

May 2000

# Friends of Warrandyte State Park



# Newsletter

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

## Market Trailer Arrives

By Pat Coupar

It's big. It's blue. And it's brand new. It's the FOWSP custom-made market trailer. Standing approximately two metres high by two metres long, the peacock blue, sheet metal trailer is magnificent and will transform the FOWSP market stall into a weather-proof, mobile 'Friends' information centre.

We took delivery of the trailer at the end of April and the very next day an impromptu 'working bee' was held. Working in the large work shed at the rangers depot, with welcome rain pouring down outside, six committee members turned up to fit out the new trailer.

Under the directive of Geoff Speedy - who organised the purchase of the trailer - display boards, table/counter, steps, wheel chocks etc were put together. For three hours, with a break for coffee, sticky buns and carrot cake, the six sawed, sanded, hammered, screwed and glued the various bits and pieces.

While there is still some work to be done to complete the fitting out, the basics are there and usable. The trailer opens at the back. Inside there is room for a chair to be placed at the fitted table which folds out to form a counter, carpet-covered display boards have been attached to the inside of the trailer as well as velcro strips for posters etc on the folded out sides. The trailer is designed to lift up at the side to provide protection from the rain.

The trailer is light and maneuverable and will be kept in a shed at the rangers depot ready to be towed into position each market day. It will also be available to use if FOWSP are invited to other festivals or environmental occasions where we would like to promote our group.

The committee are looking for FOWSP members who would be interested in towing the trailer to the Warrandyte market and back again. Even if you could only donate your time once or twice a year, it would be of great assistance.

For more information on the trailer, ring Geoff Speedy on 9437 0894.



## Riparian Ecology Course

Report by J.R & C.W

**G**reening Australia (Victoria) recently ran a three day Riparian Ecology course to educate people working in the environment industry about managing riparian systems (i.e. rivers, streams and their catchments). Andy Nixon (Ranger in Charge), J. R (Nursery Manager) and Cathy Willis (FOWSP committee member), were among the fourteen participants who attended the three day course based on Raymond Island in the Gippsland Lakes.

We were interested in the course because of its particular relevance to Warrandyte State Park. The Yarra River flows through most sections of the park, and the remaining sections form part of its catchment. Our focus for the course was the Mitchell River, which being relatively short lends itself to close study. While we were a long way from home the principles we learnt are transferable.

The course was extremely intensive, with nine presenters of varying scientific disciplines continuously bombarding information at their somewhat overwhelmed students. We soon learnt that the three most important points to remember in riparian management are "catchment catchment catchment". The health of any particular reach of river or stream is directly related to the state of the catchment.

We traveled to various sites by bus and boat, starting with a geomorphology lesson in the Mt. Taylor area. Then to a tributary, the gorge, on downstream to the alluvial terraces, and finally to the estuary at Lake King. At each site we sampled and surveyed; soils, habitat values, vertebrate and invertebrate fauna, vegetation communities and flora quadrats, water quality etc., and talked about the factors that could influence each of these. The abiotic environment is as important to consider as

the biotic environment. Flood events, drought periods, the hyporheos and the benthic layer, runs and riffles, surrounding geomorphology, all these were covered. Catchment figured largely in the discussion! For example we can across a slug (a very slow moving sediment layer on the stream base), which provides very poor spawning habitat for fish. Was the slug caused by clearing in the catchment or was it a natural occurrence caused by a flood event?

On the last afternoon we collated results. For each site five major categories of riparian health indicators were assessed and given a rating of one to five – five being excellent. Awarding points was not always straightforward with so many factors to take into account. This assessment session highlighted the need to consider both the history and the potential of the site, to monitor many sites over many seasons, and to (yet again!) consider the catchment.

What did we learn? Apart from some big words, we came away from the course with a much greater awareness of how to view our environment. We all see Warrandyte State Park in a slightly different light now. Riparian systems are forever changing over time and space. They provide us with drinking and agricultural water, recreational opportunities, and quiet places to let time slip by and appreciate nature. While some aspects are surprisingly robust considering our society's neglect and abuse, they need active management to remain healthy in the long term.

