two female wombats at Wilson's Promontory National Park and by all reports he has relocated well. We wish him and his female companions all the very best.



Green Wedge Seminar

Frogs - a talk by Gerry Marantelli

Report Pat Coupar

The appeal of frogs was reflected in the record attendance of over 60 people at the May Green Wedge Seminar. The speaker was Gerry Marantelli, Director of the Amphibian Research Centre, who has been involved in the natural history and conservation of frogs since 1971.

Gerry's talk, accompanied by high quality slides, concentrated firstly on local frogs, or at least those species which may occur in this region of the State. While most are fairly common in the local area some, like the Growling Grass Frog, are now extremely rare in Warrandyte and others, like the Rocky River Frog, have never been recorded for this area.

Features useful in identification were discussed. Colour, Gerry emphasised, is not one of these features. He illustrated this fact by showing two slides of the same species of frog with quite different colouration. It is preferable to identify frogs from their calls, but this is not always possible since only males call and often

only during the breeding season. Other features used in identification include toe pads, webbing, pupil shape, tympanum or ear, and in some species the presence of glands.



The second half of Gerry's talk detailed the work which he and his team were doing at the Amphibian Research Centre. One of their main objectives is to discover the reasons for the decline of some species of frog, for example the Corroboree Frog. He described a breeding program which involved taking tadpoles from the wild and rearing them in a controlled artificial environment. This method is proving to be quite successful.

Gerry brought along several live specimens of local frogs which under the warm lights of their tank remained very active throughout the evening. The frogs evoked much interest from the audience. It seems people just cannot get enough of these appealing little creatures.

Anderson's Creek Update

By Joan MacMahon

The second meeting of the Anderson's Creek Reference Group was held on May 26th at the Warrandyte C.F.A. headquarters. There were representatives from the C.F.A., Manningham Council, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria (Glen Jameson) and local interest groups (Margaret Burke and myself).

The Activity Plan is now in draft form. Each of the seven management units in the catchment has been carefully studied under the headings of issues, strategies (ie necessary action), outcomes and costings.

Wayne Tennant from the consultants I.D.& A., using a separate map for each unit took us 'for a tour' of the problems and possible solutions. These were indicated in icon (small picture) form.

Problems raised include:

- 1) Rubbish dumping along Gold Memorial Rd.,
- 2) Rabbits in the same area.
- 3) Private creek crossings in several of the management units.
- 4) Lack of a strong sense of ownership by local residents. (This in reference to Gold Memorial Rd.)
- 5) The likelihood of a creek crossing being constructed

for access to the new basketball development at Anderson's Creek Primary School. There will also be pressure for a large amount of parking and care must be taken to ensure there is no damage to the creek environment.

6) Of particular interest to us was the point well made by Margaret Burke that agencies cannot rely on volunteer groups to do 'their' work. Over the last ten years, the age of active members has risen due to changes in the economic and cultural climate.

7) Pugging of ground by stock, leading to erosion, bank instability, and reduced water quality.

8) The need to modify road drainage management practices. Ideally run-off should be diverted into vegetated swales (shallow depressions).

9) The practice of some local governments, as a cost-cutting measure, of spraying out road verges needs to be stopped and slashing re-introduced.

There were many, many more problems covered. I was fascinated by the extent of the problems effecting this one tiny catchment and the equally large range of actions needed to return it to something much closer to its condition in Wurundjeri times.

I am optimistic that this can be done.

P.S. If you would like to read the Activity Plan contact me on 9844 3213.

Worth Repeating

Weeding Out the Undesirables

By Tim Winkler

On the edge of Melbourne, among some squat, rolling hills, is an area known by a number of romantic names: Kangaroo Ground, Bend of Islands and Christmas Hills. At this time of year, a big chunk of it is covered in purple flowers. It looks pretty, but not everyone appreciates the blooms.

One of them is Karyn Kamminga. "Tourists drive past this hill and I see them stop and get out to take pictures because there's all this lovely purple and I want to stop and tell them 'Don't you know it's a noxious weed?'"

