

March 1999

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

Revegetation Fence - a Winner

By Pat Coupar

FOWSP has been successful in obtaining a grant, via the Parks Victoria Community grants scheme, for the removal of Onion-grass (*Romulea rosea*) from a high profile revegetation fence at Pound Bend Reserve.

Onion-grass, not to be confused with Angled Onion (*Allium triquetrum*), is a tough perennial herb belonging to the Iris family. Its linear, grass-like leaves grow from a robust corm, often deep underground. This troublesome weed usually goes unnoticed until it flowers in spring. The attractive magenta-pink flowers are followed by numerous seeds in summer.

For a long time the site at Pound Bend Reserve, between the asphalt path leading to the tunnel and the river, was heavily weed infested with Angled Onion, Wandering Jew, Blackberry, Purple-top Verbena and an array of weedy grasses. It was, undoubtedly, somewhat of an eyesore for an area that receives more visitors than any other Reserve in the Warrandyte State Park.

In 1994 the awesome task to improve the site was begun, firstly by carpeting and mulching, followed by planting carried out by FOWSP. Protection from rabbits was by individual guards and small couplets which did nothing for the aesthetics. Around 1995 a grant was obtained from the then Melbourne Parks and Waterways community grants program to fence the area. The site

has never looked back.

Intensive weed control has been carried out. While most of the weeds are able to be controlled with regular maintenance, Onion-grass has proved difficult - the narrow leaf with its waxy cuticle means there is little vegetative material to spray and digging the plant is often the best option. Thanks to the grant money the removal of this weed will now become a reality.

The fence has been the site for a number of FOWSP planting mornings over the last few years. Emphasis has been on the showy indigenous species and, if appropriate habitat, on species that are rare and threatened in the Park. There have been many favourable comments from members of the public who regularly visit the area and have seen the dramatic transformation.

An information poster on the Pound Bend tunnel revegetation project is currently in preparation by Park staff and when completed will go on display at the information shelter in the picnic area.

If you haven't been down to this site for a while (or have never been!) it is worth a look, at



what is probably one of the most successful joint projects between rangers, crew and 'Friend's. There will be an opportunity to be involved with the management of this area at a planting day on Sunday June 27th.

Warrandyte Platypus Marathon Swim Record

When Australian Platypus Conservancy (APC) researchers trapped a young male platypus during a recent survey along Steels Creek near Yarra Glen, they assumed they had encountered a "new" animal. After all, this was not only the first ever survey of this particular waterway but also the first time that investigations had been conducted anywhere in this sub-section of the Yarra catchment.

Nevertheless, they dutifully checked the platypus for an identification transponder signal, even though they had little expectation of a positive result. To their total surprise, the scanner gave a beep of recognition and flashed an ID code - Trovan 0144-9158 - on the display screen. After a quick reference to the APC database, the origin of the mystery platypus was revealed: an animal that had been caught as a juvenile in May 1997 in Andersons Creek, a kilometre upstream of the Gold Memorial in Warrandyte State Park.

The distance moved by this animal - approximately 40 kilometres in total, as the river flows - was considerably more than the previous confirmed platypus travel record of around 15 kilometres. This marathon swim indicates that much still remains to be discovered about platypus movement patterns, especially those of juveniles dispersing to find living space.

The May 1997 survey of Andersons Creek was undertaken by the Conservancy as part of the Melbourne Water Urban Platypus Program. The trapping exercise found a total of four platypus in Andersons Creek. In addition to the afore-



mentioned juvenile male, two adult males and a female were encountered in the lower section of the creek between the Yarra and Harris Gully Road. In August 1998 a follow-up survey was conducted, with another adult male being found at Everard Drive Reserve.

The results to date suggest that, for its size, Andersons Creek supports a reasonably good number of platypus. However, like neighbouring Mullum Mullum Creek, animals mainly make use of the lower reaches of the waterway - i.e. where they can also easily access the Yarra river.

The APC also conducted the first full survey of Jumping Creek in August 1998 but no platypus were encountered. Undoubtedly platypus from the Yarra make use of this creek from time to time, but its smaller size and less consistent flow regime possibly inhibit platypus from utilising this waterway on a regular or resident basis. However, it is hoped to conduct a follow-up survey of Jumping Creek to investigate the situation further.

