

July 2000

# Friends of Warrandyte State Park



## Newsletter

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

### Looking Out Our Backdoors

By Andy Nixon and Glen Jameson

“Doo, Doo – Du, looking out my backdoor”. I won’t sing it, lucky for you folk, but it does seem to have become something of a signature tune for the park rangers over the last few years. (And if you cannot remember the tune, does the name ‘Creedence Clearwater’ help – trust that this does not show our age!)

The reason that it is a tune that we hum along to, and at times dolefully, is because Warrandyte State Park has a lot of backdoors looking out into the park - over a thousand in fact. Some of you who have these backdoors no doubt look onto a very treasured setting. Your garden would open up and embrace the native vegetation of the park, an overlapping nexus of sensitive domestic landscape connecting with the naturalness of the adjacent bush. There are, however, other folk whose properties have yet to provide this best of views, and the ensuing rewards.

The very nature of Warrandyte State Park, its separate blocks of bushland, and the linear nature of the Yarra corridor, creates a number of management difficulties. These blocks all bounded by a plethora of streets also creates access difficulties for park staff. There are no doubt, some locations that few park staff have been.

And what have we found in these locations?.....carports, BBQ’s, chicken coops, wood sheds, driveways, rubbish piles, lawn clippings, vegetable gardens, orchard planting’s, trampolines, cubbies, patios, and sadly native plant removal, and of course many weeds. The weed problem is an equal problem for the park

and the private property owner - an issue that we are happy to work with our neighbours on together. You may have heard of the ‘Good Neighbour’ initiative. This is a program where agency funds are made available for specific works (usually pest plant / pest animal) for works on adjacent private and government (Crown) land. Past works have been dotted in various locations around the park. The narrow park strip between Everard Dive and the river has seen some particular good works in the last two years. Have a look next time your walking through. Neighbours here participated by agreed removal of known problem plants from their estates to be replaced by plants from the FOWSP nursery. Wonderful!

The real difficulty of this issue is separating out the land uses without separating the goodwill from our neighbours. What one neighbour may see as a good use of public land may not be exactly what that land was originally set aside for. Notions of ownership can get confused. Neighbours look out their backyard at pieces of land every day that we may not set foot on from one year to the next. It’s not that we don’t care for these sections of the Park, it’s a matter of the priorities of our environmental focus. Then, when we find problems, the resources that are absorbed in dealing with minor encroachment issues can sometimes be considerable.

Some of you may also remember the Park Care program from a few years back. At that stage we had a full-time staff member working with community on enhancing a co-operative effort between park and private landowners. A  
**Continued on next page**

### Looking out our backdoor contd.

worthwhile program but sadly not continued. And whilst Warrandyte State Park is lucky in having better resourcing than many parks, resourcing will still never be enough to tackle all the problems we have. The real answer is with each of you, each park neighbour thinking how 'my/our property' can best blend with the park. And if it needs a co-operative effort then we, the Warrandyte State Park staff will do the best we can in working with you.

Finally. A thought struck me driving down Mont Albert Rd Camberwell a few weeks back -

A well to do area with some impressive houses. But something was amiss. No eucalypts. I could see nary one. No native vegetation. And so no (or few) native birds. But ah! Warrandyte has all that - a place that really is something special. No offence to the Camberwellians but Warrandyte has a naturalness that is rare in a city environment. We can retain its specialness through a conscious effort of good management in our own backyards.

Shut that back door now, go inside and have a cup of tea.

## Financial Incentives for Landowners

Manningham City Council has adopted a new incentive program of environmental initiatives on private property. The new program expands on the existing Local Environment Assistance Fund, but now also targets residents living in the urban areas of the municipality.

The program offers:

- One off grants on a sliding scale to be directed towards properties protecting remnant vegetation.
- An allocation of \$15,000 towards an Urban Streamfrontage Program
- An allocation of \$10,000 towards a Park Care Program
- An allocation of \$60,000 towards the Local Environment Assistance Fund
- An allocation of \$15,000 towards Pest Animal Control Program
- An allocation of \$15,000 towards Pest Plant Control Program

For more information contact Conservation Officer Donna Stoddart on 9840 9307

## Friends of Eltham Copper Butterfly

The Friends have received a Parks Victoria Centennial grant for the restoration of Eltham Copper Butterfly habitat at Pauline Toner Reserve.

