

May 1999

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

Weed Watchdogs for Warrandyte

By Pat Coupar

It was a FOWSP Thursday afternoon ramble. From the carpark at the end of Lower Homestead Road, Wonga Park, we followed the river upstream into the slowly evolving Heritage and Country Club.

Over the last couple of years billabongs have been artificially created - some, vast areas of open water fringed by sedges and dotted with rushes. Already many birds have found them to their liking. Much planting has been carried out. As well as the grasses, sedges and rushes around the wetlands, wattles, bottlebrush and paperbarks (some grown by FOWSP) have been planted along the river bank.

Ongoing weed control was evident - an awesome assignment - for these swampy fertile flats are a haven for weeds. Many were familiar, like Drain-flat Sedge, Aster, Fleabane and of course thistles which occur in most moist disturbed sites in Warrandyte State Park. Among those we couldn't name was an evil-looking plant with toothed leaves and large, oval seed capsules bearing vicious spines. A couple of plants still bore the remnants of their white trumpet shaped flowers. A sample was taken for identification. The plant, it turns out, is a noxious weed in Victoria and Western Australia called Thornapple (*Datura* sp.) and belongs to the family Solanaceae. Like some other members of the family which includes native Kangaroo Apples and the introduced nightshades, the seeds of Thornapples contain toxic alkaloids (atropine, hyoscyne and hyscyamine) and if swallowed can be lethal.

There is no record of this weed being found in Warrandyte State Park. The occurrence was

reported to Melbourne Water who were suitably concerned particularly as to the manner of its arrival at this site. Action has been swift and the offending plants have now been removed. However, the finding of such an obnoxious noxious close to the Yarra River downstream of which lies Warrandyte State Park with its regionally significant gorge and riparian vegetation, is a worry, particularly as the site is undergoing massive earth moving activities.

As well as the Parrots Feather found at Mount Lofty last year (see last months newsletter), another new weed for WSP has been located this time along the river bank at Black Flat. It's called St Peter's Wort (*Hypericum tetrapterum*) and, like the Parrots Feather, has been removed at an early stage of its invasion.

FOWSP members who live close to the river or walk its banks or canoe its waters can play an important role as weed watchdogs. Both the Parrots Feather and St Peter's Wort can be viewed at the WSP nursery. Any suspected sightings of these weeds or Thornapple in the vicinity of the State Park can be reported to the Park on 9844



2659.

Thornapple,
flowers & fruit



Worth Repeating

At Home Among the Gum Trees

By Ben Mitchell regional reporter

After more than 210 years of white settlement, Australians are yet to come to terms with the bush, according to a Melbourne University study.

It found that most city people prefer landscapes similar to the English countryside rather than native Australian forests because it is easier to walk in relatively clear and open fields. Country people also like open landscapes, but with plenty of grass to feed stock.

The study, titled 'Perceptions of Native Vegetation in Rural Landscapes', found most city people preferred open grazed woodland, which was predominantly clear land with a light covering of grass, to more dense and naturally occurring bushland.

"The open, smooth landscapes presented a valuable recreation environment," the study said. Ironically, open grazed woodlands were the least 'ecologically intact' and naturally occurring landscape scenes used in the study.



She-oak (*Allocasuarina littoralis*)

Country people preferred grassy woodlands or landscapes with a smattering of trees and a heavy undergrowth of grass. They used words such as "grazing" and "shelter" to describe the key attributes of the vegetation in this category. City and country people expressed their dislike of thick native forests of bull oaks and she-oaks (often called casuarina trees), which are common throughout Victoria.

Bull oaks are often surrounded by a dark bark while she-oaks appear dry and lifeless. City people thought the landscapes presented to them showed dead trees when they were actually healthy.

"It is likely to be relatively difficult to raise concern for protection of ecosystems such as bull oak and sheoak woodlands," the study said. It found that the preference for open landscapes indicated many people had a low regard for biologically diverse country.

"This preference for less ecologically intact landscapes emphasises the need for effective communication of the importance of biological diversity to urban populations," the study said.

An art critic for *The Age*, Mr Peter Timms, said the relationship between Australians and the bush was not surprising. The bush was portrayed as dangerous and imposing by early colonial painters. Later artists, particularly those of the Heidelberg school such as Arthur Streeton, showed the bush as existing to serve human needs: "They celebrated the idea of clearing the land for productivity."