For additional information contact Geoff Williams, Australian Platypus Conservancy, PO Box 84, Whittlesea Tel: 9716 1626

The Eastern Freeway Extension

The Victorian Government is committed, in the near future, to the extension of the Eastern Freeway from Springvale Rd to the Maroondah Highway at Ringwood. One of Melbourne's most beautiful and valuable nature corridors - the Mullum Mullum Creek valley is faced with the threat of extinction. There are three options for the extension:

1. Above ground through the Koornung Valley. (Original Vic. Roads proposal).

2. Above ground with a very short tunnel. (Current Vic. Roads proposal).

3. A long tunnel.

Options one and two will destroy the creek valley. Many hectares of native forest with a diverse range of flora and fauna will be lost.

A public meeting is being held on 4th March. The results of this will be published in our next newsletter.

For more information contact:

Chris Auger (Eastern Freeway Tunnel Project)

Diana Haby (Australian Conservation Foundation)



Worth Repeating

Survey takes stock of vanishing forest

By Jason Koutsoukis Canberra

Australia has lost about 36 per cent of its forests since European settlement, according to the first national inventory of forests released yesterday by the Bureau of Rural Sciences.

Forests today cover 157 million hectares, or 20 per cent of the country, compared to 245.3 million hectares in 1788.

The survey found 7.5 million hectares of forest had thinned out and 1.1 million hectares had become more dense since 1788.

Forests are home to 13,622 plant species and 1239 vertebrates, according to the survey, which took four years to complete.

Eucalypts, the most common tree variety, cover 124.5 million hectares, acacias 12.3 million hectares and non-natives one million hectares.

A smaller 1990 study, cited in the survey, found Victoria's forests were the most ravaged by European settlement.

The state lost 59 per cent of forest, compared to 58 per cent in New South Wales, 51 per cent in South Australia and 47 per cent in the ACT.

Queensland has the most forest, with 49 million hectares, followed by the Northern Territory with 35.4 million hectares, Western Australia with 34.9

million hectares, NSW with 21 million hectares and Victoria with 7.5 million hectares.

The Minister for Forestry and Conservation, Mr Wilson Tuckey, said the survey described the characteristics, extent and ownership of forests.

"I am delighted that all Australians now have access to a comprehensive reference on Australia's forests that has a sound scientific basis," Mr Tuckey said.

"As all the various stakeholders jostle for their position, there have probably been more untruths expounded about Australia's forests than White House sex scandals."

The survey found loggers each year harvest about 1.5 per cent, or 110,000 hectares, of the 7.3 million hectares of multiple-use forest available to the timber industry.

In 1996, 6900 Australian businesses employing 84,200 people were engaged in timber-related industries. The country was a net importer of forest products, in terms of value, but a net exporter in terms of volume.

The report warned the environmental effect of land clearing may yet be fully realised.

"The history of deforestation from agriculture, forest burning and grazing shows that environmental consequences may be long delayed," the report said.

"This is apparent not only in the loss of trees across the pastoral and agricultural landscapes, and the associated loss of biodiversity, but in the problems of dry-land salinity and increasing salinity of water supplies.

Source: *The Age* 10/12/98

Paddle and Pull

There was a slightly disappointing turn out to our first Sunday activity of the year. The weather cannot be blamed - it was perfect and the river temperature was warm, but unfortunately we had opposition from the Mullum Mullum Festival which opened the same weekend.

Canoes and a flat-bottomed aluminium punt were used to ferry people across the river to several isolated clumps of the Yellow Flag Iris - our target weed. Contractors were on hand to help with any heavy work. Many large clumps were removed by mattock and shovel from amongst the

native Club-sedge (*Bolboshoenus fluviatilis*). Hopefully this plant and other riparian species will now regenerate quickly to replace the weed.

The afternoon ended socially with a relaxing barbeque on the banks of the river.

Thanks to Ranger, David Van Bockel who organised canoes, contractors, tools and the barbeque for the day, and to Flora Anderson and Cathy Papalia who did an excellent job with the catering. Finally thank you to those Fowspians who came to do battle with the Iris - every bit helps.



A Weekend Away *at* *Woorarra*

By Geoff & Lee Speedy

Last year my wife Lee and I "roughed it" in a spacious and very neat caravan situated on 65 acres of natural bushland in Gippsland.

Woorarra Bushland Retreat, run by Irmela and Graham McIntyre (ex of Greensborough), has a variety of bushland walks, extensive areas of coral ferns and tea-tree, vast numbers of parrots and nectar-eating birds, wetlands, and a year-round display of native orchids.

Even after the long dry summer we had just been through (again), there were Autumn Bird Orchids flowering on a thick carpet of orchid leaves in April.