Next meeting will be on September 10<sup>th</sup> at 10.00am at Pauline Toner Reserve for some weeding, rubbish collection and drainage works.

For more information on this Friends group ring Anna 9411 5158

## Did You See?

### Warning on toxic mushrooms

Victorians kept in the dark about poisonous mushrooms will be enlightened tomorrow by the acting Health Minister, Bronwyn Pike. Ms Pike will highlight the "killer variety" at the Prahran Market, after recent reports of people taken to hospital after consuming foul fungus. Ms Pike's office said recent rain provided ideal conditions for toxic mushrooms.

Source: *The Age* 12/6/00



Death Cap  
(*Amanita phalloides*)

# Interstate

## *In the Clear Kimberley Light*

By Pat Coupar

The sky was full of stars and my head full of words. I was searching for adjectives, superlatives to describe the day, which had been a highlight among a two week holiday of highlights in the Kimberley.

The day had been special, not so much for the scenic beauty of the gorge – rated by the books as being less spectacular than some – but for the experience of spending uncomplicated time in a pristine natural environment, undisturbed and without distraction.

We had arrived at the camp site beside the Barnett River the day before. It was a typical bush camp – a small cleared area at the end of a rough track with no facilities other than a circle of river stones for a fireplace. Next morning we rose at dawn with the dew still on the tent and the air distinctly chilly. By nine o'clock the temperature had risen to a comfortable mid-twenties.

With reasonably good guide book directions, we set off to find the Barnett River gorge. After crossing a couple of shallow tributaries we began to ascend the sandstone cliffs, picking up a trail marked by cairns. These piles of small artistically balanced rocks led us through tall spear grass, sharp spinifex, flowering grevilleas, wattles and the deciduous kurrajongs adorned with large rosy pink, sticky, trumpet-shaped flowers. The track emerged every now and then for tantalising glimpses of the river below. Eventually we descended, scrambling down to a broad sandy beach at the base of the gorge, beside a deep pool.

Perhaps not as geologically dramatic as some other gorges, the cliffs were nevertheless stunning in the clear Kimberley light. The gorge was sandstone. Layers upon layers, blocks upon

blocks, slices and slabs, jagged and smooth, in colours of rusty orange, salmon pink and ochre, streaked vertically with ash grey that contrasted sharply with the vivid blue of the sky.

The temperature had reached the high twenties. We spent the day exploring the rocks and waterfalls and swimming in the deep teal-coloured water. Sitting in silence we absorbed fine detail: multi-coloured butterflies, dragonflies, iridescent fish, the birds and, growing in the cracks between the sandstone rocks, a strange emerald green grass that exuded a curious sticky substance that smelled exotically, in the warm air, of coconut.

Nobody came. The whole day and no one else arrived. The place had an effect. Like a slow infusion of adrenaline that seeps into every cell of the body. The feeling was good. Indescribably good.

We had traveled half the length of the Gibb River Road, about 300 kilometres, to the heart of the Kimberley. This road is at the doorstep of some of the most remote regions of Australia. At times the rugged ranges reminded us of South Australia's Flinders Ranges and some of the gorges were not unlike the Northern Territory's Katherine gorge, but the feeling is pure Western Australian Kimberley.

It is the land of bottle trees (Boab's) and the domain of the four wheel drives – most gorges cannot be reached without one. Because of the unseasonably late cyclone in the region, much of the vegetation was still green and the creeks and waterfalls were carrying more than their usual amount of water for the time of year. Also, because of the cyclone we nearly didn't get to see the gorges at all. Little did we know - until a taxi driver informed us on our arrival at Broome airport - that the Gibb River Road and access roads to the gorges, had been closed to all vehicles until two days before.