Congratulations to GAV on putting together such an excellent course. We hope we can put what we learnt into action to benefit Warrandyte State Park.

If anyone is interested in reading the course notes provided, ring Cathy.



## Fungi Walk

at Jumping Creek Reserve led by renowned expert Bruce Fuhrer.

Date & Time: Thursday June 15<sup>th</sup> at 9.45am.

The walk will start promptly at 10.00am

Place: Meet at Sandy Bay car park, Jumping Ck Reserve (Melway ref. Map 23 K9)

## Book Review

By Andy Nixon

### The Life of Birds

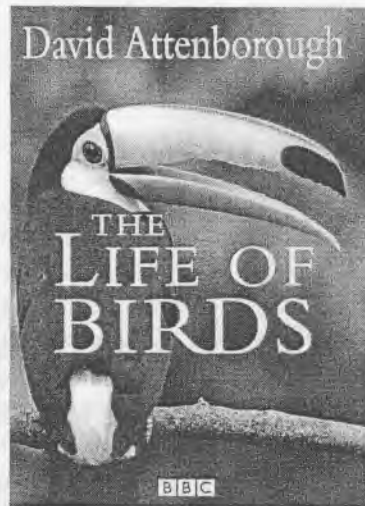
By David Attenborough  
John Murray Paperbacks

I was given the book having already seen the show. No connection, I hadn't waxed lyrical about the series, but known to be interested in the planets avian fauna I had received the book as a birthday present. (Ahh! books - always a welcomed gift).

As usual any of Sir David Attenborough's productions attracts accolade and so too it was with his recent 10 part TV series 'The Life of Birds'. But could a book on a topic such as this be as good as the show. Its presentation in 'coffee table' format seemed to say that this would be a volume that I would pick up and glance at whilst sipping a beverage in front of the TV (maybe watching the LOB re-run at the same time!)

Well all I can say is, if you are interested in birds - read it. Attenborough's book '**The Life of Birds**' is every bit as good as the TV series of the same name. Quite mesmerising really. I was surprised that from the first session it went from a coffee table/reference book to a book that each night sat on my chest in bed, just on the right side of lightness to be held in the mitts without the biceps tiring. Mind you it could leave a dint in your forehead if you nodded off - but don't worry, you wont, its too good.

From the first two sentences of the Foreword you can hear Sir David talking to you ..... *"It is easy to understand why so many of us are so fond of birds. They are lively; they are lovely; and they are everywhere."* If you say it attempting to use that delightful expressive and eloquent



punctuation that he uses, the pauses, and the little huff's of air, then he is almost reading the pages to you. And throughout the book there is always that clever use of question and amazing fact, so that the reader's interest is maintained to turn the page again.

The chapters are organised as the TV series, based on

themes and/or stage in a bird's life. So if you happen to need to use it as a reference on a theme of say, song, then you will find plenty of information right there in Chapter 6. And the photos, .....well it prompts the same thought as when watching the show, 'How did they get such a photo?' Simply stunning.

Its published by the BBC book department (1999), and I think was around \$55 dollars when it first appeared in the book stores but no doubt would be much cheaper now. Watch out for it at a discount sale perhaps.

**NB.** In the last FOWSP newsletter Cathy Willis described an interesting tale of the South Seas which jogged my memory of a small book I read many years ago - '*A Pattern of Islands*' by Arthur Grimble. Grimble's story is an autobiography of his life in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands as a British colonial service officer, where he was based for a number of years just prior to the First World War. A great tale, incorporating vivid descriptions of, eg. his bravery test by being the bait for giant octopus on the lagoon edge, and the life of the islanders which he came to love dearly. Like Cath's words (on authors Tim Severin's words), it just wants to make you go there.

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## Parks Victoria Festival May 2000

Parks Vic organised a huge public Festival at Albert Park on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> May. FOWSP's market stall was in a tent village, along with at least 15 other "Friends" groups. It was wonderful to see the amount of volunteer effort put into the environment through these groups.

Flora Anderson, Peter Curry and Geoff & Lee Speedy met many old "Friends" friends and made new ones during the constant discussion, interchange of ideas and exchange of printed material. I came away with at least three new locations to visit, with firm invitations of a guided tour from the keen representatives of the local group.

