

October 2000

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

Warrandyte's Wildflower Show

By Pat Coupar

Spring rain at last. And how well the bush has responded. We are enjoying one of the best wildflower displays in the State Park for many years.

Most of the wattles are now past their best, but their golden blooms have been replaced by a cacophony of colour. The pea family now dominates Warrandyte's bushland from the rich Purple Coral Pea and its pale mauve cousin the Common Hovea to butter-yellow blooms of Golden Tip - a rare plant of the area which should not be confused with that invasive, environmental weed from South Africa, Cape Broom.

During October the bush is brightened by thickets of orange and red parrots-peas, bush-peas, bitter-peas and flat-peas. And, from the same family comes Austral Indigo with its arching magenta flowers and fern-like smoky grey leaves.

Spring flowering daisies are represented by a range of plants: from the large shrubby Snowy Daisy-bush to several tiny, ephemeral annuals. A variety of eye-catching everlastings include the clustered, grey, button and sticky. Tall golden globes of Billy Buttons are one of the rarer species.

Then, of course there are the lilies and orchids, too many to mention. These floristic treasures are among the Park's most threatened wildflowers.

The rains have also caused the weeds to flourish. It is a particularly good year or bad year, (whichever way you like to look at it) for Angled Onion. Originally from the Mediterranean region, this introduced lily with the obnoxious

smell has taken up residence in many of Warrandyte's gullies and drainage channels as well as in riparian vegetation beside the river and creeks.

Another weeds having a good season is a grass called Annual Veldt-grass which also flourishes in alluvial soils and disturbed areas. As its name suggests this species is native to South Africa.

Quaking Grass (*Briza maxima*) with its distinctive shell-shaped flowers, has the unfortunate ability to invade grassy dry forest vegetation communities, such as occurs on Fourth Hill. It is this plant community which supports most of the wildflowers. However, if you ignore the Quaking Grass - or even better pull some out - then Fourth Hill, Timber Reserve, Professors Hill and The Common are the places to visit for a feast of Warrandyte's stunning wildflowers.



The Desert Park = Alice Springs

By Ray Clarke

After visiting the Desert Park, Sir Richard Attenborough's comment was "There is no museum or wildlife park in the world that could match it." Since his visit there have been extensions and much growth of vegetation.

This is where our 'Fowspian', Angelique Stefanatos is working. Through her love of animals and by dint of conscientiously facing up to hard work, she has, bucking strong opposition from within and outside the Park, achieved the status of Zoo Keeper with particular responsibility for reptiles.

Having heard much from Angie, and having seen her photos of the Park, my expectations were high, but were outstripped by realisation.

The 55 hectare site is a magnificent botanical garden of Australian trees shrubs and wildflowers. The towering, rugged West MacDonnell Range makes a spectacular backing for the Park. The animal enclosures and aviaries are spread through the bush setting, and are almost invisible until winding paths lead you to them. The birds, reptiles and marsupials are well displayed in natural settings with dioramas and explanatory notes and pictures.

A feature of the Park is the nocturnal house where, after first finding brightly-lit displays of diurnal snakes and lizards, you move into a dimly lit area where you peer through glass at bilby, quoll, echidna, possum and various small marsupials and desert rats going about their nightly business.



The Park is administered by the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission and is patently well funded. The staff of about sixty includes aborigines who do much of the guiding and lecturing.

The birds are a joy, housed in aviaries, some of them 'walk through' and are laid out with native vegetation which makes it hard to realise you are in an enclosed area.

Each morning and afternoon, there is a spectacular display of feeding diurnal birds of prey. Black kites fly down from the mountains and put on a breathtaking show of aeronautics as they plunge and soar to catch food thrown up by the keeper. They are joined by a black breasted buzzard which also produces a wonderful aerial performance before landing and cracking open an imitation emu's egg by picking up a stone with its beak and bashing it against the shell. After four hits, the egg cracked and the buzzard flew off with the concealed meat.

The eggs are made by the keepers in plaster moulds to closely resemble emu eggs in size, colour and texture. Then a Wedge-tail Eagle from the Park's own stock, flew down and pounced on meat dragged on a string by a keeper. I asked Angie whether the eagle and buzzard ever flew away. She replied "sometimes, but we have radar tracking attached to them."

