

March 2000

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

Join In - It's Fun

By Andy Nixon (Ranger-in-Charge)

I returned yesterday from yet another pleasurable FOWSP activity. A canoe trip down the Yarra via circumnavigation (almost) of the Mt Lofty peninsula. A bright fresh morning, a new view of the park – goodness, we could have been on a river in East Gippsland, and of course the web holding it together being the excellent company of happy, chortling Fowspian's.

Being part of FOWSP, particularly for those who participate in activities, really must be rewarding (and enjoyable !). I say this as the individual who is charged with the overall responsibility of managing the many different programs here at Warrandyte State Park. Because of this role I am afforded the opportunity of seeing and participating in some of these activities that FOWSP undertakes. And also as part of those activities mixing with the folks that contribute to the action – the fun parts and those that require a little bit of toil. (Not to say that the toil is not fun. Just see the results of your labours months later as a seed sprouts or a seedling takes larger form out in the family of its revegetating siblings).

Turnouts to the Thursday morning activities, usually centred on the nursery, are good. Sometimes there is almost not enough room for all around the tables. The diligent work is evidenced by the greenery of the adjacent shade houses. So too the monthly market stall - Fowspians plying the crowd with words of wonder regards the Warrandyte bushlands, and the necessity and delight that can be found in having endemic

native plants as part of the home garden. Weekend activities, annual camps, evening talks are all there too - but not always the crowds.

So where are you all then ? So often the same faces, the same contributors. The Friends have over 150 members and if you are reading this then no doubt you are one of them ! Join in I sayit's fun, it's sociable, and your giving something back to your local community (your own backyard).

Your chance is anytime of course, but two great opportunities are coming up in May. Its Arbor week, May 15th to 21st. On Thursday 18th FOWSP will be undertaking a big planting activity at Taroona Reserve, Everard Dr. And on Sunday 21st another planting morning at Mt Lofty wetlands, Lower Homestead Rd, awaits the presence of your green thumb. So here is your chance to get your foot in the proverbial door.

Be part of it. I encourage you to put down the newsletter, get out of the armchair, go out on to

the verandah, and shout to the world (viz. do a General Macarthur) I WILL BE THERE ! and then stride forth to the next FOWSP activity. I think you will enjoy it. I know I do.





My Favourite Place

By Rose Mercer

I'm a city kid, you see, so when my husband insisted he wanted to move from Balwyn I thought: "Oh good...here's my dream of living in city apartment about to come true". My fantasy of walking downstairs for my morning cappuccino, being within walking distance of cinemas and any number of eateries, Chinatown, the Greek area all came on with a rush.

Now I know I have a very poor sense of direction, but suddenly I find myself living in North Warrandyte... Huh? How did that happen?

We've lived in North Warrandyte now for one and a half years and you know, I think I'm getting used to it. In fact, I think I'm might actually really like it: smelling clean and fresh air every day, particularly highlighted after rain, the scent of the bush and various gum trees, hakeas and bursaria in bloom.

My favourite place is sitting on the deck, breakfasting at leisure listening to the bellbirds, watching all the others flying by.

We kept asking neighbours what the different birds were, but finally we just had to get our own book. We now say "the boys are back" when the red-browed finches visit the bird feeder; there are at least two pairs of Crimson Rosellas: Jack and Jill were first, but then we saw Arnie and Rose (they have extra long tails), and occasionally there's Charlie, because the poor thing has a flat head and looks like a right one. Oh yes, the Eastern Rosellas and the Lorikeets are an occasional treat as are the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos and their cousins the Sulphur-crested who use our little valley as a highway. They seem to do the equivalent of parading up and down Lygon Street in souped up cars as they swoop backwards and forwards along our little

valley calling to each other. Oh yes, and the Grey Shrike-thrushes, what lovely calls; does "I'm, I'm I'm Manjimup" and "Where, where, where's Huey" pop by your place too?

When we first moved in, Jacky, the kookaburra came and sat on the railing watching us and giving us advice about where to place things, or rather, laughing at us when we put things wrong. Now we have a couple of families of pardalotes as well as Eastern Spinebills keeping tabs on us and our gardening attempts. The wattlebirds approve of the abutilons we've planted in a tub on the deck, but I have it on good authority that our efforts at restoring some of the land to original bush will be even more welcomed.