It was great to see how FOWSP is held up as a

large, well-established and successful Friends group. Many other groups were fascinated by the market trailer, and took details of it's

construction, so I expect next year's festival to look like a trailer sales rep's dream!!

'Flora of Warrandyte' also took the fancy of many wildlife photographers, who could appreciate the time, effort, and superb quality of the photographs. One lady photographer spent at least 45 minutes leafing through the first 3 of the 8 volumes, enthusing over the contents.

Other attractions at the Festival included free hot-air ballon rides, FOX-FM radio stations with giveaways including 3 night holidays for 8 people in the Gabo Island lighthouse, electric bicycles and strolling entertainers and a sound stage. See you there next year!!

# Koorie Culture and the Landscape

By Elizabeth Sevior

On a sunny afternoon in late march, Betty Mifsud and I arrived at the Mia Mia Café and Art Gallery in the Westerfolds Manor to take part in a Community Training Event. As usual with Greening Australia programs, all participants were presented with an informative booklet of facts and background notes. This booklet is available to anyone who would like to read through it, so in this article I will deal mainly with the activities and oral statements of leaders and participants.

There were introductory comments and three parts to the event. Greening Australia organiser, Kate Stothers, welcomed us and introduced Phil Hamer, Chief Ranger of Yarra Valley Park (YVP). Phil described the two functions of YVP - which extends along the valley from Burke Road, Kew to the boundary of Warrandyte State Park - as recreation and conservation, and gave a brief summary of land, highlights, and uses of the Park by the public. There have been changes in the history of the land usage. The billabong now known as Bolin Bolin is only a part of a much larger swamp area, which is now mostly drained and used for sporting activities. Nevertheless, we still have reminders of earlier times in the scarred trees that remain.

Colin McKinnon, the proprietor of the Mia Mia Café, paid tribute to the support he had received from Phil in the early stages of establishing the café and art gallery. He lamented the few remaining local members of the Wurundjeri people.

We then met two indigenous leaders - Natalie Morham who is a heritage facilitator with the Merimbiak Land Council and Brian Powell, a Site Protection Officer for the Kulin Nation Cultural Heritage Organisation. Brian asked us why the Manor was on such a position at the top of a hill and chuckled when someone said it was to look out for Aborigines. He was thinking of a much earlier time when Wurundjeri people would watch for other groups of people and animals in the lower lands.

Rodney Wharton, artist in residence at the Mia Mia Café and Art Gallery and a skilful and talented didgeridoo player, led the first part of the afternoon activities. We walked along a mown grass track to a beautiful spreading Red Gum. A general discussion of the functions of the tree in

Aboriginal culture and other cultural traditions followed. Participants were interested in traditional marriage customs. On the whole marriages adhered to strict rules of who should marry whom, but Brian said there were also love marriages and marriages of convenience so as to gain rights to another clans benefits. Rodney spoke of the tree's indications of the changing seasons, its use for tools and weapons and colours for art ideas. We walked on to look at some Black Wattle trees and noted gum, which we were told, was used as resin and as a sweet substance to suck. In a pond some bullrushes (cumbungi) were growing. The roots of this plant were eaten raw, baked or boiled. The starch in the stalks was removed by pulling through the teeth and the remaining fibres were used as string for traps and baskets. In addition, the snakes, eels and ducks, which moved amongst the rushes, were also used as food.

We returned to the art gallery, which was set up with chairs as a lecture room, and Beth Gott, Ethnobiologist at Monash University, gave the solid mental course of the afternoon. Beth is well known to many Friend of Warrandyte and is very generous with her knowledge.

Before she began her talk Beth made two important points:

- 1) *The strong indications of an active maintenance of plant resources by the tool of fire.* This cleared the land of undergrowth and recycled nutrients into the soil. Early settlers described the look of the countryside as 'Nobleman's Park', due to the spaced out trees and green herbage.
- 2) *The practice of the women's digging stick.* Early historians have ignored this. It was not as exciting I suppose, as the hunting of large mammals but digging loosened the soil and the incorporation of leaf litter added to, and aided, the continual propagation of roots just below the soil. Beth showed us many beautiful slides of lilies, orchids, rushes and fruits with the edible parts clearly displayed. Koories used plants for food, medicines, baskets, tools, fire-making, adhesives and musical instruments.