Researchers from Melbourne University's Institute of Land and Food Resources surveyed 568 rural landholders in Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia and 664 Melburnians for the study. The study was conducted to help establish guidelines for ecosystem protection and sustainable land use.

Source: *The Age* 19/3/99

Colliding Rhythms

A monthly event

When: the last Saturday of each month
Where: Mechanics Institute Warrandyte
The very best of Jazz, Gospel, Rhythm 'n Blues and Country.
May 29th: Kerri Simpson's Gospel Train.
All enquiries and bookings call Linda Carroll on 9844 2195. Bar and supper will be on hand, Adults \$15, Concession \$10 - group and table discounts available.

Tassie Tiger Sighting in Warrandyte!

OK. Now we have your attention. If you still have a red dot next to your name on the front of this newsletter it means that we have no record of your subscription payment for 1999 and this will be your last newsletter. A renewal form can be found on the back of this newsletter.

We apologise if our records are incorrect and you have already paid. Please let us know if this is the case so that we can continue to send you newsletter.

Thank you for your support.

Burgan Day

By Pat Coupar

Black Flat was besieged by a single-minded team of burgan removalists on Sunday April 25th. The site chosen was in the south-east corner of the reserve where the burgan is at its most dense. Struggling to emerge above the thickets were a few eucalypts, most of which were suffering from severe die back. Many in fact were dead. The pinging call of Bell Miners was a constant accompaniment to the days activity and the close association of these aggressive native birds, dense burgan thickets and eucalypt die back, cannot be ignored.

Armed with drills, hand saws, mattocks, spot guns and dabbers, the willing workers tackled the burgan on a number of fronts. The in roads gathered speed as Colin got going with the chain saw. A few struggling shrubs were found lurking under the burgan (mainly on the outside edges). These included Grey Parrot-pea, Spreading Wattle, Creeping Bossiaea, Raspwort and a small Red Box.

One of the main reasons for choosing this particular site for the burgan trail (for there are many such badly infested burgan blocks in the Park), was the presence, in an open adjacent area, of a number of tiny annual herbs, sedges and an unusual plant loosely termed a fern ally called Adder's Tongue. It is hoped that by opening up more area, these locally rare, regionally significant ephemerals will spread, or at least will not be swallowed up by the encroaching burgan forest. Only time will tell.

At the end of the day, which was punctuated by a walk to see the gold relics and a barbeque, we had left behind a massive pile of cut burgan to be burned at a later date.

While the day was a great success, thanks to field services officer, Colin Bromley and ranger David Farrar, numbers of Fowspians were again disappointingly low for a group with such a large membership as ours. The committee would be grateful to hear from anyone with suggestions for Sunday activities which they think might attract more people.

Jumping Creek Road Closure

From 26th May 1999 for Five Months

For several years there has been community and Council concern in relation to the dangerous traffic conditions on Jumping Creek Road, especially the narrow Jumping Creek Road Bridge.

The road carries approximately 6000 vehicles per day and the number of accidents, including, fatal accidents, makes the road one of the most dangerous in the region.

Council, over the past two years, has developed a strategic plan in consultation with a Resident Reference Group to upgrade the road and improve traffic conditions, whilst also taking into environmental nature of the area.

The initial stage of road works will involve the replacement of the Jumping Creek Road Bridge, which is in urgent need of replacement.

The new bridge will be wider, have a pedestrian/equestrian walkway and will also be 1.4 metres higher making it less likely to flood.

Because of the environmental sensitivity of the location and the physical limitations of the site, the Jumping Creek Road Bridge will be closed for approximately five months during the construction period.

Whilst the Council appreciates this will cause inconvenience, unfortunately there is no other way in which this urgently needed project can be undertaken. Works include regrading and realignment of the road approaches to the bridge to improve sight and safety for motorists as they approach the bridge.

For public safety reasons the construction period will take place from the last week in May until the first week in December so the works will be finalised in time for the 1999/2000 fire season.

Council will be erecting an extensive sign network to assist motorists to take alternative routes.

For further information please contact Manningham City Council's Project Management Unit on telephone 9840 9310.

Source: Letter sent to residents from Chief Executive Bob Seiffert (Manningham Council).

