

December 1998

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

An Event Full Year

By Pat Coupar

Variety is the spice of life, they say. Well there was certainly plenty of variety on offer for FOWSP members during 1998.

For the first time in a long time we had the bonus of Sunday family activities led by Rangers. Through guided walks we were introduced to little-known areas of Warrandyte State Park and Yarra Valley Parklands - from Mount Lofty to Tikilara and beyond.

Thursday activities took us to Shepherds Bush in Glen Waverly, Diamond Creek and Candlebark nursery. We held planting mornings, weeding mornings and of course regular propagation mornings. While there have been a few difficulties encountered at the nursery during the year, we look forward to these being resolved with the appointment of a paid facilitator early next year.

Education was again high on our agenda. The Green Wedge Seminars, run in conjunction with Manningham council, have been very well-attended with over 60 people on more than one occasion. On a more informal note, two slide talks were held in the Folly - a tour of East Gippsland and a tour of John Walmsley's Earth Sanctuaries. Both preceded by barbeques and accompanied by a frog chorus.

Several FOWSP representatives had input into the Mount Lofty management plan which was formulated earlier in the year. The plan is progressing well, although it has brought to a head the 'burgan issue'. With the rebirth of the Flora Management Team (FMT), issues like burgan are now being investigated. A high level

of communication, co-operation, and consultation are a feature of the team and there would be few Parks where 'Friends' are fortunate to be so involved in such decision making.

Friends of Koornong - the small, but dedicated, last remaining sub-group, continue to meet once a month and, over the year, have carried out vital revegetation and weeding in this lesser known area of the State Park.

In an effort to publicise our group further afield, FOWSP has produced its first ever brochure, plus two information posters to promote our activities. As well, a new series of greetings cards have been printed which are available at the market stall. Speaking of which the stall at the monthly Warrandyte market continues to be our most important shop front thanks to the many members who give their time to organise and run it each month.

There have been a few battles over the year to which FOWSP has given support. Not the least, the unfortunately, unsuccessful attempt to save the old Manna Gums at the Harris Gully roundabout site. The Jumping Ck road bridge upgrade continues to simmer. While our alliance with the Anti Ring Road Organisation (ARRO) remains an ongoing commitment.

The list goes on. So much in just one year. The committee has been strong and active, often making time when none is available to ensure the needs of the group are met. We thank all members for their support of the FOWSP organisation and look forward to another year full of hopefully pleasant events in 1999.

Flora of Warrandyte Update

Work has continued over the year on the 'Flora of Warrandyte'. While it may seem to be a never-ending story, with new species and distribution records still being found, the end is in sight. Hopefully next year.

All photographs already taken (some several years ago) have been scrutinised to see if any could be improved. Two things have given us the opportunity to do this: a good flowering season following the drought years, and a superior level of film processing which can now reproduce blue colours more accurately. The number of photographs still to be taken is down to a handful.

While descriptions of all 485 species have been completed some time ago, these are being revisited to ensure consistency. Botanist, Graeme Lorimer, is going through each completed volume to check for accuracy and to ensure no glaring errors in text or photographs slip through.

A short introductory chapter has also been written detailing the different plant communities found in the Park and explaining various terms used in the text. Another inclusion is a brief description of each family, a list of all species within that family covered in the book and a

general guide on the typical plant communities in which each genus occurs with an example of where they can be found in Warrandyte.