Can you believe a couple of city kids spending spring counting and marking all the chocolate lily colonies? And getting all excited on finding other plants that look like they belong but are yet to be identified by an expert?

Whatever happened to my city apartment? Well, if the giant 'plate-sized' spiders don't get me down, and if the other bugs start to respect my space, I just might continue sitting on the deck at breakfast and not getting up, until dinner time. After all, you only live once and to be able to relax, unwind and experience the joy of the wildlife and the sunlight playing on the ridge opposite is worth it. After all, we get to experience every day what others may on an occasional weekend away.



Lichens

By Ray Clarke

What's this? More things to watch for in the forest?

With a smattering of knowledge about each, I already go into the forest endeavouring to recognise the geological surroundings, I gaze up at the birds, set about identifying the trees, try to sort out the understorey, peer at the ground plants and watch for insects, arachnids and other beasties. And now Kath Ralston of the National Herbarium of Victoria tells us there is a fascinating world of lichens.

At a Rotamah Island weekend she introduced us to a few of the 2,800 species of lichen found in Australia, and, under the microscope they are indeed surprising, grotesque and eye-opening. (exclamations of 'Wow'). Try looking through your magnifying glass.

Kath told us that lichens can be found on rocks, trees or on the ground. They have no effect on the base on which they grow. There are three

types, crustose which appear almost like painting on rocks or bark, foliose, the leaf-like lichens flat on their base, and fruticose, the whiskery ones we see growing on dead branches or sprouting from the ground.

An extraordinary facet of lichens is that the spore is ejected from the plant's apothecia and lands on an alga, and with it sets up a symbiosis which becomes a growth in no way resembling either the fungus or the alga. The composite organism behaves as a single independent plant, the alga manufacturing sugars by photosynthesis, the fungus living off the food stuffs and providing the alga with shelter and moisture nutrients.

Lichens are sensitive to air pollution, and a species growing small and poorly close to Melbourne will be found to increasingly prosper the further from the city it grows. They can be regarded as a rough indicator of the degree of pollution present.

And so we can go out to look at another fascinating world, and we can blow our chests out and claim to be 'lichenologists'.

Astronomy at Mount Lofty

By Geoff Speedy

Once again, an intrepid dozen or so FOWSPians braved the elements in quest of greater understanding of our Place in the Universe.

Actually, due to the overcast conditions on Friday night, we postponed to Sunday night. Glen Jameson arrived first at Mt Lofty, opening the gate for Phil Mahon our Astronomical Society astronomer, borrowed along with his 8-inch Newtonian telescope.

Glen then rushed off to close up other sections of the park, whilst the FOWSPians converged on the hilltop. Phil pronounced the site to be excellent, (we had always suspected...), and started the show with clearly detailed observations of the mountains on the moon,

moons of Jupiter and Saturn with its well-known rings. Due to the hot day, the earth was still heating the atmosphere, so the views of Saturn required a little time to stabilise.

Magnificent deep space views of far-off gas clouds in "the pot", a binary star in the "pointers" and sparkling fully-starred views of the Milky Way

were shared by all.

Soon it was too late for a Sunday night, and we all dispersed back to our humbler but closer abodes.



Community Grants Success

Last year our group applied for three grants under the 'Parks Victoria grants program 1999/2000 community grants'.

From the 328 applications submitted from across Australia, 193 projects were selected for funding. We are delighted to report that FOWSP was among the successful recipients. Not only that, all three of our applications were accepted.

The projects we chose to submit for funding are diverse and illustrate Fowspians wide range of activities.

The benefits of rabbit exclusion fences have been shown time and again by increased growth and diversity of vegetation within the fenced areas. This years grant will be used to protect the recently rediscovered Dwarf Greenhood orchid (*Pterostylis nana*) as well as other regionally significant species on Fourth Hill, not far from our first and highly successful exclusion fence.

Since the mid-eighties 'Friends' have been running the State Park nursery, propagating indigenous plants for the Park, Melbourne Water, local councils and community plantings. The

ongoing commitment of our group to the nursery has been recognised and supported over the years by Melbourne Parks & Waterways and Parks Victoria. This years grant of over \$1,500 is to replace the old, original 'hot bed' (used to germinate seedlings and strike cuttings) and to purchase various items including new propagating mixes and tools.

The third grant, and perhaps the most exciting, is for a purpose built trailer for storage and display of our many pamphlets, books, cards etc. The trailer will be taken to the monthly market, the annual Warrandyte festival and any other venues where we would like to promote our group.