## Worth Repeating

### Jump to it ... life's a treadmill as these roos do the locomotion

By James Woodford

**W**hy do kangaroos hop? A team of highly trained kangaroos is being put on treadmills to find the answer.

Zoology professor Terry Dawson and his students at the University of NSW have tested a variety of kangaroos, from two-metre reds to one of the tiniest macropods, the brushtailed bettong.

Their results are crucial to an understanding of how mammals - including humans - propel themselves through the environment and how muscles respond to strenuous exercise.

What Professor Dawson and his team have found is that the kangaroo family is defying all accepted laws of locomotion and that their movement is almost as efficient as that of animals that fly.

The only mammal more athletic than a kangaroo is a horse.

Humans are regarded as not particularly efficient in terms of energy cost at speed; in fact, on an energy versus speed graph humans are midway between rats and dogs.

The kangaroo family is the only group of large mammals that is known to have ever hopped.

When a kangaroo bounds it is able to recover up to 50 per cent of the energy it uses for one stride and use it for the next. This method is so efficient that a large kangaroo can travel, with five-metre bounds, for kilometres on end 45 kmh, faster than the world's best sprinters can muster over 10 metres.

It can take up to a month of daily practice before the captivity bred kangaroos get used to the treadmills, but once they are experts on the fitness circuit they are monitored for their oxygen consumption and the length and frequency of their stride.

A postgraduate student in the school of biological sciences, Ms Koa Webster, has trained six bettongs and gives them 15 minutes on the treadmill almost every day. "We have to get them used to moving and not going anywhere, Ms Webster said. "It's basically no different to one of those walking or running machines in a gym except on this one you can go a lot faster."

When other mammals increase their speed, they immediately begin to use up extra energy. But kangaroos continue to accelerate and their energy consumption plateaus, giving them a stamina that is matched only by horses.

On the treadmill a red kangaroo can hop up to 120 times a minute with its speed limited only by the treadmill's length.

Source: *The Age* 7/10/99



HE'S ONE OF THOSE CAPTIVITY BRED GUYS - DOESN'T GET AROUND MUCH!

# FOWSP THURSDAY PROGRAM

We meet for propagation and other nursery activities every Thursday morning at 10.00am at the Warrandyte State Park depot, Pound Bend Road, Warrandyte (Melway 23 C10), unless otherwise stated below. When there is no scheduled afternoon activity we often go on a spontaneously organised walk. **Propagation takes place from 10.00am to 12 midday followed by lunch. No prior experience necessary - there is always someone available to show you the ropes.**

*This activities list will be pinned on the noticeboard in the Folly.*

## **JULY 6TH NURSERY**

Propagation morning. 10.00 am onwards.

## **JULY 13TH NURSERY**

Propagation morning. 10.00 am onwards.

## **JULY 20TH NURSERY**

Propagation morning. 10.00 am onwards.

## **JULY 27TH NURSERY**

Propagation morning. 10.00 am onwards.

## **AUGUST 3RD NURSERY**

Propagation morning. 10.00 am onwards.

## **AUGUST 10TH NURSERY**

Propagation morning. 10.00 am onwards.

---

## **Green Wedge Seminar Series 2000**

### **Thursday 3rd August "Weed Ecology"**

Geoff Carr, director of Ecology Australia, has an extensive knowledge of Victorian flora and the processes that threaten our precious bushland. The seminar will focus on the ecology of weeds, their lifecycles, control and management.

### **Thursday 7th September "The Impact of Urbanisation on Remnant Vegetation"**

Nick Williams from the Australian Research Centre for Urban Ecology (part of the Botanic Gardens), will speak on changes in urban vegetation changes over a period of 10 years on landscape and community scales.

### **Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October "Fire Ecology"**

Diane Simmons, lecturer at Deakin University, is CFA captain for Christmas Hills. She will speak on the ecological benefits of controlled burning, when and how burning should occur and mosaic burning.

The seminars are held at Currawong Bush Park (conference room), Reynolds Rd, Doncaster East 3109.

