

June 1999

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

Rabbits Know No Boundaries

By Glen Jameson

The Good Neighbours and Rabbit Busters federally funded rabbit control program has completed its third and final year at Warrandyte State Park. It is time to look over what has been achieved.

In its first year, Jane Dyke completed a broad brushed five year planning document and fenced off the cleared river terraces at Yarra Brae. The fencing of these two paddocks would contribute to preventing rabbit establishment along the river banks and cut off migration across the Park by eliminating feeding areas.

I came to Warrandyte State Park in October 1997, to manage the program in its second year, and under pressure to undertake work at Mt Lofty from the Department of Natural Resources & Environment (DNRE), the administrators of the funding. Mt Lofty was a major problem. It was unfenced. It had a seemingly limitless supply of rabbits and was low in environmental assets compared to other sections of Warrandyte State Park.

I set about focussing on environmental assets and building on previous works completed, but the first thing to establish was a data base on how many rabbits and where they were. This gave us a methodical basis on which to build a strategy. Also Mt Lofty was to have an injection of capital funds including fencing and harbour control in the next financial year.

The results revealed that the number of rabbits per spotlight kilometre were as follows: Black Flat had low numbers at 0.7, Fourth Hill had 1.5 (although Park neighbours complained of high numbers), Jumping Creek had 2.7, Mt Lofty 78, Pound Bend 35, Yarra Brae 14, whilst Stane Brae was covered in rabbits. The Common had its best areas already protected within fences.

I then set about drawing up an Action Plan that committed funding to actual works on the ground. Three exclusion fences were built on Fourth Hill to capitalise on previous fences built to protect the valuable orchid populations and other flora.

Documentation of orchid populations by David van Bockel and Pat Coupar provided evidence of the value of this strategy. Rabbits were in low numbers in this section of the Park but doing considerable damage. Anecdotal information suggested they were a big problem for Park neighbours on Fourth Hill. Together with DNRE's Paul Hay, we arranged for the community to bait their properties as this was where the rabbits were feeding. The baiting was very successful in collapsing rabbit numbers. Harbour destruction was carried out in the Park along Whipstick Gully Rd to assist the baiting, and in Normans Reserve and along Gold Memorial Rd where residents were fencing their properties.

Fences were repaired at Stane Brae and Yarra Brae, and baiting carried out inside the fences eradicating rabbits. Fencing was erected in Pound Bend to continue the excellent work done by Park staff and FOWSP to establish large exclusion areas. Rabbit barrier fences were erected below Hutchinson avenue to stop rabbit migration into the Pound, and over the exit of the tunnel. Harbour destruction was carried out and residents began revegetation. Finally Pound Bend, including private properties and the Scout Camp, was baited and rabbits went down to 0.9 rabbits per spotlight kilometre. Some areas were direct seeded (this has proved to be unsuccessful so far).

1999, (and the dawning of the Chinese Year of the Rabbit) - the third year of the program began with an attempt to broaden the integration of residents, authorities and the Park. Rabbits know no boundaries and this had to be accounted for in their control. Together with DNRE who provided a facilitator, Glen Terry, Manningham City Council and Nillumbik Shire, we set about carrying out my plans for establishing Rabbit Action Groups. These groups would form logical boundaries, inter-lock with each other and integrate their control work.

Continued on next page

Rabbits Knows no Boundaries continued.

Community Co-ordinators came forward, Bob Stubbings (Normans Reserve) John Hanson & John Cox (Fourth Hill Central), Kim & Diane Dixon, Ant Owen (Fourth Hill East), Anthony North & Terry Wheelton (Fourth Hill South), Nick Robinson (Pound Bend), Neil (Koorngong) and Julie Pryor (Yarra Brae). Donna Stoddart from Manningham City Council in particular was very supportive of the program.

Over 1000 letters and questionnaires were sent out to residents in targeted areas abutting the Park, to establish rabbit distribution and population density. Community meetings were held, coordinators meetings thrashed out details and finally something happened. We had good responses from Normans Reserve, Fourth Hill Central, Fourth Hill South and Yarra Brae and these groups have carried out a baiting program integrated with Clifford Park and any Council or Parks Victoria land.