While preliminary enquiries have taken place to obtain such a trailer, we don't yet know if it will be ready in time for this years festival.

While on the subject of grants, we are putting in an application to Melbourne Water's community grants program to purchase a second hand plastic canoe. While FOWSP does have its own canoe, it is made of fibreglass and not really suited to shallow rocky sections of the Yarra. But we will have to wait a while to see if this latest application is as successful as the last three.

New Secretaries!

By Cathy Willis

FOWSP has a new secretary for the new millenium. Peter Curry was elected onto the committee at the AGM in November, and volunteered to take over the position at our first committee meeting of the year. Peter is a long term Warrandyte resident, has been a FOWSP member for several years, and is the president of Warrandyte Awareness Group. I think he will make an excellent secretary for our group, bringing with him a broad knowledge of local issues, experience with dealing with government bodies, and most importantly enthusiasm and new ideas.

Lee Speedy, who has been a very valuable and dynamic committee member for the last year, will take over as membership secretary. This position has been shared between treasurer Ant Owen and me for the last few years, with long term member Marg Dimech keeping track of the membership list and printing the monthly newsletter labels.

Thanks Marg, you've been fantastic! Having Lee do the whole job will reduce the load on both secretary and treasurer, and I'm sure help the system run more smoothly. Addressing membership renewals to "Membership Secretary" and prompt payment (NOW!) will make her job much easier.

Friends Seminar

Date: Saturday 25th March
Place: Geelong West Town Hall (morning)
Buckley Falls Park (afternoon)

The theme of this seminar is '**Restoring Urban Bushland**'.

Registrations close on Tuesday 21st March.
Enquiries: Marion Taylor 0359 83 1580 or
Tony Woodford 03 5243 6340
Fax 5244 1267

The Warrandyte Festival

March 25th & 26th

This year FOWSP will be sharing a large tent with the Rangers from the State Park. It will certainly do away with all the hassle of putting up and taking down the old tent and all the other paraphernalia.

We will still be able to display all our information and sell our books and cards.

If you would like to volunteer to help on the stall over the weekend of the festival please ring Betty Oke on 9844 3763.

To Feel it's Strength

Inspirations from Trepina Gorge
East Macdonnell Ranges

By Angelique Stefanatos

People ask "What do you see in the desert?"
I answer "The desert gives you strength."
"How?"

Like the worn and eroded rock faces that are wise from time, experience, harshness. These things make them appreciate the soft patter of rain on their faces, or the heavy torrents streaming over their bodies and then joining to become sheets of water. Always knowing that the rain is slowly eroding them away, but is giving life elsewhere.

They love the rain when it comes. They don't take it for granted or curse it for wearing them down. It might not rain again for seven months or seven years. And for the rest of the time they bake in the piercing sunlight. But they are content. They have all the time of eternity to listen to the birds call around them. The crows "cawing" softly, sadly which can change like a desert storm to become harsh and grating. The Rainbow Bee-eaters energetically performing aerobatics and calling constantly. The Pied Butcher-birds' melodious songs. The Cicadas echoing off the walls of gorges, vibrating into the heart of the rocks. The soft rustle of leaves from the River Redgums, Bloodwoods and Ghostgums. The shrill piercing cry of a bird of prey.

The desert air makes you strong. No pollution for thousands of kilometres in all directions. No "mental" pollution too: no cities with big populations. No pretence out here either. All is exposed like the countryside.



Everything seems more beautiful in the desert. Every plant is special, unique, clinging to an existence. Is that what we admire, because we feel the same way about our lives?

The fish and frogs come so briefly but they don't stop and waste time lamenting their short lives, they dive in and live in the moment.

Every moment is powerful, almost tangible in the still, quiet desert. If you stop, you can feel the power of nature, of mother earth and father sun pulsing through your body. Like the vibration of a cicada's call, or a heartbeat? An indescribable energy. As vast as the oceans, as isolating, as beautiful and as terrifying. One day the warm wind is like a lover's caress, the next the hot wind is desiccating.

The desert does not give up its treasures easily. To see them you must become still and quiet within, and you must adjust your eyes. Like you were waiting for nocturnal creatures to appear in the cool silvery shadows of moonlight.