Melways ref. 34 H6

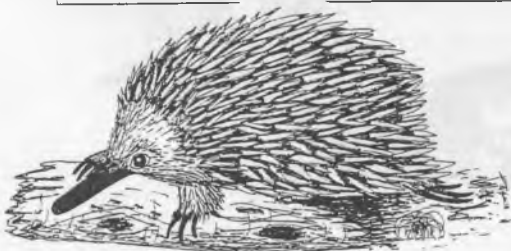
**Starting Time:** 7.30 pm

**Cost:** Free

Tea, coffee and biscuits provided.

**Sponsored by Manningham Council**

**The Deadline for the August Newsletter is August 2<sup>nd</sup>**



## FOWSP Committee 2000

Mike Coupar 9903 9567 Contact person  
Flora Anderson 9722 1776 Public Officer  
Pat Coupar 9844 1650 Editor  
Anthony Owen 9844 4867 Treasurer  
Cathy Willis 9844 1841  
Peter Curry 9844 0958 Secretary  
Lee Speedy 9437 0894 Membership Secretary  
Geoff Speedy 9437 0894  
Alastair Traill 9722 1518

### Wildlife Rescue

Julie Pryor 9722 1117

### Market

Betty Oke 9844 3763

Park Office 9844 2659

Nursery Manager 0408800026

FOWSP Committee Meetings for 2000 will be held at 7.30 pm on the second Tuesday of each month. Date for 2000 are as follows:

August 8th  
September 12th  
October 10th  
November 14th



## Community Training Program

### “ID of Native Plants – *Eucalyptus* and *Acacia*”

Saturday 5th August 10am-4pm at Education Resource Centre, Dandenong Ranges NP, Ferntree Gully (Mel 74H4)

A day with Leon Costermans who has had many years experience in the field and published many books. The session is intended to help participants recognise characteristics used to identify eucalypts and wattles. Includes a site visit.

### “Small but not Forgotten – Mosses and Liverworts

Thursday 10th August 10am-4pm at Currawong Bush Park, Reynolds Rd, Doncaster East (Mel 34H6)

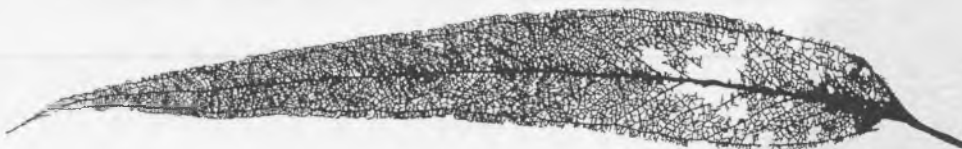
The session will look at the diversity of non-vascular plants and the role they play in the environment. There will be a slide presentation, field visit with the opportunity to look at different characteristics under the microscope.

### “Identifying Characteristics of the Environment”

Thursday 17th August 10am-4pm at Belgrave South Community House, Gilmore Court, Belgrave South (Mel 84G4)

This session aims to ‘get our eye in’ about particular features and natural processes occurring in our urban environment. The day will involve a walk through the bush with Darcy Duggan.

The 2000 Port Phillip Community Training Program is sponsored by Parks Victoria and co ordinated by Greening Australia Victoria. For more information on any of the above training days contact Kate Stothers on 9457 3024





## OLIMPIQS

To mark the millennium 'cross-over' year of 2000, Birthday Honours last month, the Olympics in September and the Melbourne Cup in November, I Spy will award an OLIMPIQS medallion to two FOWSP members each month. These members are 'long distance runners' and representative of many who voluntarily work to maintain and improve the natural resources of the Warrandyte State Park environment.

\*OLIMPIQ = Our Loyal Independent Members Pitching In Quietly.

### *Medallion Awards for July*

**Bill Roxburgh** for long time support and his more than regular sorting and sieving a wide range of collected seed. So essential for our plant propagation efforts.

**Cathy Willis** who for many years has been continually active at the nursery and consistently involved in key organisation activity.

### *Soup Semi-stanza*

Thursday lunch soup continues at the Folly. Margaret Woiwood's carrot and bacon soup was well enjoyed one week and the following week we all partook of Elizabeth Sevier's 'Evi's' Greek Soup.