Woorarra has just two caravans, each with carport, separate M/F shower blocks, and a large covered, pot-belly heated bush shelter and many tent sites. The central pole of the shelter is occupied by a possum nest, with possums visible each night. (Also antechinus' in the old farm sheds). Many bird species are to be seen, including blue wrens in winter plumage, yellow robins, dozens of finches (pardelotes?), and waterbirds in the dam and wetlands.

The current owners are collating a folder of orchid photos, time lines and details of the various orchids to be seen on the block, and were happy to discuss all aspects of bushland management.

The bushland block is about six kilometres inland from the Corner Inlet, at a few hundred

feet elevation, and only a few kilometres south of the Strezlecki range. Excellent views across Corner Inlet to Wilson's Promontory may be obtained just after leaving the main road at Toora. Nearby day trips to Port Albert (historic sleepy fishing village) and Yarram (excellent food in the Imperial Coffee Palace).

Visit the Omega tower (465 metres for tech-heads and pensioned-off 70's activists) and the wonderful Tarra-Bulga National Park. Tarra-Bulga, although small and long established, has beautiful temperate rain forest, fascinating lichen and fungus and appears to be very well kept. Children would enjoy the interpretation centre.

The full length of the Grand Ridge Road can be driven starting at Tarra-Bulga, but be warned, it's all dirt, it's windy, it traverses logging areas and it's poorly signposted. I wouldn't recommend the full length of it unless you're really fresh. Views from the top are spectacular, but generally over managed monoculture eucalypt and pine forest.

The Standing Giant tree at Mt Worth State Park shows a remnant of the 300 feet high Mountain Ash once standing over much of the area. It's roots are four to six feet high at ground level, and the pronounced lean of the tree has no doubt strengthened the roots, and scared off the 19th century loggers. It's a twisty old tree with attitude!! (Alternate access from the Princes Highway at Darnum.)

Hope you enjoy these sights if you decide to visit Gippsland. We did!

*Woorarra Bushland Retreat is 2 hours drive southwest of Melbourne, near Toora & Foster.
Ph 0356 816 209*

Mobile Phone Tower on Fourth Hill???

Optus and Vodafone are soon to erect a new mobile phone tower to improve coverage to parts of Warrandyte. One of the four proposed sites is near the top of Fourth Hill. We are concerned because:-

- Bringing the tower and equipment to erect it into the park will cause disturbance in this fragile area.
- Underground power would need to be brought to the site causing even more serious disturbance.

- Ongoing maintenance means keeping the site cleared.
- The visual impact would be detrimental to the natural values of our State Park.

Is this the thin edge of the wedge? If a mobile phone tower is allowed in our State Park what next??

Optus and Vodafone are setting up several meetings for community consultation over the next few weeks. For more information contact Charlotte Allen on 9417 5035

The Red Book

as read by Flora Anderson

*The Walrus and the Carpenter
Were walking close at hand:
They wept like anything to see
Such quantities of sand:*

*"If this were only cleared away,"
They said, "it would be grand,"*

*"If seven maids with seven mops
Swept it for half a year,
Do you suppose," the Walrus said,
"That they could get it clear?"
"I doubt" said the Carpenter
And shed a bitter tear.*

These two verses from Tweedledee's very long poem come back to me whenever I remember, with a group of volunteers, being confronted ten years ago, with the sight of millions of seedlings of Flax-leaved Broom, Spanish Heath and Coastal Tea-tree on Airey's Inlet Coastal Reserve, during the very first ANGAIR Weed Week. All 'Friends' groups engaged in environmental weed control would appreciate the Walrus and Carpenter's dilemma.

When the 'Red Book' arrived in the post I wondered momentarily if our own 'bitter tears' could at last be dried. I will leave the answer to you, dear reader.

At last it's out, tabled in the autumn (1998) parliamentary session, the 'Report on Weeds in Victoria' (the Red Book) - the result of a two year inquiry into pest plants by Victoria's Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

For all land managers, community groups and individuals interested in the conservation of biological diversity, this is essential reading. The full enormity of Victoria's weed problem is now laid out in one publication. Everything you already knew or need to know of the cold hard facts, including: the complications of current legislation; the costs of doing something about the problem (and the costs of not doing something); current arrangements for weed control on roadsides; the nursery traders role in the dispersal of environmental weeds; complete lists of noxious and environmental weeds; extracts from submissions; enforcement and non-enforcement of the Catchment and Land Protection Act (CALP) 1994 and finally, the Committee's recommendations.