Are you beginning to get the impression that I was impressed? Just let me say that it was worth the trip from Melbourne just to see the Park and to understand Angie's delight in her work.

And remember "*you will never never know if you never never go.*"

Powerful Owls on the Increase

There are now three confirmed pairs of Powerful Owls in Warrandyte State Park. These rare birds, listed as threatened under the Flora & Fauna Guarantee Act, now seem to enjoying Warrandyte State Park as their home.

Popular belief is that they chose Warrandyte due to the abundance of food sources, predominantly Ringtailed possums (a large part of the Powerful Owl's diet) and other small animals and birds. Park staff are taking measures to make sure the Powerful Owl families endure minimum disturbance.



Nesting sites are avoided and even annual fuel reduction burn areas have been changed to ensure the birds remain undisturbed. Their future at Warrandyte seems assured. Already there are plans to band the chicks. This will enable future scientific research into the movements of the species.

Source: Warrandyte State Park Newsletter September 2000

Middle Yarra Timelines Calendar

By Flora Anderson

At Currawong Bush Park, Templestowe, on Sunday 30th July, one of the last days of 'deep winter', the Mayors of Manningham and Nillumbik Councils launched a truly beautiful publication - the six-season 'Timelines calendar for the Middle Yarra'. By a remarkable coincidence, that same weekend the Australian newspaper published, on the Weather page, a news item entitled 'Six seasons for a better connection'.

The exact length of each season depends on a particular year's conditions, explained the spokesperson for the Fremantle Aboriginal Heritage Unit. When people are linked to the spirituality of the land and living in harmony with the natural world, they let plants, animals and birds tell them when one season is ending and merging into the next. Members of the Unit say everyone would benefit if they learned to understand and read the signals that mother earth sends out.

The names given by the indigenous population of the south-west of Western Australia to their seasons are Bunuru (February-March), Djeran (April-May), Makuru (June-July), Djilba (August-September), Kambarang (October-November) and Birak (December-January).

The names given in the Middle Yarra Timelines calendar are, in the same order as the aboriginal ones: late summer, early winter, deep winter, early spring, true spring and high summer.

Sunday 30th was Glen Jameson's day, the culmination of many years work, made even more meaningful by the presence of Ian Hunter who represented the spiritual owners of the land, the Wurundjeri, and welcomed us to Currawong.

Glen has been a key member of the 'Timelines' group project developed by the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria (FNCV), the Gould League and Yarra Valley Parklands to record and analyse

seasonality themes of the natural history of the Middle Yarra.

A database is being established to provide valuable information to land managers and environmental educators. The calendar has been produced from this data. The photographs used were contributed by photographers we know well - Helen Moss, Pat and Mike Coupar, and Marion King.

Glen has been, with a poetic flair, writing descriptions of what happens during each season, as 'Naturalist in Residence' for FNCV and these have been published in *The Victorian Naturalist* during 1996-97. These writings form the basis of the script for the calendar and are well worth reading carefully.

There is additional information about local flora, fauna, places to visit and Nillumbik's and Manningham's environment groups.

After a huge spread of Australian native food (billed as 'light refreshments') we were lead through the Park by both Glen and Ian.

It was a truly memorable occasion. Congratulations to all concerned.

The calendar is available from the front counter of the City of Manningham offices at 699 Doncaster Road, Doncaster, at the bargain price of \$5.50 (including GST).



Friends of the Island

During August the 'Friends' were fortunate to have the help of the Green Corps, a team of hardworking young people with a team leader, who erected a rabbit fence across the point and did a considerable amount of spraying of woody weeds, meticulous handweeding of the Bridal Creeper and an ambitious ivy eradication.

Our plans to follow up on the ivy were thwarted at the September meeting by the river being up a metre after all the Spring rain. One of our rangers cancelled the afternoon's activities as access to the "Island" was too dangerous without scuba gear.

There will be no Spring planting on the "Island" this year however, we're hoping Manningham Council will go ahead with one in 2001 to revegetate the banks which are sorely in need of some attention.