### *Timely Tables*

The two new tables mentioned in the last issue are now ensconced one in the Folly, one outside.

### *Meristematic Matters*

Is it true that cuttings struck from lateral tips will produce lower more prostrate growth and those struck from vertical tips will produce taller, more upright growth of the same plant? Could someone send in a concise explanation if this is so?

### *Wow! Wowie!*

Which ranger has a shelf in his office with plastic and chocolate miniatures of native animals?

### *Auditing Aid*

Ranger, David Farrar was seen auditing first aid kits around the Park office, in the depot, in vehicles and the Folly. Another essential task carried out on a regular basis.

### *Just June*

The after-named group tended our information trailer at the June market: Lee and Geoff Speedy, Neal Tessier, Marjan and Daniel Kiewiet, Joan MacMahon, Marie Krause, Tim Ferguson, Owen Humphries and Bette Oke.

### *Herb Haven*

A native herb garden? Near the Folly?

### *Watching Water*

Seen reading the water gauge near the bridge of one of our local creeks was Debbie Metcalf (nee Parker). Debbie was recording flow rate; she now works for THEISS and is based at Woori Yallock (downstairs from the DCNR office). Debbie was responsible for some of the nesting boxes installed some years ago around the Folly etc.

### *Propagation Perusal*

Corinne Bothwell BSc (Biological Science, Hon's) is doing research on the Argentine Ant. She was at the depot observing how plants are propagated by FOWSP and the general regime of watering, propagating and potting mixture sources.

### *Prunus Prostate*

An African tree, *Prunus africana*, is approaching extinction, just as awareness of its potential to treat prostate conditions in older men spreads. .  
(Source: CSIRO, *Ecos*, April-June 2000).



## Botanical Meanings

*Acacia implexa* (Lightwood)

*Implexa*

Entangled, referring to the pods

## A Very Special Australian

The platypus is one of the most fascinating and unusual animals in the world. Unique to Australia, it is warm-blooded, furry and feeds its young with milk. It also lays clutches of one to three eggs with leathery shells, like those of lizards.

Male platypus have a pointed spur on the heel of each hind leg which can be used to inject venom from a gland in the thigh when they are threatened. The platypus has webbed front feet for swimming and sturdy claws to dig burrows in the banks of streams or rivers. No wonder that early

European settlers in Australia called the platypus a "water mole"!

The platypus is beautifully adapted to life in the water. Its fur is very thick and virtually waterproof. Its sleek body shape helps it swim very efficiently. Electro-receptors on the bill enable it to hunt underwater without using eyesight.

Despite its immense scientific importance, much remains to be discovered about the platypus, reflecting the difficulties involved in studying this predominantly aquatic and nocturnal species.

## Seeking a Clear View of Platypus

Platypus populations have declined or disappeared in many places - especially along waterways affected by urban development and agricultural activities. At present, little is known about the rate of this decline and what factors are the precise cause of this problem.

The Australian Platypus Conservancy is undertaking a wide range of surveys to find out more about platypus numbers and to develop practical management strategies to ensure the long-term survival of the platypus. Major monitoring programs include the Urban Platypus Survey in collaboration with Melbourne Water, a study in the Wimmera in connection with the *Rio Tinto Project Platypus* Landcare program and a survey of platypus on Kangaroo Island. In

addition, the Conservancy conducts many short-term specialist studies and surveys.

The work is carried out by experienced researchers, using well-tested methods that do not pose any risk to platypus. Such fieldwork takes a lot of time to plan and carry out and so only relatively few waterways can be sampled each year. Accordingly, reports of platypus sightings by members of the public are a vital way of building up a better picture of the distribution and status of this remarkable Australian.

**You can greatly assist efforts to learn more about platypus populations by reporting past and present sightings of the animals (including details of any dead platypus found) to the Platypus Watch monitoring program.**

## PLATYPUS SIGHTING REPORT



If you see a platypus, please report the following details to Platypus Watch:

Date and time of sighting(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Location - waterway: \_\_\_\_\_

suburb/locality: \_\_\_\_\_

Map ref or other site identification: \_\_\_\_\_

How long you observed the animal: \_\_\_\_\_

Any comments on the activities of the platypus observed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Please feel free to attach additional information if appropriate.