The Coupe Update

By Elizabeth Sevier

Many thanks to Alison Thom and Ben Gottlib who braved a very hot Thursday in March to help in the coupe with weeding, and mulching. Unfortunately the day scheduled for this activity turned out to be a real scorcher, but Alison, Ben, Betty and I found that the challenge of spreading around three tractor trayloads of mulch took our minds off the heat for long enough to do the job.

Betty and I have been working steadily along week by week in this revegetation area. Some of our ground covers are going very well, but we need to battle thistles, dandelions and couch grass. We have followed some suggestions from nursery manager Teri O'Brien and are covering the troublesome areas with thick wads of newspaper.

To begin with we weighed this down with fallen and discarded branches from the young trees and piles of weeds, well-dried and dead. Now, though, we have five trayloads of mulch to cover the paper and make a growing medium for more plants and seeds. (It looks better too).



One of the loveliest aspects of working in this patch of the downward slope to the river is the sighting of wildlife. This happens often when it is least expected. Kangaroos hopping by or stopping to stare are a sudden delight and we frequently see a koala. I suspect it is the same young male slowly growing larger on our eucalypt leaves. Some weeks ago he was on the ground at the base

of a young wattle. His back was turned to us, perhaps on the theory that if he didn't see us, perhaps we would go away. As we did, after a good look!

The bushy parts of the coupe encourage wrens. We often see and hear them flitting busily about. As the seasons pass, thornbills, parrots and firetails visit, feed and pass on.

Many thanks to all the FOWSP members who brought newspapers for weed suppression. We have enough for the present.

Thanks to the Duke

By Joan MacMahon

The Duke of Edinburgh, no less, is responsible for some wonderful regeneration work in North Warrandyte, not far from the confluence of Anderson's Creek and the Yarra.

What's this? High security secret visits? Princely skulking in our local bush? Royal minders lugging mattocks and tree guards? Tablecloths being spread for the royal tea break?

Nothing, I'm afraid as exciting. The Duke has his name attached to an award which a friend of ours is pursuing. She's achieved bronze and silver levels and is now working her way to gold. As part of this she has chosen to do 60 hours of supervised conservation activities.

Over the last few months Katya (16 years old and from Bulleen) has worked hard clearing a large section of the river behind our place of that rampant aquarium escape which goes by the name of *Egeria densa* (Dense Waterweed). As a result

we found another patch of the local water plant – *Potamogeton crispus* (Curly Pondweed). Another



consequence is that Katya's mum Marg's vegie garden has benefited greatly.

As well as this aquatic activity, the MacMahon's habitat enhancement scheme has received a great boost and today, Sunday April 18th, a large patch of Maidenhair Fern in the park was partially cleared of the ivy which has been invading it at least as long as we've been living here (seven years). Satisfying work, which was only stopped by the arrival of dusk and the insistence of a certain Ken that it was time to come back up to the house. And so reluctantly we did.

Book Review

By Geoff Speedy

Forest-Friendly Building Timbers, an Earth Garden Magazine Publication is available for \$9.95 from Readings Bookstores, edited by Alan T. Gray and Anne Hall.

Forest-Friendly Building timbers is a marvellous resource for the home builder who wishes to use plantation timbers. At \$9.95 it is a bargain, if only for the supplier's addresses of dozens of building products, which would otherwise take hours of phone time to track down.

On the negative side, I found Section 1 a single-minded, confused and unfair representation of building products, their production and supply, tainted with fuzzy thinking and out-of-context quotes. I am prepared to work to maintain diversity in our native forests, but I don't believe the approach taken here furthers that cause.

The book aims "That broad-scale native forest logging should be looked at in the same light as whaling". This attitude neglects other environmental aims such as minimising embodied energy (eg. transportation and packaging energy) and the use of heavy metal, chlorine and solvent treatments.

I was very much looking forward to this publication, being halfway through building a mudbrick & timber home in North Warrandyte. However, when we received the magazine-style publication, the contents didn't offer many products which could be used in our home, for a

variety of aesthetic, practical and health reasons. As an example, none of the suggested flooring products were suitable for exposed floor joists at 1.0 metre spacing, and many of the products contain formaldehyde glues and / or are CCA (Copper/Chrome/Arsenic) treated.

When I queried Alan Gray on the ABC's 3LO as to why the natural grain features and hardness characteristics of native forest hardwoods are discounted in this book, he replied that they had aimed the book at the mass market of people wishing to build a relatively conventional timber-framed brick and plaster house, not at mudbrick house builders.