Flora of Warrandyte

Volume one

A Pictorial Record of Warrandyte's
Indigenous Flora



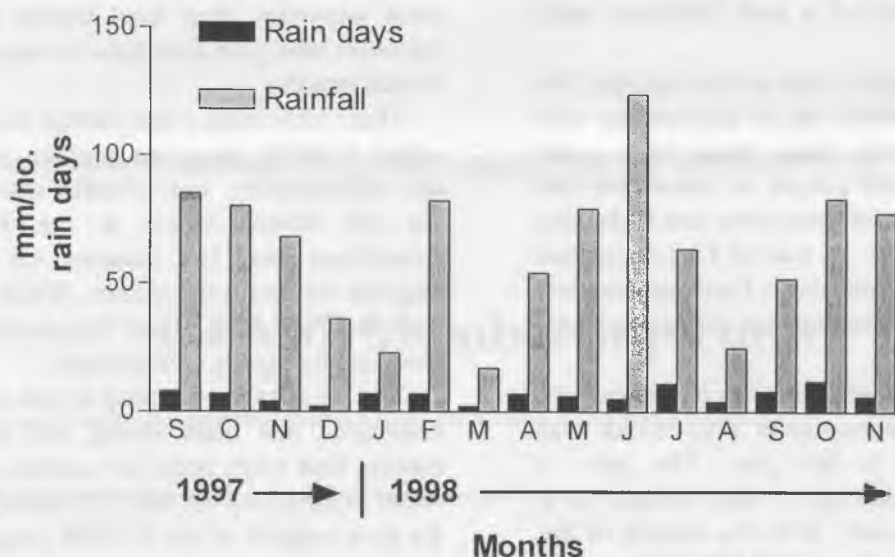
Pat Coupar and David Van Bockel

Sponsored by
Department of Natural Resources, Environment and Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Two copies of the incomplete 'Flora of Warrandyte' are available for short-term loan from the FOWSP library (contact David Van Bockel on 9844 2659). It is pleasing that so many members have made use of them already.

Warrandyte's Rainfall



These readings of Warrandyte's rainfall from September 1997 to November 1998 have been recorded by Pat and Mike Coupar from their property in Brackenbury St Warrandyte. The graph shows a slightly unusual pattern with exceptionally high rainfall in June, but well below average for August and September.

You can look forward to more updates from Warrandyte's Meteorological local community weather station next year!



Rangers Report

By Andy Nixon

The year of 1998 has again been a busy and not least to say, an interesting one for Warrandyte State Park. As our work becomes busier (and I definitely include that of our volunteer FOWSP'ians) and our resources more stretched, it requires of staff and volunteers that extra 'grunt' and preparedness for 'sweat on the brow' to get the job done. So a big thankyou to all.

For park staff there has been further organisational change - a re-arrangement of park districts and regions, the functionalisation of aspects of management (Environment/Assets), a new Head Office structure, including the CEO and senior management team, new Chief Rangers, budget processes, communication systems, etc. etc. How dreadful I might hear you say, but it is all designed to assist us in getting the job done better and our service to the public (and environment) to attain a higher level. No doubt there are teething problems, but overall it is looking promising, particularly now in having an organisational structure that reflects closer working relationships and understandings between the Head Office planning divisions and the work that takes place on the ground, via the rangers, in the parks.

So some names to these people who are now involved in the 'business end' of Warrandyte State Park - David Nugent, Chief Ranger for the Yarra district (of which Warrandyte S.P. is part); Andrew Paxton, Chief Ranger for Asset management (region wide); Tony Varcoe, Chief ranger for Environment (region wide). Also the new regional manager, Jennifer Lilburn. If FOWSP'ians have not met these people then please avail yourself when the moment suits! And of course a farewell and thankyou to John Nankervis (ex Chief Ranger Yarra) and Ian Christie (ex Regional Manager)

The summer of 97/98 was, if you remember, a very high fire danger period. The park staff were kept busy in our local district but also in support to other Parks Vic and NRE staff in many locations around the state. Just have a look at their end of fire season T-shirts - it includes Sydney ! Not only fighting fire, but also fighting rabbits was a priority for the summer. The Rabbit Action program had considerable funds committed to it and results can now be seen at Pound Bend, Stane Brae, Webb St and a number of other locations. Local community rabbit action groups have been formed and much

thanks must go to Glen Jameson, who is our newest member of staff, having transferred from Parks Victoria Westerfolds office.