Please send your sightings to:

**Australian Platypus Conservancy**  
P.O. Box 84 Whittlesea VIC 3757  
Tel: (03) 9716 1626 Fax: (03) 9716 1664  
E-mail: [platypus@vicnet.net.au](mailto:platypus@vicnet.net.au)

Many thanks for your time in helping our research efforts.



## Hints on Spotting Platypus

Platypus have dark brown backs and silvery-fawn bellies. They are surprisingly small animals (40-60 centimetres in length) and are generally difficult to spot in the wild because of their aquatic and mainly nocturnal lifestyle. The best times to look for platypus are very early in the morning and around dusk. They are sometimes seen during the day, especially in summer when nights are short and many females are suckling young and hence feed for longer periods.

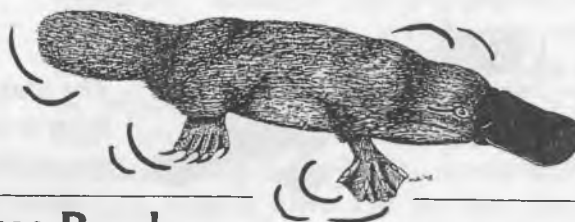
Platypus usually stay underwater for 1-3 minutes at a time. While underwater, they store small prey items in their cheek pouches. After rising to the surface, platypus are often seen floating in one place for a minute or so, chewing food with a side-to-side motion of the bill, before diving quietly again.

If startled, platypus will dive suddenly, making a loud single or double splash sound. Their dives

usually create a distinctive ripple pattern, sometimes with small bubbles in the centre as air escapes from their fur.

Platypus are most likely to be confused with Australian water-rats, which are nearly the same size and similar in colour. When viewed at a distance of 20 metres or more, it is virtually impossible to identify the two species in the water with certainty. The best distinguishing feature is provided by their tails. Platypus tails are broad and completely brown while water-rats have thin tails with a distinctive white tip. Also, platypus are rarely seen out of the water, whereas water-rats will often be seen running on the bank, especially while feeding.

Diving ducks and even swimming tortoises and large fish can also sometimes be mistaken for platypus but are usually readily distinguished on longer observation.



### Platypus Book

Wildlife Carer Julie Pryor has passed onto to FOWSP a book entitled 'Living with Platypus' by Geoff Williams and Melody Serena from the Australian Platypus Conservancy. The book is a practical guide to the conservation of this very special Australian.

The book is available for loan from the FOWSP library.

### Friends of the Island

This small, but active group have been busy removing rabbit guards and stakes from around the spring planting bounty. Some of the guards had to be torn off as the kangaroo apple and prickly moses plants had grown so tall.

Spring Planting Festival coming up in August.

For more information on this Friends group ring either Glenn Henke 9844 2239 or Gay Harris 9844 1448

### North Warrandyte Osborne Peninsula Landcare

This group has been very busy co ordinating a Green Corps Team who have been working in their area removing ivy, honeysuckle etc as well as making rabbit exclusion coupes and planting.

Next activities for the group are the regular nursery day on Sunday July 23<sup>rd</sup> at 2.00pm and planting days on August 1<sup>st</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>.

For more information on this Landcare group ring either Margaret Burke 9844 1060 or Ruth Rankin 9844 1959



Surface  
Mail  
only

Postage  
Paid

REGISTRATION BY AUSTRAL  
PP 346802 / 0005  
If undeliverable please return to  
Friends of Warrandyte State P  
P.O. Box 220  
Warrandyte, 3113



*Platypus (Ornithorhynchus anatinus)*

*The platypus is one of Warrandyte's two monotremes, the other is the echidna. These warm blooded animals suckle their young, but lay eggs like reptiles.*

*More information about the platypus can be found in this newsletter.*

## FOWSP Membership Form

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Tel. no. ....

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