To integrate the community baiting with other techniques of control the following actions were taken: a barrier fence was erected at the neck of Normans Reserve to stop rabbit migration; warren destruction and fumigation was carried out along the river banks of Pound Bend and Norman Reserve; warren destruction

was carried out by the Green Corps in Pound Bend; harbour destruction occurred in Pound Bend, Norman Reserve, Fourth Hill and Koorngong; baiting at Yarra Brae and Pound Bend; and reinforcing barrier fencing below Hutchinsons Avenue.

Mt Lofty has had an extensive baiting program after Parks Victoria capital funding built fencing and paid for harbour destruction. Rabbits went from 78 rabbits per spotlight kilometre to 10 after baiting (more works obviously needed). Rabbits are still low at Pound Bend at 2.6 where the change in the flora biomass and species diversity is substantial due to the low rabbit numbers.

Where to from here? We need to consolidate the work so far completed in zones that participated by holding Field Days that encourage landowners to follow up the baiting with other techniques. We need to extend the system until the Park is encircled with protective zones. There is also a great opportunity to organise the revegetation of the river banks at Pound Bend, Yarra Brae and Stane Brae protected by fences. However, much depends on the level of funding for the Park in the next financial year to capitalise on previous expenditure.

FRIENDS OF THE ISLAND (FOTI)



You may be aware of our group which exists in your area, we are attempting to enhance the environment of this quite precious piece of land stretching from the Stonehouse shop to the Yarra river called 'The Island'.

Before the gold-rush the river flowed around the old route that still exists which choked up over the years with hard rubbish and weeds.

We intend to continue to work on weed removal and improved water flow in the river, which will in turn improve the habitat for native species of both flora and fauna whose numbers will increase rather than decline into extinction.

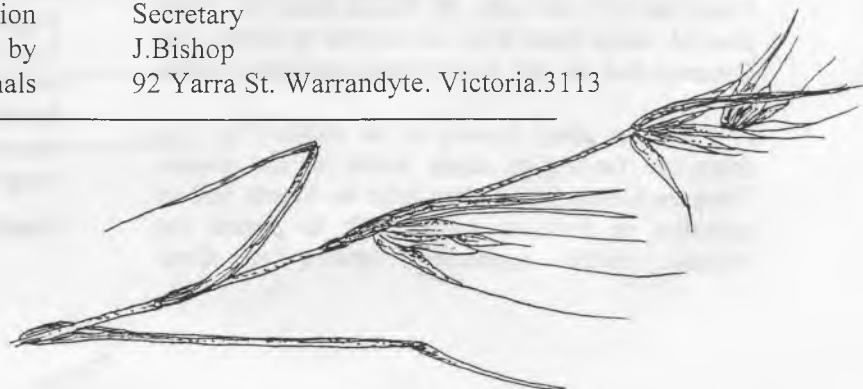
Ultimately we envisage that the river will flow around this land as in earlier times forming the island properly and we hope that this natural sanctuary will be able to reverse the near extinction of our more unusual and rare native animals by protecting them from predation from feral animals

such as foxes, cats and dogs.

To this end we ask that you become a member of our group by paying the annual joining fee. And assist us with your labour or specialist knowledge whenever you are able so that we can continue to work with such bodies as Melbourne Water, Manningham and Nillumbik Councils, Parks Victoria, Greening Australia and other land care groups.

We are lucky enough to have recently been granted some money from the Federal Government for this area as the start of the Warrandyte/Kinglake Habitat Corridor, see enclosed partial copy of newsletter.

Membership \$10 send to
Secretary
J.Bishop
92 Yarra St. Warrandyte. Victoria.3113



Weather Update

May's Moisture Finally Arrives

By Chloe Saltau

May in Melbourne is meant to be wet, the wettest in fact. But so far this year May is confounding the weather bureau by refusing to live up to its reputation.

Yesterday, at last, Melbourne's skies opened wider than elsewhere in Victoria and dumped more than 14 millimetres of rain on the city. It was the wettest day since 5th of April, when 17 millimetres fell.

Still, rainfall so far this month has amounted to a mere 33 millimetres, compared with the average 68.

Mr Terry Ryan, a senior forecaster at the Bureau of Meteorology, said Victoria was still waiting for the rain that was expected to mark the end of the El Nino phenomenon.