A number of capital works activities were completed including :-

- Mines safety audit of Fourth Hill area, and associated public safety works.
- Basic improvements to visitor facilities at Pound Bend and Jumping Creek - a new walking track now connects the top picnic area, at Jumping Creek to the main riverside facilities.
- The concept plan for Mt. Lofty was finalised. Valued input to the draft was received from a number of community groups including FOWSP. (An interesting archaeological survey was conducted, though no great finds of significance).

On the environment front the running of the Reserves to the north of the park now rests with the Sugarloaf depot though WSP staff still play a significant role in Threatened Species and Fire Management. We are in the second year of the vegetation assessment project and this work continues to be done via Dunmoochin Biological Surveys - quadrat sampling this year and the all important mapping work next. Good things have been happening with revegetation sites at Pound Bend are progressing well, particularly with some of the seeding work in the old orchard areas below the park office. The management of the Eltham Copper Butterfly Reserves is an important role that the park still maintains. Some significant numbers were found at the colonies this year and the ecological burn conducted at the Western colony appears to be providing good regeneration of the favoured *Bursaria* habitat. And all this information will now be collated and stored on the long awaited Parks Victoria Environmental Information System, a great bonus to WSP and parks throughout the State.

Walk, talks and gawks; nursery days; Flora management team meetings; planting days; campouts and BBQ's, were also activities that brought the staff and Friends together, and usually always with smiles on peoples faces !

The final word simply needs to be - thankyou. And sincerely all the Warrandyte park staff wish for me to pass this on as the work that we, and by 'we' I mean staff and Friends, carry out would not achieve the wonderful results that are seen around the park without the input of our many 'Friends'.

Thankyou, a happy Christmas, and looking forward to the year ahead with our FOWSPIAN's.

Book Review

By Elizabeth Sevier

Plains Wandering - Exploring the Grassy Plains of South Eastern Australia by Ian Lunt, Tim Barlow and James Ross. Published by the Victorian National Parks Association and the Trust for Nature (Victoria). 1998. 182 pages.

Almost in the nick of time, the indigenous grasses of Southern Australia are moving back from a fast rush towards extinction.

This slim, handy book offers a very readable description of the grassy plains of South Eastern Australia. It has been written by three naturalists of varying backgrounds, but all have a great interest and experience in grassland ecology.

The book is well-illustrated with clear colour photographs and reproductions of nineteenth century art works. Both photographs and reproductions are necessarily small. Also included

are quotations from early visitors to the regions. The book is in two sections with the first part describing the ecology of the Lowland Plains followed by regional descriptions of South Eastern grasslands with simple maps. The regions described range from the Mid-north of South Australia to the Southern Tablelands of New South Wales and from the Riverina in Northern Victoria and New South Wales to the Tasmanian Midlands in the South.

Most of the book is taken up with colour photographs of the plants, with a brief description of each and symbols to show its habitat and region. In addition there are some clear and well produced drawings of particular grasses showing the structure of each.

Finally there is a glossary of botanical terms, references and an index.

I recommend this book to anyone who wants an enjoyable introduction to grassland plants. The text is easy to read and the illustrations are very useful in identification. I invite you all to consult it and borrow it from the FOWSP library.

My Favourite Place



By Ethan Le Duc

I have written a story
about my favourite place at
Warrandyte state park.
Could you please put this
story in the newsletter
Love Ethan

*I hope the story
gets in the newsletter!
Keep up the great work*

My favourite place
at Warrandyte is Stane Bree

I like all the animals
"especially" Willy, "Wally" and
"Whoopsie" Wombat. At Stane Bree
we saw lots of Koalas

I saw lots of scats at the
bottom of the tree

*This sounds fantastic!
What wonderful
writing*





Green Wedge Seminar Fire Management

Report by Pat Coupar



Understanding fire behaviour is one of the keys to surviving a bush fire. I learnt this at the Green Wedge Seminar on fire management, given by David Farrar and Jeff Adair, on Thursday November 5th.

Of all the seminars over the year, this was probably the most important - at least as far as personal safety is concerned and certainly most relevant to those of us who have chosen to live close to bushland. And yet, it had one of the smallest audiences. Was it complacency, the divergence from the zoology theme, or the result of the comprehensive fire expo held in Warrandyte last year?