The desert is like the ultimate 'creator-destroyer' being, you must have the courage to feel its strength and the caution not to get burned by its fire. But if you do these things, you will emerge with the strength of tempered steel, and with inner peace.

Boxes and Pots

Numbers of polystyrene boxes and pots are getting rather low at the nursery. If members have bought plants over the last few months, we would be most grateful if you could return your pots and boxes to the nursery. If no one is in attendance just leave them beside one of the polyhouses.

Also, if anyone knows where we can obtain a supply of polystyrene boxes and/or forestry tubes please could you ring the nursery manager on 0408800026.

Thank You

The editor would like to thank every one who responded to last months plea for articles for the newsletter.

The response was wonderful and has uncovered a wealth of talented writers. There isn't room to include all of the articles in this months newsletter, but it is great to have some in hand for next month.

Contributions are always welcome so don't hesitate to keep the articles coming.

Poems, quotations and illustrations are still being sought after and I'm sure there are many artistic members out there.



Valuable Volunteers

February 2000 market stall volunteers were: Owen Humphries, Neal Tessier, Alan Woodcock, Tony Honeyborne, Katherine Byrne and Ian Hodgson. Thank you all.

Roster Report

A new roster is operating for the picking up and setting up of the monthly market stall. (This small group will be self contained and self organised). It consists of Lee and Geoff Speedy, Owen Humphries, Richard Barnes and Neil Doran.

Brian's Baby

Ranger, Brian Phefley, is responsible for producing the Warrandyte State Park newsletter - now in its third third edition. Copies are available on request or at the Warrandyte information shelter in the town.

Helping Hand

Ranger, David Van Bockel, recently visited the Yellingbo Fauna Reserve (for the conservation of the Helmeted Honeyeater) to help Ian Roche (ex Ranger-in-Charge at WSP) with a plant survey.

Canoe Capers

On Thursday 24th February a group of 13 'Friends' were led by Elise from Adventure Canoeing Ltd (Warrandyte), down the Yarra River by canoe, starting from the Lower Homestead Road car park (Melways map 279 B4) to Wittons Reserve (Melways map 24 K6).

Wet Water

The two hour canoe trip was accomplished with several capsizes, and some canoe pushes (and pulls) over the rapids. Apart from Elise, who checked out each rapid for the best way(s) through, only four canoeists were completely dry

when we reached the end of the trip - Marie, Margaret, Pat and Elizabeth.

Flora Features

The trip enabled us to look for/at various aquatic plants, to discover where the largest group of invasive willows were located and to discover that Vietnamese Mint (*Persicaria odoratum*) - a new weed finding its way into Victoria - was present on the river bank.

Scenery Seen

The only distant views were along the river, with a flat water surface and hills either side. Apart from one or two pumps and a notice about a cable across the river, the scenery was unmarred by human busyness.

Along the banks we saw many hundreds of plants and trees specifically propagated by FOWSP.

Rocky Rapids

There were small rocks, bigger rocks, Bob's Rock and many 'mobile' rocks which appeared from nowhere to wedge and bump your canoe.

Physical Facts

Life jackets and helmets were compulsory, not just de rigueur. Sunscreen was available.

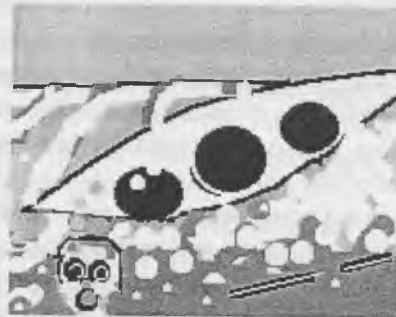
Aching thighs, back and neck muscles were all the go the next day.