Book Reviews

by Lee Speedy

Not so much book reviews as book recommendations! Which books DO Fowspians read for pleasure?

I thought that this month I'd list a few books I have truly enjoyed in recent times, in the hope that you might relish them too.

Noting that outdoor survival is very much on everyone's minds this month, I recommend Jon Krakauer's latest offering '**Into the Wild**'. This resonating yet thin book, tells the story of Chris McCandless and his struggle to survive Alaskan weather on minimal provisions. Krakauer has recreated Chris' travels both in mind and body, attempting to discover the reasons for his difficult and self-imposed journey. I appreciated each chapter opening with quotations from other authors, usually major influences on Chris' life and his thinking, such as the works of Thoreau, London and Tolstoy. *Into the Wild* is a satisfying read, successfully blending the author's own wilderness experiences with Chris' troubled pilgrimage. Read the book before the inevitable US movie!

Chris McCandless might just have benefitted from an Alaskan version of Keith & Irene Smith's '**Grow your own Bushfoods**' Comprehensive and clear advice is given to make jams and teas, grow bush tomatoes and greens from Aussie plants. The Smith's detail historical information on some plants such as Warrigal or Botany Bay greens, whilst giving a few recipes or salad suggestions. I am

currently using bush plants I naturally have (running postman leaves make a sweet tea) only carefully adding plants to my vege patch that won't become pests. Dare I say I've started growing bush tucker very gingerly?? With this book you can combine your interests: native plants, food and bush survival!

Lastly, I endorse any book by Jackie French! To help with your herb garden, **Jackie French's 'Household Herb'** book lists most herbs alphabetically and has an excellent layout with small icons to guide you through each herb's features - needs full sun, medicinal, cosmetic, prone to weediness etc. I also recommend Jackie's sense of humour for your darker days. I've never made any of her homegrown lotions and potions, but it's a laugh reading about them! '**The Earth Gardener's Companion**' and '**Seasons of Content**' are both excellent for month-by-month advice on organic gardening. The latter is really an idealised year of Jackie's life in the Araluen Valley, interspersed with practical recipes. I found *Seasons of Content* particularly delightful, but then I love reading about wombats, country folk and Jackie's joyful appreciation of each season's assured changes.

Into The Wild ~ Jon Krakauer (Pan Books \$16.95)

Grow your own Bushfoods ~ Keith & Irene Smith (New Holland Publishers \$21.95)

Jackie French's Household Herb Book \$10.95

The Earth Gardener's Companion \$14.95 (reprinted)

Seasons of Content (Angus & Robertson \$19.95)

* NB : These last four books are all available from Earth Garden magazine's Good Life Book Club (03) 5424 1814.

Her bark is worse than her chirp

London. Baldrick the albino magpie, who was mauled by a cat as a baby bird, is getting her revenge on cats now after learning how to bark. The bird can mimic a dog so well that cats will not go anywhere near her.

Emma Kemp, 21, found Baldrick when she was a week old chick and had been almost mauled to death by a cat. After a few months the lively albino mimicked anything that moved. Emma said: "I tried to teach Baldrick some words as she was obviously a good mimic. But instead of copying me, the main thing she learned was how to bark from our dog Luke the lurcher," Emma said.

Source: *The Age* 22/8/00



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.

OCTOBER 12TH Morning Activity

Orchid Walk & Briza Pull at Timber Reserve
Either meet at the nursery at 9.30am or at the end of Harding Rd (Melway ref. 35H2) at 10.00 am.

OCTOBER 19TH NURSERY

Propagation morning. 10.00 am onwards.

OCTOBER 26TH Morning Activity

Removal of old guards and replanting
Meet at the nursery at 10.00am

NOVEMBER 2ND NURSERY

Propagation morning. 10.00 am onwards.

NOVEMBER 9TH NURSERY

Propagation morning. 10.00 am onwards.

NOVEMBER 16TH NURSERY

Propagation morning. 10.00 am onwards.

Green Wedge Seminar Series 2000

Thursday 2nd November "Raptors"

Richard Naisbit is the Keeper in Charge of Reptiles and Raptors at Healseville Sanctuary. Richard will give an insight into the birds of prey, their population, distribution and behaviour in urban environments. He will also discuss techniques used to rehabilitate birds of prey.