The coldest, hardest fact of course is that 65% of Victoria carries wholly or predominantly exotic

vegetation and every terrestrial and wetland community has been affected by weeds, as well as a significant proportion of marine environments.

In 1987 it was estimated that weeds in agriculture cost the Australian economy \$3.3 billion per annum (in Victoria \$357.6 million) - figures which do not include what environmental weeds cost in loss of biodiversity.

The 1990's began a period of intense activity by Federal and State governments to address weed problems, including \$12 million to assist primary producers and the development of a Pest Plant and Animal Program within DNRE. In May 1996 the pest plant problem was referred to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. Terms of reference covered:-

- Impact on economy and environment.
- Cost of control on both public and private land.
- Adequacy of current information.
- Rationale for distinction between agricultural and environmental weeds.
- Role of government, industry, landholders, in research, education and control strategies and cost sharing arrangements.
- Priorities for weed control.

Three hundred and twenty four submissions were received (yes, FOWSP participated in the exercise) 71% came from conservation groups and individuals. The remaining 29% came from government semi-government organisations, research and academic institutions, farmer organisations, and industry. Submissions were also received from overseas countries, the World-wide Fund for Nature, World Conservation Union and International Institute of Biological Control.

Many submissions indicated that the standard of weed control in parks and reserves is inadequate and substantially increased expenditure is required. The State Government has made a commitment through Victorian Weed Initiative to spend \$12 million on agricultural weeds but has not made any projection of expenditure for environmental weed control.

Poor information exchange between research groups was identified as a major gap in environmental weed management. According to Geoff Carr, Director of Ecology Australia Pty Ltd: professionals, academics and huge numbers of 'Friends' groups know a great deal about environmental weeds yet no-one is talking to anyone else.

The Committee believes that an efficient information network should be set up and managed

The Red Book contd.

by a central Co-ordinator, whose role would be to establish and maintain an internet site linked to other relevant sites.

'Friends' groups have been aware for a long time that a number of nurseries sell serious environmental weeds. I was therefore not surprised to read that while visiting a nursery in Eltham, the Committee saw English Broom, a proclaimed noxious weed in Victoria, displayed as the 'Plant of the Month'. I felt great sympathy for the DNRE Ranger from Arthur's Seat State Park who stated in his submission that \$95,000 had been spent on the eradication of Bluebell Creeper *Solya heterophylla*. He had spoken to about 20 nurseries seeking co-operation in the withdrawal from sale of this plant, but one, opposite the Park, refuses to do so.

A chapter is devoted to roadside weed management. Victoria's 160,000 kilometres of roads account for 7% of the total area of the State's public land.

It's pretty depressing reading really - highlighting that inadequate weed control along roadsides is creating problems for the management of both agricultural land and natural ecosystems. Unfortunately, the allocation of responsibility for weed control on roadsides is a complex issue. The high number of ties with an interest in or impact upon roadsides, says the committee, means competing uses and different objectives of weed control. I know that the Victorian Roadsides Conservation Committee formed in 1975, but now defunct, was fully aware of these cold hard facts. The confusion still abounds and the CALP Act 1994, according to the Report, has not clarified the issues of responsibility on, public land or private land. Indeed, many land owners are not aware of their responsibilities and obligations outlined in the Act, nor are they clear as to who is responsible for various categories of weeds. Under the Act a land owner must be able to distinguish between:

- State Prohibited weeds that are the State's responsibility.
- Regionally Controlled weeds that must be controlled by the land owner when they occur on his or her land, or on the adjoining undeclared roadsides.
- Regionally Prohibited weeds which must be eradicated by the land owner when they occur on his or her land, but which must be eradicated by the State if they occur on roadsides.

Are you still with me, dear reader?

It is worth noting that the Committee emphasises that it is essential that both environmental and agricultural weeds are adequately represented on the State 'noxious weeds' list so that the list can be used to protect all land values.