We moved outside for the final part of the program. With a low burning fire behind us, we moved along to fill our plates with slices of kangaroo meat, organic vegetables, home made bread and damper, along with mugs of river mint tea.

I recommend the Greening Australia Training Programs for the excellence of their content and presentation and the Mia Mia Café and Art Gallery for its facilities, service, beautiful setting and art works.

## Rangers Report

### Assets:

- Gallatlys Lane house purchase
- Track repair work to Gold Memorial Tk. completed. Also reveg. & closing off of steep track up to Johnsons Mine. (Unfortunately flood repair work could not be undertaken on the Bruce Bence Tk.)
- Two new picnic tables are coming for the Folly
- Various other asset works are underway – Vehicle track repair, dangerous tree removal and signage repair
- The new owner of Stane Brae will be closing off all access, via the private driveway to the park, other than to emergency vehicles. Access for non-emergency activities will need to be via JC/Blue Tongue Bend Tk
- Wittons Reserve. PV has offered a considerable sum of money to Manningham (\$ for \$) to motivate the council into completion of the planned upgrade of the reserve.

### Environment:

- Vegetation Community Report. Awaiting final undertaking of mapping requirements. Holding the completion up somewhat.
- Rabbit program is now well underway. Pindone poisoning in a variety of on & off-

- park locations, fumigation, burrow destruction. (A popular and generally well supported program by the community)
- Most pest plant projects have now been completed.
- Some \$\$\$ have been moved from the reserves 'weed projects' to fund completion of the mapping work.
- 3 burns completed. Ecological burn at Mt Lofty (*sp. themeda*) very successful. Monitoring surveys to be planned.
- Two tertiary research projects are being run at the park. Looking at – introduced species 'Argentine' ants; also overview of eucalypt dieback in JC reserve

### Other:

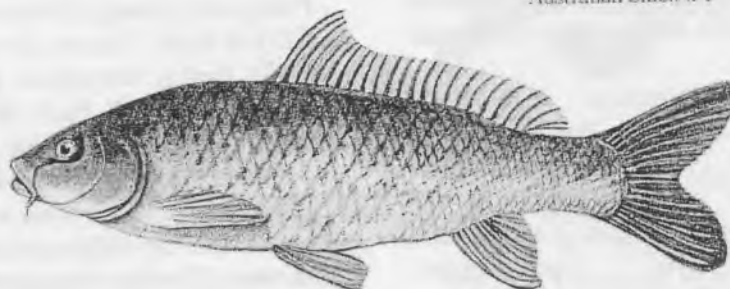
- Staff consumed by fires and budget / program planning for the next year
- Glen Jameson is back after a six week secondment to Yarra Bend park.
- A successful Clean Up Australia day activity in the Mt Lofty loop was undertaken by the Kirinari Kayak Club. Much rubbish removed!
- A successful Warrandyte festival PV / FOWSP display was seen by many visitors to the festival. Thanks to all who assisted – particularly during the absences of rangers (on patrol or at Pie Fights)
- Minister Garbutt announced the retention of Parks Victoria as an umbrella organisation for a separate NPS and Melb. Parks & Bays Service. Staff will work 'across' both services..... more info on this at a later date.

## Feral Future Findings

*"Carp from Asia now dominate our biggest river, the Murray-darling. During a recent survey of the river, they comprised a whopping 93 per cent of the 4000 fish sampled:*

*carp, carp and more carp. In Victoria, carp and goldfish now outnumber native fish. Carp weren't*

*a problem for Australia until a fish farm imported a vigorous new strain, the 'Boolara', in 1961. It was soon recognised as a threat and 1300 dams in Victoria were poisoned*



*in a valiant effort to defeat it. But some of these superfish slipped into the Murray near Mildura and the river's ecology is now in ruins.*

*Footnote: The worst extinction ever in modern times was triggered by a fish. After the Nile Perch (*Lates niloticus*) was stocked*

*into Lake Victoria in the 1950's more than 200 species of smaller cichlid fish disappeared into extinction. The Queensland Government very nearly introduced Nile Perch (a close relative of*

*barramundi) into Queensland."*

Source: Feral Future by Tim Low; published by Viking.