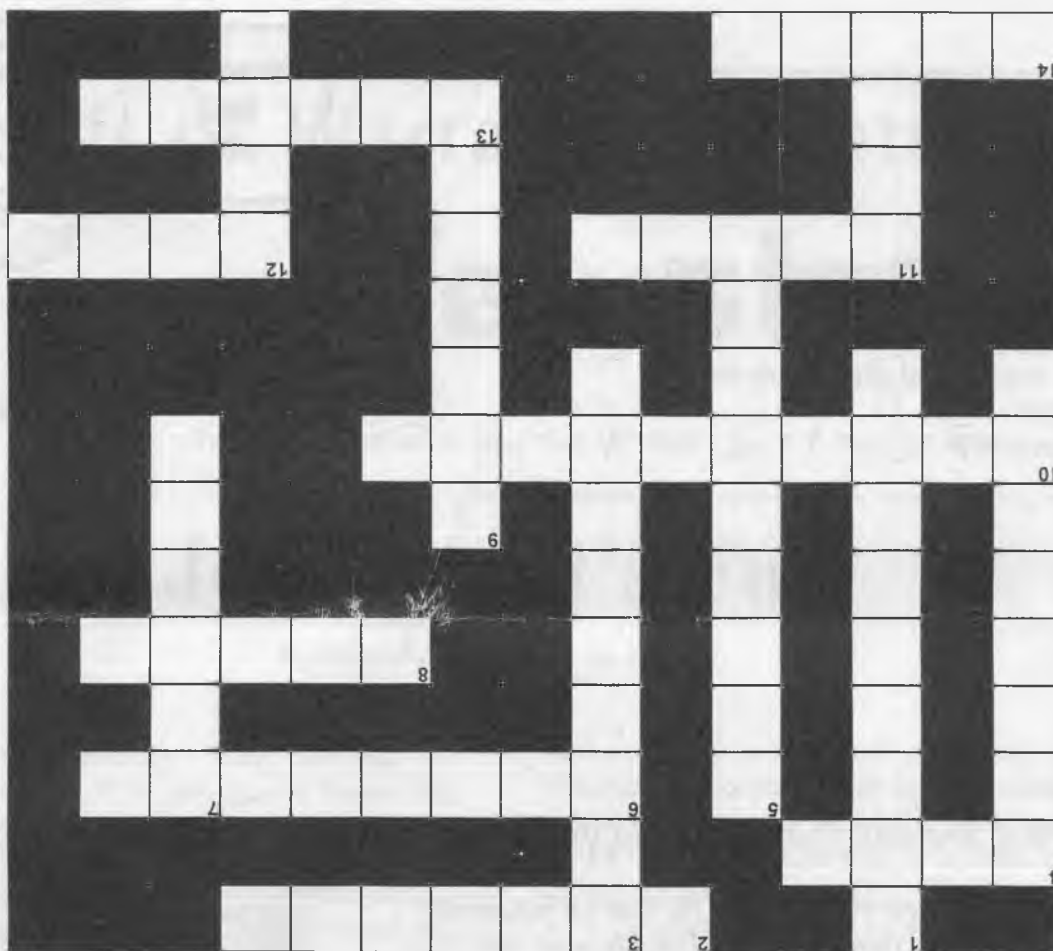
Thanks go to our own Nursery Manager who organised the trip. Also thanks to Debbie who worked at unloading and reloading the heavy canoes and associated equipment.

Debbie and Elise are from Adventure Canoeing Ltd Warrandyte. 9844 3323.

Final Fiat

As the Yarra is an integral feature of the State Park perhaps 'Friends'. Park staff and others should at try at least one trip along it. Well recommended.





Across

2. crustaceans
4. WSP area, Black
6. ... mudstone (geol.)
8. FOWSP Public Officer
10. male die-off species
11. soil covering
12. sun is one
13. at Bend of Isles
14. watercraft

Down

1. tiny bird
3. southern (Lat.)
4. celebration
5. David with twins
7. lights
9. giant planet
11. satellite
12. growth medium

Community Training Program

'Koorie Culture and the Landscape'

Date & Time: Friday 24th March
4.00pm to .00pm

Place: Mia Mia Gallery & Cafe, Westerfolds Pk, Fitzsimons Lane, Templestowe

Cost: \$25 for members of a community group.

Note: We have vouchers for free entry to some seminars. Check with Cathy Willis on 9844 1841.

The session will begin with a guided walk through the environment to interpret the natural signs of the landscape. A short presentation on bush foods and traditional use of native plants will follow and participants will partake in a bush food meal. The evening will be spent having a discussion around a campfire.

Enquiries: Kate Stothers 9457 3024



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Black She-oak (Allocasuarina littoralis)

This is the only representative of the Casuarina family that grows in Warrandyte. The Black She-oak is a graceful tree which grows to about eight metres, male and female flowers usually occur on different trees. She-oaks can be seen growing beside the river in several areas of the State Park including Pound Bend Reserve, Black Flat and Yarra Brae.

This species is currently being propagated at the nursery.



FOWSP Membership Form

Name

Address

.....

Tel. no.

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