Section 2 Plantation Products follows the building process, from stumps through framing, joinery to finishes. There are many great products which could be used in a conventional house, especially if selected at the design stage. For example as non-exposed joists, plywood or metal web trusses are superior to F17 hardwood, as it is easier to install pipes and wiring, and is lighter to install.

Section 3 Recycled timbers gives many pointers and contacts for the supply of recycled timbers. Reuse of timber IS more environmentally friendly than new timber, but you can expect problems with supply and higher costs.

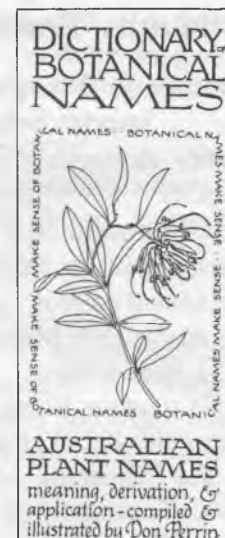
Section 4 Resources provides advice regarding building contract wording, timber grading and pine mills.

I do wish Alan Gray the very best in promoting his book, and hope that the second edition will address some of the deficiencies of the first edition.

Dictionary of Botanical Names

By Don Perrin, available from Greens Bookshop ph 9372 3333

This wonderfully illustrated and jocularly written book simplifies the Latin & Greek names used in botany. Would you think that a species named "blanda" actually means "enchancing or pleasing", "cerbera" named after a mythical three headed dog, or "Erioglossum" means "wooly tongue" (Must have been a big night out!). I find this self-published, softcover black & white book fascinating for a flip through, and no doubt it would also be useful for the serious student of botany.



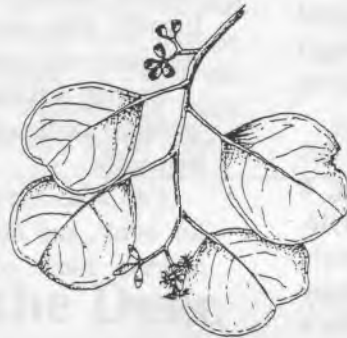
Plants on the Move

By Joan MacMahon

Our community is so fortunate to have such a wonderful bunch of 'plant makers' in its midst. Do the Thursday propagators realise how valued and valuable is the work they do? And what a pleasant way to spend Thursday morning; producing excellent quality plants while socialising and having a fun and fulfilling time.

FOWSP plants have lately helped transform three areas in Warrandyte. The first of these is the Bakery Garden where yours truly is 'Chief Landscape Organiser' (sounds much flashier than 'Gardener'!) Next time you visit go down to the lower garden and check out the wildflower section. Rather than plant in a random fashion I decided to create a more formal look, partly for fun as well as to catch the eye of people unused to appreciating indigenous grasses and herbs.

The second location is the Warrandyte Community Centre. In my capacity as 'Landscape Manager' (see above brackets), having had some welcome rain, I decided to risk planting out the hard, inhospitable bank between the hall and Webb St. Turned out to be less difficult than I thought so we can look forward to a lovely display of small wattles, daisies, guinea flowers, clematis and purple coral-pea. I took an even bigger risk and planted (again) two more Red Box in the lawn area.



Over the four years I've worked there my planting success rate in the lawn has been abysmal. Whether guarded or not most plants have lasted only a short time, falling victim either to deliberate vandalism or accidental damage by playful youngsters. I must be the eternal optimist.

The third site is the Warrandyte Community Garden. This is between the police station and the river and what a great initiative it is. About 20 people have hired garden beds and you should see the fabulous vegies and flowers! Magic soil. Full sun.

Silly me, just for a bit more fun I offered to establish a 'Warrandyte Wildflower Garden - a glimpse of the original Warrandyte'. I was given a plot on the lower level and so, at a working bee a few months ago, with help from my friend Mary, and some of the other 'vegie' people, we planted a mixture of grasses and herbs. For extra interest we threw in some heath and a grass-tree. They are all doing beautifully. Fabulous growth rate in the open and organic-rich soil mix.

But, hey, what's this familiar, shiny, onion-like leaf with the white bulb? Grrrrrr! Anyone who knows the weeds of the moister parts of Warrandyte will recognise it as Angled Onion. Most bulbs are way too deep for digging out with a knife. Oh well..... some judiciously applied glyphosate around flowering time (when the bulb is at it's most exhausted) should do the trick.