## Worth Repeating

### Seven years to fix Snowy as water wins top billing

By Claire Miller Environment Reporter

The government has set a seven-year time frame to restore the Snowy River in a budget with new emphasis on protecting and restoring the states water resources.

The timeline for works to revive the river indicates tough negotiations ahead with New South Wales, whose latest position was a 15-year plan to boost flows to an "environmentally acceptable" level.

Victoria is committed to restoring a minimum 28 per cent of the Snowy's original flow from the Jindabyne dam, compared with the present 1 per cent.

The government has increased spending on environment and natural resources by 5.1 per cent over last year's budget to a total of \$914.8 million.

Water and catchments are now the single biggest expenditure group, with a 20 per cent increase in funding to \$185.8 million. It has overtaken agriculture (up 1.2 per cent to \$171.1 million) and conservation and recreation (down 3.8 per cent to \$167.5 million).

Much of the water increase is due to the government spending almost \$54 million over the next four years to replace the unpopular catchment management levy on rural landholders.

The levy, introduced by the Kennett government, was the country equivalent of long standing charges on city ratepayers to finance catchment conservation works.

Commitments to the independent member for East Gippsland, Craig Ingram, have been fulfilled with \$1.9 million for programs to reduce polluted run-off entering the Gippsland lakes and feeding toxic algal blooms. About \$12 million will be spent on Snowy River restoration works this year.

In a related move, \$30 million will be spent over the next three years on irrigation upgrades and infrastructure works to combat salinity and save water to boost environmental flows in the Murray River as well as to return more water to the Snowy River.

The government has also provided \$26.5 million for new country town sewerage systems to replace septic tanks and improve water quality in streams. Other budget items include:

- A 17.3 per cent increase in the forestry budget to \$134.9 million, including \$700,000 to employ more staff to enforce the code of forestry practices.
- \$1 million to establish a marine national park in Port Phillip Bay.
- \$4 million to set up an office of the commissioner for Ecologically Sustainable Development, which will consider public complaints.
- \$15 million in grants to subsidise households installing solar hot water systems.

Source: *The Age* 4/5/00

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## Parks Victoria Update - a small bump in the road, but still heading in the right direction

Some of you may be aware that when the Labour party recently came to power there was an announcement that the Bracks Government would reinstate the National Parks Service and create a new Metropolitan Parks and Bays Service.

After extensive consultation with staff, stakeholders and the community, the government has announced that Parks Victoria (which received considerable positive support) will remain in its public persona - that is same staff, service, uniforms, and yes.... logo, badges, letterhead etc. But to effect government policy there is to be some internal restructuring. There will be two separate head office divisions focused on the governments policy intent :- A National Parks Policy and Strategy division headed by

Mr Ian Christie (well known to some of you as a former regional manager covering Warrandyte State Park), and a Metropolitan Parks and Bays Policy and Strategy division headed by the deputy CEO of Parks Victoria Mr Geoff Vincent.

To further strengthen the governments intent the new National Parks Service will in the field cover the 'rural' regions - Victoria West, Vic Central, Vic East. The two city regions - Melbourne Metropolitan, and City and Bays, will be under the Metropolitan Parks and Bays Service. The key to the relationship between HO and the field will be the policy setting by the head office division and its translation to the relevant parks, regardless of where they sit in the regional context.

**Andy Nixon, Ranger In Charge**

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### ***Soup Starter***

Jan Tindale is back. Jan is the first to volunteer for our year 2000 soup roster and on Thursday May 18<sup>th</sup> she will prepare artichoke soup for all for lunch at the 'Folly', Pound Bend depot.

The roster is pinned up on the noticeboard, please write your name on the list, selecting a suitable date, if you can help.

### ***Work Experience Placement Worker***

Clarissa Rendell spent five days at the Park in the above 'position'. Clarissa, who was striking correa cuttings when seen, is a student at Swinburne (Lilydale campus) doing Natural Resource Management.