David Farrar, Ranger at Warrandyte State Park, spoke first, on the balance between fire behaviour and conservation.

Australia, along with California and France is one of the three most fire prone areas of the world and Warrandyte ranks in the top ten within Victoria. With that sobering fact, David went on to explain (illustrated by setting light to the real thing) the different types of fuel: dry grass - fine fuel that ignites easily; stringybark fibres - causes short-range spotting; gum bark strands - causes long-range spotting and large sticks that do not ignite easily.

David discussed conditions effecting fire behaviour such as temperature and humidity, topographical features are also important - fires burn quicker uphill. He talked of fuel reduction burns (to protect life and assets) and ecological burns (for flora and fauna viability) and showed a short video of a prescribed burn.

The second half of the presentation was given by Jeff Adair from the Warrandyte CFA. He emphasised the importance of community education. He spoke on how to prepare your property well before the fire season, whether to go or stay (a decision which must be made early on days of potential fires).

Like David, he stressed the unpredictability of a fire. There may be no power, no water, no warning. Be prepared. Embers are the enemy. Have at the ready 20 litre containers of water, knapsacks, long-sleeved cotton clothes. And remove door mats.

Jeff was reticent at recommending fire refuges, other than as a last resort and then only as a short-term option. It seems they may be phased out before long. He did however, make one whole-hearted recommendation - the 'Super Soaker' water pistol, a child's toy which could save a house. At least that solves one present this Christmas!

Orchid Surprises

Although the breaking of El Nino has been somewhat tentative, this year has produced a few fascinating findings in the Warrandyte orchid department.

In typical fashion JR, the guru, rediscovered not one, but two orchid species, that despite intensive searching, had not been seen in the Park for over ten years. These were the Dwarf Greenhood (*Pterostylis nana*) and Small Gnat-orchid (*Cyrtostylis reniformis*). As well, new records for several of the 'hot spot' fenced areas at Fourth Hill and Timber Reserve have been added. Two more orchid surprises. One from Cathy Willis who discovered Tiger Orchids (*Diuris sulphurea*) growing inside a small area fenced a couple of years ago. She had never seen this orchid on her block before.

The other was from Bev Hanson, whose property abuts Fourth Hill. She found Scented Leek-orchids (*Prasophyllum odoratum*) where she had not seen them since the 1970's. The reason - a combined, concentrated rabbit poisoning effort with about 20 neighbours in May this year. This evidence of the longevity of orchid tubers in the soil, gives hope for the rediscovery of more presumed extinct species in Warrandyte State Park.

Stop Press: A couple of days before this article was going to press, another orchid species has been rediscovered in the State Park. A colony of 33 plants of Cinnamon Bells (*Gastrodia* sp.), in full flower, were found by Ranger David Van Bockel. A specimen of the flower has been collected to determine the species.

Worth Repeating

Birds fall prey as victims die

By Greg Roberts

Populations of Australia's largest bird of prey, the wedge-tailed eagle, are crashing across much of the continent as birds deprived of their chief food source, the rabbit, are starving to death or failing to breed. Farmers report that desperately hungry birds are turning to domestic animals, in one case carrying off a miniature-horse foal.

Mrs Jenny O'Connor was dumbstruck when she saw an eagle fly off with the five kilogram foal in its talons at her stud near Beaufort, near Ballarat. She later found the half-eaten carcass of the three-week foal, which had been sold for \$4000.

Mrs O'Connor said eagles had been hunting in small flocks, attacking dogs and cats and even adult horses.

"I don't let my kids out to walk in the paddock any more in case they turn into lunch," she said. "I don't like them eating my horses, but I don't like to see them starve either."

On another farm in the Beaufort region, Mrs Dorothy Atkins has lost several goats to eagles

over the past 12 months. "They just swoop down on them" Mrs Atkins said. "We've been here for 37 years and it had never happened before until the rabbits went away."

Rabbit numbers have plunged since the escape of the rabbit calicivirus in 1995.