Kamminga is vice chair of the Round the Bend Conservation Cooperative, which owns 132 hectares of bush lying about 30 kilometres northeast of the GPO. She is concerned that farms owned by Melbourne Water are the most weed infested properties in the area.

The purple-flowered Patterson's Curse has proliferated on "Yanakee", Melbourne Water's farm in Kangaroo Ground, as nothing has been done for several years, says Kamminga.

The plant is poisonous to a number of grazing animals, including horses that have been agisted on the property in recent years, and its seeds remain viable in the soil for more than eight years.

A variety of weeds are a problem on several nearby Melbourne Water properties, Kamminga says. In addition to the Yanakee property and the huge Sugarloaf reservoir nearby, Melbourne Water owns other pockets of farmland in the area totalling about 80 hectares, she says.

The land was bought by the Government years ago for the construction of the Yarra Brae dam at the top of Yarra River, but the dam was stopped by local protest and has been kept as farmland ever since, she says.

The spread of weeds from the farms has been a significant problem for adjoining landholders and the members of the cooperative, Kamminga says.

"The Minister for Conservation and Land Management, Marie Tehan, has recently appealed to community groups to help the Government win the war against weeds. If the Government was really serious about tackling the weed problem, they would clean up their own back yard and also

direct Melbourne Water to clean up theirs," Kamminga says.

Weeds may be a mundane topic but have proven environmentally pernicious, crowding out native plant species in some areas, according to the president of the Bend of Islands Conservation Association, Alan Bonny.

Indeed, when Tehan launched the State Government's Weeds Initiative in March, aimed at controlling the spread of weeds, she said they cost Victoria \$360 million annually in lost productivity, as well as doing serious damage to the bush. The Government has promised to spend more than \$1.9 million on the direct removal of weeds this year and a total of \$12 million over four years.

Bonny and Kamminga have written to Melbourne Water and Tehan about the issue during the past year, but are yet to find a resolution to the problem.

The cooperative conducts weeding parties every month but the job was made difficult because of the spread of Patterson's Curse and other weeds more prone to infesting the bush, Kamminga says.

She said Melbourne Water had said the problem would be addressed but that it was an issue for those who leased the land.

A Government spokesman said last night that weeds are the responsibility of land owners, Melbourne Water could not be contacted for comment.

Source: *The Age* 26/11/97



Patterson's Curse

New Fence for Koornong

By Cathy Willis

The Koornong sub group has learnt some new fencing skills in the last two months. Under the patient guidance of Colin Bromley, the Park's fencing expert, we have built one new rabbit exclusion fence and extended another.

'Big Manna Fence' is a small, completely new fence at the bottom carpark - the southern end of the river track. If you haven't visited the Koornong lately you may remember this spot as a sea of ivy with one magnificent ancient Manna Gum, full of nesting hollows, rising above it.

Hard work late last year, particularly by Laurie Safstrom and Ray Clarke, saw the ivy removed.



Little vegetation of any kind was left apart from the Manna Gum, a couple of shrubs and some Poa tussocks. Of course the weeds took off fast, but we are slowly gaining the upper hand. We have plans to make this very public area a little showcase of small "pretty plants", particularly the rare and the significant species. Watch out for a spring planting date.

Triple Tree Fence was another small fence a few hundred metres north along the river track. This area was originally fenced several years ago, mainly to protect a very boggy area ideal for wetland edge species. It contained a fallen triple-trunked Swamp Gum, some sedges and many weeds. Over the years Friends of the Koornong (FOK) and Park contractors have spent many hours carpeting, mulching, weeding and planting. We still have ongoing weed problems associated with wet sites, but the transformation is astounding.

Last month we tripled (appropriately) the size of Triple Tree Fence to include a relatively weed free partly mulched area. We will carry out a little Burgan thinning over winter to let in some light for another spring planting.

If you would like a guided tour of our new fences we'd be happy to show them off. FOK meet on the first Wednesday of the month from 9-11.00am. followed by morning tea.