But pressure systems had been high where they ought to have been low, the odd low pressure system had hovered over the Tasman and off Australia's west coast, and the south-eastern corner of Australia had been uncharacteristically dry since October 1996, Mr Ryan said.

Heaviest rainfall outside the central city yesterday was at Laverton, in the western suburbs, which reported 10 millimetres between 9am and 6pm, while the eastern suburbs remained relatively dry.

Mr Ryan said average rainfall was predicted for the winter months, which could raise the low water levels in reservoirs around the state.

Mr Ryan said much of country Victoria remained parched (in many areas rainfall has so far amounted to less than half the May average), although farmers in the Mallee and Wimmera in north-western Victoria, which recorded up to 20 millimetres of rain at the weekend, would be encouraged by recent rainfall.

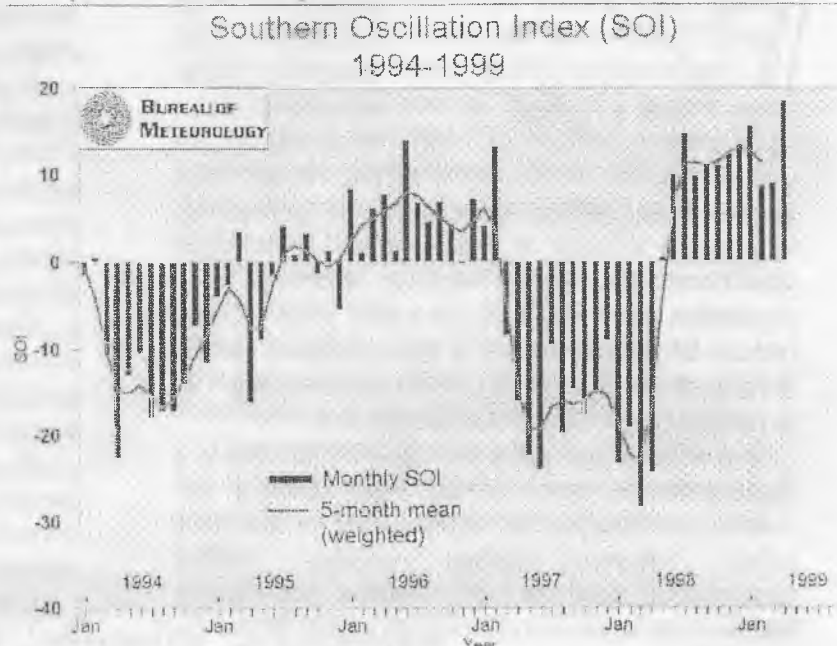
"It's a good start for those farmers who are planting winter crops or already have crops in the ground," he said.

"But we need more (rain) to make up the deficiencies for May, and even April was fairly dry."

West Gippsland had just a smattering of rain yesterday - five millimetres - and East Gippsland none at all, Mr Ryan said.

Source: *The Age* 25/5/99

Editor's note: Since this article I have recorded, in Warrandyte, a further 40mm of rain between 28th and 31st of May.



Broom Battle

Thanks to all those who turned up to Scotchman's Hill on Thursday May 20th to do battle with the Cape Broom (*Genista monspessulana*). This was the second year we have come to the Hill to attack the broom. Last year a huge amount of this aggressive South African weed was hand pulled by Fowspians and although many new plants had germinated, most were small.

The area in which we were working is the best preserved remnant bushland on the Hill and contains a diversity of wattles, peas and wildflowers including orchids and lilies. It also has the largest population of the significant and uncommon Grassland Geranium (*Geranium retrorsum*) in the Warrandyte State Park.

The activity was punctuated by a welcome break for morning tea, chocolate biscuits and a stunning view from the summit of the Hill to the mountains of the Great Dividing Range.

Green Wedge Seminar

Koalas - Populate and Perish

Summary of Roger Martin's talk
by Alastair Trail

For the first white explorers the koala was a rare animal kept in check by the Aborigines who both prized and revered it. With a decline in Aboriginal hunting its numbers increased dramatically, only to fall again as it was later



hunted for its pelts by the settlers. A second factor in its decline was the increase in severity and size of bushfires as the Aboriginal custom of frequent fuel reduction burns was abandoned.