Next Spring and Summer there will be a wonderful floral display of pinks, whites, yellows blues and mauves.

Thanks to the 'Friends'.

Community Training Program

Protecting & Managing Remnants & Species Selection

- Identify threatening processes affecting remnants
- Prioritise management issues
- Develop skills in barrier construction & feral animal control

Date: Saturday 29th May

Time: 10.30am-4.00pm

Place: Conference Room, Currawong Bush Park, Reynolds Rd, Warrandyte

Cost: \$10 Greening Australia Victoria members, Community or Landcare Group members, \$30 individual

Please, Please

The editor is going to be away for five weeks in June and July and is desperately seeking articles to have in hand for the next two newsletters.

Please, please put pen to paper or fingers to keyboard and send your contributions. The following categories are a only a guide, articles on any aspect or conservation and the environment would be most welcome.

- My Favourite Place
- Book Review
- Around the State
- Flora and Fauna Sightings
- The Weather
- Worth Repeating
- Dates for the Diary



Scene on the Screen

The computer monitor in the main office reception at Pound Bend depot shows (during its 'idle' moments) beautiful scenes of State and National Parks of Victoria.

Several visitors to the office commented favourably. Whosoever in Parks Victoria initiated this drawcard interface deserves commendation.

Certain Signage

Please would all 'Friends' volunteer workers sign the FOWSP and Volunteers Insurance Registry book, kept in the 'Folly'.

Many are helping but not signing. The records are not beaurocratic, they are in your own interests.

Coupar Caper

Mike and Pat are off to Townsville for five weeks in June and July - something to do with the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS).

Jumping Creek Road Jumps

A sign is up near the Jumping Creek Road bridge indicating it will be closed for bridge building and realignment. Possibly sixty trees of varying sizes will go. Keep an eye on it.

They and Them

Almost every Thursday a varied number of people spend their time pricking out seedlings from trays and carefully transplanting them into small, slim, black plastic tubes.

They then place the tubes into polystyrene boxes, water them and apply minute amounts of slug and snail pellets. The boxes are then lifted and carried into one of the hot houses and placed on the shelves.

Other times the boxes full of more mature seedlings are transferred to the shadehouse. Months later they are carried into the hardening off area.

Most of the jobs are finger/hand work. The boxes can be heavy (not too much so). The work is repetitive, but the conversation is pleasant.

The Park (life) owes a great deal to these workers and they are rarely mentioned in 'despatches'.

Thanks are due to all of **them**.

Bockel Boys

David Van Bockel (ranger) and his wife Bronwyn have increased their family by two boys, Kyle Isaac and Alec Joshua (brothers for Talia). Born mid-April.

Congratulations and welcome.

Another Addition

Karen Reynolds (the member who led Fowspians around her interestingly sited property) has a brand new girl, Nicole. Karen also has her own greenhouse at home where she has baby wattles.

'Prom' Points

Information bulletin No 2 - February 1999 (Wilson's Promontory National Park) states: 'In response to community feedback Parks Victoria is endeavouring to ensure that a similar volume of campsites will be maintained, whilst minimising effects on the environment'.

From my observations good work is being done on some tracks and facilities. But why is so much of the P.R. material still being laced with excess adjectives and euphemistic open-ended statements that leave me uneasy?

What is needed is more appropriate work staff, more money in the conservation process and more genuine environmental leadership.

To recoin a cliché - the price of our Parks is constant vigilance.

Rangers Report

The report in our April newsletter by Andy Nixon, Ranger-in-Charge, at Warrantdyte was highly informative and reflects the good work Andy and his team are doing for the Park, particularly in the face of staff, budget and other restrictions. Praise due to all.

Parks Staff Sighted

Seen in their 'glad rags' on a recent Thursday - Steve Anderson (ex-WSP ranger), Andy Nixon and Colin Bromley off to an awards event.

Stane Brae Stars?

Look out for a possible astronomy activity at Stane Brae in the future. Today Parks Victoria, tomorrow the stars?

Away in W.A

I Spy is off for an intoxicating trip to the Nullabor, Esperence, Perth and return.

Perhaps a guest I Spy might like to fill in for a month or two? Nevertheless, we will return.



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