Please note our July meeting will be held a week early on June 24th so as not to coincide with school holidays. Hope to see you at the Koornong soon!

Tikilara Trek

Sunday Family Activity with Ranger Glen Jameson

Date: Sunday June 28th

Time: 1.00 pm

Place: Meet behind Aumann's Nursery, Webster's Rd Templestowe (Melway's ref. map 34 D2)

Free plants available on the day

Glen will lead us on a walk of discovery through Candlebark Park, where Manningham Conservation Society have been carrying out revegetation work since 1985, to Petty's Orchard and Tikilara Park. A car pool will be organised on the day.

Afternoon tea will be provided by FOWSP.

If you would like to join the Friends of Yarra Valley Park for a barbecue at 12 midday before the walk ring Glen on 9844 2659 to book.

Would You like to Help ?



We are looking for a member to take over part of our book distribution network. (Betty Oke services our other outlets.) It is an easy job which would suit someone living locally. The outlets you need to visit (at about two-monthly intervals) are the Warrandyte Post Office, Spencer and Martin the real estate agents and the newsagency at Goldfields Plaza.

This is an opportunity for a member who would love to contribute but is unable to attend our regular activities. Please phone Joan on 9844 3213 for more details.

SPY

By B.G

Questing Quote

"Part of the irony of environmentalism is questing for solutions when you know you are part of the problem".

'Hayseed' sorts seeds

A frequent 'Friend' (and ex-farmer), Bill Roxburgh, has been at the Pound Bend depot 11 Thursdays, 4 Sundays, 2 Tuesdays, 1 Friday and 1 Monday during the first four months of this year. Bill spends hours each time sorting, sieving and cleaning all the seed that 'Friends' have collected for propagation.

Seven Supporters

Thanks are due to Elsa Arden, Antje Bauer, Joan Broadberry, Katherine Byrne, Betty Oke, Eve Scopes and Neal Tessier who looked after the FOWSP stall at the May Market.

Staff Works Responsibilities (SWR)

Responsibilities include:

- maintenance of all small motor machinery - pumps, chainsaws, brushcutters, generator and mover.
- checking and maintaining all trailers (three tandems, firetrailer and floating collar tank).
- Running the quick fill pump; organising can/bottle recycling; 'diesel dip'; maintaining firewood stock; checking river pump - filling the tanks; maintaining all first aid kits in the workshop, office and vehicles.
- Checking and cleaning the tanker, checking vehicle lists and keeping tally of jobs which need attention at the next service.
- On high 'Orange and Red' days setting normal works program aside and making decisions regarding the works for the day accordingly.

And that's just a sample of SWR.

Quote Query

In what local rag did the following headline appear around July 10th 1959 AD? "Lights came on and Pound Bend went gay" (How words change).

It referred to the ceremony, barbecue and dance to celebrate the connection of the electricity supply to the area. The article also included: "Cr. W. F. Bettor, in outlining the history of the area, said Pound Bend under the original survey of 1841, was reserved as an Aboriginal settlement".

Michael's Mark

The Hon. Dr Michael Wooldridge, Minister for Health and Family Services, Candidate for the Federal seat of Casey informs me that he selects as his favourite plant the Black She-oak - "a graceful looking tree which produces a delightful sound when the wind passes through it".

Frankly Frank

Frank Armenid, ALP Candidate for the Federal seat of Casey, likes "Red Box because the bark is persistent and it grows in stony soils. It has distinctive foliage and is a dominant feature of the Warrandyte landscape." He also likes "Prickly Moses - graceful, but prickly".

Destination Darwin

In an inverse hibernation 'I Spy' is leaving the (temporarily) cold climate of Victoria to visit that city named after the great Charles Darwin.



Announcement

Spring Camp

Keep the weekend of October 17th and 18th free and come and join our Spring camp at The Brisbane Ranges National Park. Details to follow in future newsletters

Soup Roster

The Thursday lunchtime soup roster has begun. Regulars are requested to put their name on the list which is pinned up on the Folly noticeboard.



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