In the 1920's the koala was protected, and efforts were made to increase its numbers by a series of translocations. Under good conditions they breed rapidly, doubling their population size every two and a half years. Sooner or later the habitat suffers. If koala numbers are not reduced the trees die and then so do the koalas - as several of Roger Martin's slides showed.

For wildlife managers the koala's charisma is a huge problem. With all the right features and proportions to appeal to humans there is enormous public pressure against culling. Further translocation sites are now virtually non-existent and their managers are reluctant to accept koalas for fear of facing the same problems in years to come. Governments are scared to act because of the risk of electoral and tourist industry backlash - instead we

have situations such as at Framlingham in western Victoria where we have lost both the koalas and their habitat.

Roger talked about Chlamydia of which there are now several strains known to affect koalas. Although the reproductive rate of infected colonies is reduced, the population can still double in about 10 years. It is assumed that the koalas suffer considerably (as do infected humans) so deliberately introducing chlamydia for population control is cruel and therefore unacceptable.

The good news is that the koalas have a high reproductive capacity. The bad news is, with limited habitat and no-one willing to control their numbers their main predators are motorists and dogs.

Additional Comments on Roger Martin's talk

By Sharon Mason

Roger Martin's talk focused on changes in population density of koalas over the past 200 years.

In 1898 some koalas were taken from South Gippsland to French Island. This population free of chlamydia - a sexually transmitted disease that causes blindness and reduces fertility - grew and grew and since the 1920's koalas from French Island have been used to repopulate parts of the State (including Warrandyte State Park.)

Overcrowding has since become a major problem. Ten koalas per hectare is not sustainable and it has become increasingly difficult to find new places to relocate koalas.

On Kangaroo Island koalas are being sterilised, but this procedure is expensive. Culling is yet to be permitted. So management options appear mostly to monitor and watch.

Last year people watched as thousands of koalas died of starvation at Framlington while the Manna Gums were reduced to dead skeletons. Will we one day have to watch this situation happen in Warrandyte.

This talk by Roger Martin was the twentieth of the Green Wedge Seminar series which is organised and catered for by the Manningham Council. Many thanks to Manningham. The aim of the talks is to acquaint residents with some of the more conspicuous flora and fauna of this region of the Yarra Valley with the hope that more enlightened understanding and management will result. There is also an interest in how the Aborigines thrived in the area.

If you have any ideas for talks, names of possible speakers or would like to present a talk yourself we would be pleased to hear from you. The talks are currently held at Currawong Bush Park, Reynolds Road, Doncaster East 3109 (Melways ref. 34 H6). at 7.30pm on the first Thursday of the Month - seating is limited to about 30. The majority of our speakers hold or have held teaching positions at tertiary level plus have considerable research experience. *Contact Donna Stoddart 9840 9307 or Alastair Traill 9722 1518*

Book Review

Sustainable House
by Michael Mobbs

published 1998, \$29.95. Available from Collins,
Angus & Robertson & A.C.A. (Choice).

By Lee Speedy

I first heard of Michael Mobbs and his book when I actually DID send away for a fact sheet after a story in Burke's Backyard, back in 1996. "The Sustainable House" was still being written, something to look forward to. Now that I have finally read it, it's been well worth the wait!

The overriding impression of Michael's book is its clarity and attention to detail. His book provides a very comprehensive 187 pages of information detailing Council, Architect and Builders requirements. It is not dry reading though and is perfect for dipping in & out of!

Here's just a few of my favourite sections: Chapter 7 Rules for Building Design. Michael's rules look at the WHOLE picture including cost, aesthetics, energy savings, low embodied energy and high renewal resource use.

Chapter 9 Making Our Own Energy is filled with solar energy details, hints and of course his own experiences. Much of Michael's book has practical short lists of useful ideas or priorities. In this time of overwhelming printed matter and information, I love this directness.

Chapter 11 Turning Our Waste Into A Resource. This chapter details the Mobb's family waste-water tank which filters water through three compost beds. It is then disinfected with ultra-

violet light and finally used for gardening, toilet flushing, washing and even drinking!

Chapter 13 The Garden mostly details water recycling and nutrient recycling for gardening. In Chapter 14 Sustainable Timbers, Michael explores using chemical-free building products and finishes. He favours radially sawn timber and those made without glues. He even includes handy hints such as which flowers or plants placed indoors consume formaldehyde and may clean the indoor air.