### ***Andreas and Andy***

Recently, Andreas Sayffer (from Westerfolds) was Acting Ranger in Charge at Warrandyte for a short period – replacing Andy Nixon who was acting Chief Ranger at Yarra District for two weeks.

### ***Argentine Ants***

Students from Deakin University are doing research on Argentine Ants and eucalypt dieback at Jumping Creek Reserve.

### ***Adelaide Assistance***

During April, Ellisa Smith, nine years old from Adelaide, was helping the 'Friends' in the 'striking and potting' area.

### ***Random Rock Pool Rendezvous***

In early April, I-Spy met Joy and Greg Hildebrand at the 'Craggs' (12 kilometres west of Port Fairy) rambling in rock pools.

The Hildebrands are re-establishing tussock grasses (*Poa* species) and other indigenous plants on their rural block at Minhamite. Greg even gave 34 guitar lessons to their farmer neighbour in exchange for him creating a large depression (about the area of the 'Folly' dam) for their wetland project.

They send their warmest regards to all their friends in Warrandyte.

### ***Warrandyte Walking***

May Day (1st) two different walking groups were seen rambling around the Warrandyte area, Yarra River and the Park. Both were from community houses – Mitcham and North Ringwood.

### ***Staff Support***

Thanks to the staff at IGA supermarket, Goldfields shopping centre in Warrandyte for their co-operation in the supply of polystyrene boxes for the nursery.

### ***'Flora' Flourish***

What sort of people attended the launching of the 'Flora of Warrandyte'? Over fifty attended including: garden designers, Manningham Council staff and associates, botanists (herbarium and otherwise), library technicians, library course students, nurserymen and managers, environmental scientists, FOWSP committee members, a tutor from Deakin University, receptionists, secretaries, Chief Ranger for environmental programs across the Melbourne Metro. region, Chief Ranger for the Yarra District, Presidents of Environmental groups, Environment and Resource students, Tertiary lecturers, authors, 'working' FOWSP members, and wives, husbands, partners and children.

Well, now you know!



### ***Art Commission***

FOWSP's new market trailer has presented an opportunity for artists to contribute to conservation in Warrandyte. In recognition of the huge number of hours and expensive materials involved in the rendering of a large artwork, FOWSP are offering a \$500 Commission to create an artwork for the back of the trailer, which faces the entrance to the Warrandyte Community Market.



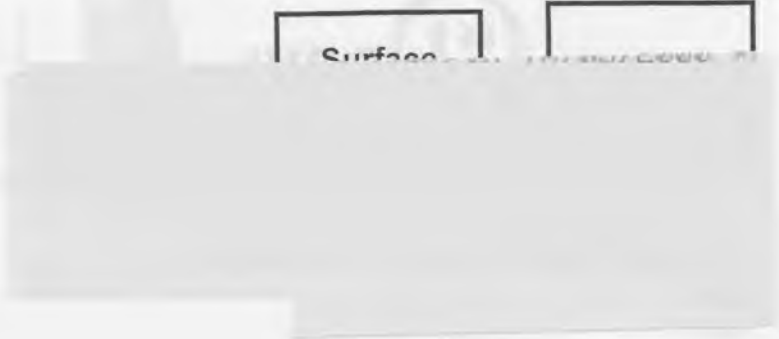
The Theme should be related to conservation, the medium can be Airbrush directly onto the trailer, or other medium, in which case FOWSP would reproduce the artwork on a large format printed vinyl poster.

Artists are invited to submit sketch designs to Geoff Speedy -9437- 0894 by the end of May. Named, Addressed sketches will be returned to the artists. The final choice will be made by a panel.



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***Nodding Greenhood Orchid (Pterostylis nutans)***

**Derivation: *Pterostylis* = winged seed; *nutans* = nodding**

*The floral emblem of FOWSP.*

*This orchid is one of the more common greenhoods around Warrandyte.*

*It grows in colonies in most habitats, especially the damper shady regions.*

*The rosettes of bright green leaves are already showing - flowering  
may be any time from July to October*

## FOWSP Membership Form

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Tel. no. ....

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