Recommendations (abbreviated)

1. A Victorian Weeds Advisory Committee (VWAC) be established.
2. That the, VWAC develop and implement a Victorian Weeds Strategy.
3. All managers of public land in Victoria develop and implement Weed Management Plans.
4. That levels of core funding for management of reserves, State and National Parks be sufficient to ensure conservation objectives are met.
5. That core funds for environmental weed control in parks and reserves be guaranteed for periods of 3-5 years to enable implementation of long term strategic plans.
6. Each Catchment Management Authority (CMA) and Port Phillip CALP Board develop and implement Regional Weed Strategies within 12 months of the Minister's instruction.
7. Develop a protocol for notification of new infestation of weeds and a Rapid Response Plan. (You may be interested to know that VNPA called for control of Chilean Needlegrass 15 years ago. A specimen was lodged at the National Herbarium of Victoria in 1934. It is now the major environmental pest plant in grassy ecosystems).
8. Create a position for Environmental Weeds Information Co-ordinator.
9. DNRE more rigorously enforce compliance by land owners with the CALP Act and amendments to the Act be made to allow this.
10. Noxious Weeds List to be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

The only action I can report at this stage is that, in response to the recommendations, the Minister for Conservation has authorised 'Victorian Weeds Strategy' which is now circulating in a draft form for consultation. Copies should be available at Port Phillip Region NRE offices.

I suppose when it's all boiled down, recommendations 4 & 5 (above) in my abbreviated list, the ones concerned with funding, are the crucial ones. With these implemented everything else should flow from that.



Cootamundra Wattle (*Acacia baileyana*)



Vital Vision

Don Hatton and Bronwyn Hatton of Strathewan (foot of the Kinglake Ranges), recently joined FOWSP. Both are interested in establishing habitats for "not yet endangered species" (waiting until a species is endangered may be too late).

Clean Sweep

Two new brooms have been placed in the 'Folly'. Sweeping is now so much easier.

February Friends

Helping at the market stall were: Tim Bedford, Anne Warren (plus Sebastian), Katherine Byrne and Tony Honeybourne. Joan MacMahon was also there in an advisory capacity in relation to local indigenous plants.

'Eagle Eye'

As motorists travelling north along Springvale Road turn left onto the Eastern Freeway they may have noticed a Cootamundra Wattle (one metre high) growing amongst the indigenous plantings on the embankment. As these are environmental weeds, a phone call has been made to Vic. Roads and an environmental officer alerted to the inappropriate presence. (The spot was too dangerous to park and remove the offending tree).

Freeways may be links between areas, convenient for some motorists, but will they now provide links to enable weeds to leap scores of kilometres?

Changes due to Easter

Friends of Koornong will **NOT** meet on April 7th. The next meeting is on Wednesday 31st March.
Enquiries Cathy Willis 9844 1841.

There will be **NO Green Wedge Seminar** on Thursday 1st April as advertised. The talk on koalas by Roger Martin will now be held on Thursday 6th May.

Mullum Mullum Festival '99

This festival, held over three weekends from 28th February until 14th March, will be opened by Bill Nicholson senior chairperson and elder spokesperson for the Wurundjeri Tribal Council Incorporated, and welcome the fourth Mullum Mullum Festival to Kulin land. Walks and activities will be in four parts, led by various people.

Gorge Country - Ken McInnes, Gretna Weste, Raylene Cooke, Marilyn Gray and Darcy Duggan.

Open Valley - David Cameron, Flora Anderson, Damien Cook, Scott Baker and Iain Woxvold.

Creek Source - Trevor Blake, Andrew Sharpe, Paul Reich, Debbie McGrath and Julie Pryor.

Meeting Place - Ken McInnes, Judith Cooke, Pat and Mike Coupar, Rosalyn Moore, Paul Carter and Ian Hunter.

Themes include: creek trek, botanical history, owl tracking, flora update, habitat conservation, plant patterns, gardening tips, ephemeral wetlands, oldest trees, eagle eye, astronomy for the people, seed collection, drawing plants, underwater animals, suburban koalas, folded earth, Yarra invertebrates, water study, music, art and story telling.

For information phone 613 9654 0023

Chocolate Choice

Geoff Speedy, candidate for the Nillumbik Shire elections and a Green Wedge supporter - a chocolate lover, names Chocolate Lily (*Arthropodium strictum*) as his favourite indigenous plant - "it smells good and reminds me of chocolate".

Festival Time

The Warrandyte Festival has come round again. It is being held over the weekend of **20th and 21st of March**. As usual FOWSP will put on a display. We are seeking volunteers to help set up the tent etc. on the Friday afternoon and to be 'on duty' at the stall for one to two hours (or more!) over the weekend. If you are able to help out in anyway please contact Betty Oke who is in charge of the roster, on 9844 3763

Help

We need a couple of people to clean out the spouting and gutters of the Friends 'Folly'. At the moment the water in the tank is undrinkable even if boiled.
Your help is needed **urgently**.



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