There are 6 Appendices used including "Useful Contacts and Service, Products and Suppliers". This book actually lists which product/system is best to use and most importantly, how they arrived at that criteria.

It is refreshing to read a book so clearly laid-out and well-written. Michael happily admits errors made and their subsequent solutions. He really wants us to learn from his great expense and efforts. I'm amazed that Michael even allows his neighbours to compost their waste in his system. (He must have explicitly trained them!)

My only criticisms of Michael's project and related book are that his obvious wealth and support from governmental bodies and companies must have made for an easier path to a Sustainable House.

The greatest irony though, is that one could easily expect this sort of effort from someone living in places like Warrandyte, the ELZ, or living on a large block. Michael lives on a 5 x 35m block, less than 2km from Sydney's CBD.

I recommend "The Sustainable House" to both the ordinary homebuilder and anyone wanting to absorb just a few good ideas into their established home.

Sunday Family Activity

Pound Bend Planting

Date & Time: Sunday June 24th 10.00 am to 1.00 pm

Place: Meet in the car park at Pound Bend Reserve, Pound Road, Warrandyte (Melways ref. map 23 A11)

This rabbit exclusion fence is a Warrandyte State Park showpiece. It shows how a weedy rabbit infested area can be transformed by fencing, mulching, planting and natural regeneration. The fence contains many of the Park's rare and threatened flora which have been planted over the last few years to establish healthy viable populations from which seeds and cuttings can be used for further propagation.



The activity will include some more planting - soft soil and no guarding, beside the river track and on the upper sections. A barbeque lunch provided by FOWSP will follow.

Worth Repeating

Photography's Out

Joshua Holko, a photography student, reports that he was apprehended by two National Park rangers while taking photos at Mount Buffalo last winter. On learning that he had sold the occasional photo, they demanded to see his permit. Incredulous, he asked them to explain what they meant; whereupon he was informed that 'professional photographers' are obliged to have a permit - at a cost, he was informed, of \$300 for one or two days up to possibly thousands of dollars for a year, with a separate permit required for each National Park! (The charges for film crews and the like are substantially higher.) The rangers took Holko's car registration number and informed him that he would be liable to prosecution under the National Parks

Act (1975) if any of his Mount Buffalo photos appeared in print.

Holko subsequently obtained a copy of the National Park's Services guidelines and procedure manual which confirms that 'still photography for sale' undertaken in a National Park requires a permit. The NPS (now known as Parks Victoria) is not obliged to issue a permit and, if it does, it can impose condition including - in addition to the permit fee - a requirement for the payment of a bond (typically of at least \$1000) 'particularly...where activities such as rock climbing may lead to increase risk exposure for (the Department of Conservation & Natural Resources) if portrayed incorrectly'. Further: 'The permit holder shall maintain a public liability insurance policy for an amount of not less than five million dollars.

Source: 'Wild' Australia's Wilderness Adventure Magazine Autumn 1999



WARNING: YOU MAY FIND THIS FUNNY, BUT THIS CAN AND ACTUALLY DID OCCUR. BE CAREFUL OF UNNECESSARY EMBARRASSMENT WHEN ORGANISING THE NEXT SLIDE NIGHT. AND BY THE WAY, 'RANGER' AND 'SUCKER' ARE PURELY FICTITIOUS CHARACTERS. ANY RESSEMBLANCE TO ANY LIVING OR DEAD 'RANGER' OR 'SUCKER' IS PURELY CO-INCIDENTAL.

Friends Network Seminar 1999

Date: Saturday 10th July

Place: The Auditorium at the Burnley Campus of the Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture, Swan St, Richmond

Cost: \$10 morning & afternoon tea provided. BYO lunch

Registration closes Wednesday 7th July

Topics include: **Community group involvement in rare and threatened plant management** - Gill Earl from DNRE of VROTOP - a system for monitoring rare and threatened plants.

Parrot's Post Script

The article in our April newsletter on Parrot's Feather - the potentially serious aquatic weed recently discovered, and removed, from Mount Lofty has ignited considerable interest.

Firstly the local newspaper 'The Doncaster and Templestowe News' contacted Ranger-in-Charge, Andy Nixon for comments and, as a result of their report, Jon Faine on his 3LO morning radio program again brought media attention, to Warrandyte's Parrot's Feather.