Research by the South Australian Environment Department shows eagles have not bred for at least three years in the Cooper Creek basin in the state's north-east. Elsewhere, birds are not breeding or are producing fewer young.

A research paper by the conservation group Birds Australia says calicivirus "will potentially have serious implications" for several species of birds of prey already suffering from poisoning, shooting and habitat degradation.

Victoria's Department of Natural Resources and Environment's wildlife damage control officer, Mr Ian Temby, said an increase in complaints about eagles preying on domestic stock in Victoria coincided with the decline in rabbit numbers.

Source: *The Age* 21/10/98

Editor's Note: This scenario is not one that has yet been experienced at Warrandyte.



Worth Repeating

Scientific Warning on Diversity

Australians spent too much time and money on cuddly creatures like koalas and bilbies at the expense of endangered species of invertebrates and plants, an environmental scientist warned yesterday. Professor Hugh Possingham who heads

the University of Adelaide's department of environmental science and management, said hundreds of species of invertebrates, plants and fungi had died out or were in danger of extinction. But governments were doing nothing about research into lesser-known species and their role in the ecosystem because there was no public demand for such information.

Source: *The Age* 5/11/98



Endangered Species Errata

In the November issue this column mentioned the quashing of Nillumbik Council. The last paragraph referred to "Manningham councillors performance", this should have read "Manningham councillors preference" (in relation to indigenous flora).

November News

On Saturday 7th November the following people were active at the 'Friends' market stall: Michael Hubbert, Eve Scopes, Katherine Byrne and Marjan Kiewiet.

Laughing Waters Location

New members Nick and Helen Robinson enquired about Laughing Waters. Is this area worth a guided walk sometime?

Chase Chapter

Sunday 15th November, botanist, David Cameron led a large group of mainly local people around the Chase Reserve. The walk was so steep that two walkers tumbled down the terrain..

David spoke of "Got the Pittosporums by the jugular!" In the same vein (excuse the pun) he mentioned blackberries, bellbirds, non-indigenous human presence, fire, rabbits and blackbirds.

Joan Broadberry is preparing an article for the January newsletter about various features of the whole walk.

Committee of Management

The committee of management for Professor's Hill and the Chase is a 'passive' group maintaining vigilance and occasional maintenance to preserve the Chase Reserve as it is.

Personel Parings

Andrew Nixon, Ranger-in-Charge has shaved off his beard. Fire season approaching?

Flinders Facts

Will Alison Thom reveal the secrets of Flinders Island? See future newsletters.

Frog in the Folly

A Ewings Tree Frog was found hiding under one of the chair cushions in the 'Folly' at lunchtime on the 26th November. Must have heard about the working bee in 'frogland' that day.

Reid Arrival

Kim Reid (nee Dowcra) is expecting another edition to the family in January 1999.

Season Starts

Justin Welander and Tim Pulleyblank are the first two so far of the 'summer fire crew'.

Gardners Group

Mark Gardner has a six month contract with the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers with the Green Corps. It involves traineeships for young Australians via TAFE. The core project is at Healseville Sanctuary involving 17 to 20 year olds. Mark is the Field Supervisor over team leaders.

The Blue Box - what blue box?

An ideal FOWSP secretary would have some magical way to pass on to members all the information that arrives in our mailbox on a regular basis. However, things being the way they are this is an unlikely scenario. Firstly, most people seem to suffer from information overload already so we wouldn't all want too much extra, and secondly ideal secretaries don't exist.

But, FOWSP receives numerous newsletters and the like from a very wide range of other groups and organisations that contain a wealth of interesting articles. When I do get the chance to

really read them instead of just skimming it is always very rewarding.

So what happens to them all? After having a short outing to a committee meeting, they get taken to the Folly and put into ***The Blue Box***. This plastic box sits on the seat in the Folly and I fear rarely gets opened. So if you have a spare hour or two why not spend it sitting in peace at the Folly getting acquainted with the contents. Its a great view! Members are also welcome to borrow newsletters as long as they are returned within a week.



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