1999-2000 State Budget

Did the recent State budget neglect the environment? You could be forgiven for thinking it had, for there was little or no publicity about it. However, after much delving into the internet we have come up with the following press release. Decide for yourself how well Victoria's National and State Park's have fared.

NEW IMPROVEMENTS FOR VICTORIA'S PARKS AND RESERVES

Victoria's world class National Parks and Crown Reserves will receive a \$12.4 million funding increase in this year's State Budget.

The Minister for Conservation and Land Management, Marie Tehan, today said \$4.4 million would be spent on National Parks and an extra \$8m on Crown Land Reserves around the state. Mrs Tehan said the National Parks funding would result in a significant expansion of the Great Ocean Walk, extensive upgrades and improved facilities at the Grampians and works at other rural national parks, including the Alpine National Park in north east Victoria.

She said the National Parks funding would also provide an exciting chance to upgrade and improve recreation and conservation opportunities for the parks of Geelong linking the Barwon River and Corio Bay.

Detailing the major National Parks projects, Mrs Tehan said the works would include

- \$1.5 million to make the 110-kilometre Great Ocean Walk a flagship long distance walk stretching from Apollo Bay to Port Campbell along Victoria's internationally recognised coastline.
- \$1 million to upgrade and improve walking tracks, lookout points, camping and picnic facilities at the Grampians - one of Victoria's most visited national parks
- A further \$900,000 dedicated to rural national parks including improved walking and cross country skiing tracks in north east Victoria's Alpine National Park; and
- \$1 million for a coordinated plan and capital works in Geelong to link walking and bicycle

trails in the Barwon River and Corio Bay precinct. People will be able to enjoy new picnic areas, revegetated areas, improved birdwatching at wetlands and recreational activities around Corio Bay.

Mrs Tehan said Victoria's parks offered something for all visitors from major tourist attractions such as the Twelve Apostles, to pristine forests providing homes to a wide range of native plants and animals.

She said it was important the conservation values of our outstanding and unique national parks were protected and enhanced ;

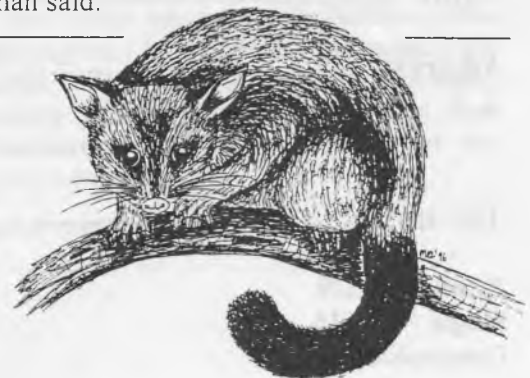
"Parks make a major contribution to the environmental, social and economic well-being of all Victorians and these projects will provide for the environmentally sustainable use of some of Victoria's greatest natural assets," the Minister said.

"This funding will improve visitor experiences while at the same time protect the unique natural values of our parks and coastline. It will also help improve access, upgrade visitor safety and enhance Victoria's reputation as a leader in the management of a world-class network of national parks"

Mrs Tehan said the \$8 million Crown Land Reserves improvements would benefit several projects across many shires throughout Victoria. Some of those projects will include:-

- A community museum and community support and information centre at Gallipoli Park in Marysville.
- Improvements at Howitt Park, Bairnsdale, with the Rotary Club of Bairnsdale and the Shire of East Gippsland. The improvements will be in line with the recently developed management plan for the park.
- Continued reconstruction of the Port of Echuca Historic Reserve and
- Development of three Crown Reserves in the Shire of Hepburn at Lake Daylesford Reserve, Cornish Hill Reserve and Hepburn Mineral Springs Reserve.

"These projects will provide real and tangible benefits which will flow to regional economies" Mrs Tehan said.



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Woody Pore Fungi - Polypores

Often grow attached to tree trunks, stumps or fallen logs - some are known as bracket fungi. The fertile surface is composed of numerous tubes which form a layer of pores on the underside of the fungi. Look out for the many varieties of these fungi in Warrandyte during late autumn and winter.

FOWSP Membership Form

Name

Address

.....

Tel. no.

- Family \$20
- Single \$15
- Concession \$10