Thursday 7th December "Wild Grasses in Manningham"

Graeme Lorimer (PhD) conducts courses on ecology and management of wild grasses in Victoria. This seminar will focus on the local native grasses of Manningham and introduced species of Manningham, including those species which have become serious weeds.

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

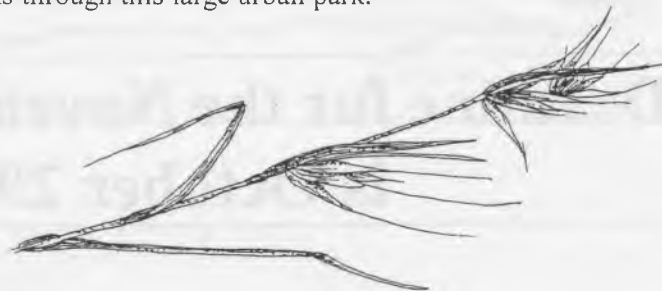
Mullum Mullum Festival

(Festival programs available from the Friends folly)

Tikalara Music Day

Sunday 22nd October at 1.pm at Tikalara Park, Websters Rd, Templestowe (Mel 34 C2)

Enjoy a relaxing outdoor concert on the banks of the Yarra River. Following the diverse music performances there will be numerous expert guided walks through this large urban park.



FOWSP Committee 2000

Mike Coupar	9903 9567	Contact person		
Flora Anderson	9722 1776	Public Officer	<u>Wildlife Rescue</u>	
Pat Coupar	9844 1650	Editor	Julie Pryor	9722 1117
Anthony Owen	9844 4867	Treasurer		
Cathy Willis	9844 1841		<u>Market</u>	
Peter Curry	9844 0958	Secretary	Marie Krause	9712 0498
Lee Speedy	9437 0894	Membership Secretary	<u>Park Office</u>	9844 2659
Geoff Speedy	9437 0894		<u>Nursery Manager</u>	0408800026
Alastair Traill	9722 1518			
Karen Reynolds	9712 0797			

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:

November 14th

Nillumbik Shire Council Community Training Program

“Indigenous and Exotic Grass identification”

Sunday 19th November 10am-12pm at Panton Hill Living & Learning Centre, Bishops Road
(Mel 263 K9)

This session will be run by Steph Smith. Learn from an expert to spot the difference between the weeds and the natives.

For more information contact Jon Miller on 9433 3192

Port Phillip Community Training Program

ID of Native Plants – Wildflowers

Date: Saturday 21st October 10am-4pm at Warrandyte Community Centre, 168 Yarra St, Warrandyte (Mel 23 F11) **Cost** \$15

A hands on session intended for beginners and those with some experience aimed at helping participants recognise characteristics used to identify native wildflowers.

Presenter: James Todd, DNRE

Invertebrates – 99% of the Animal Kingdom

Date: Tuesday 31st October 10am-4pm at Currawong Bush Park, Reynolds Rd, Doncaster East (Mel 34 H6) **Cost** \$15

This session will focus on terrestrial invertebrates, the niches they occupy and the ecological processes they perform.

Presenter: Alan Yen, Museum of Victoria

For more information contact Kate Stothers on 9457 3024

**The Deadline for the November Newsletter
is October 29th**

My favourite Road

The Highway to Nowhere

By Pat Coupar

The McDonald Highway in Western Victoria is certainly not your typical highway. It is narrow, sandy, sometimes boggy, and runs for its entire length (approximately forty kilometres) within the boundaries of a National Park – the Little Desert National Park to be precise.

The term ‘desert’ is a total misnomer, for this Park supports a range of vegetation communities and its rainfall, at around 450mm per year, puts it well out of the ‘arid’ category. The 132,000 hectare Little Desert is a huge Park that extends right to the South Australian border. Divided into three sections by two sealed roads running north-south, the gunbarrel-straight McDonald Highway bisects the central block from east to west and passes through one of the most botanically rich areas of the State. It is a road, or rather a track, to be driven slowly with the windows down, stopping frequently to explore the heathland and wander amongst multi-trunked mallee trees.

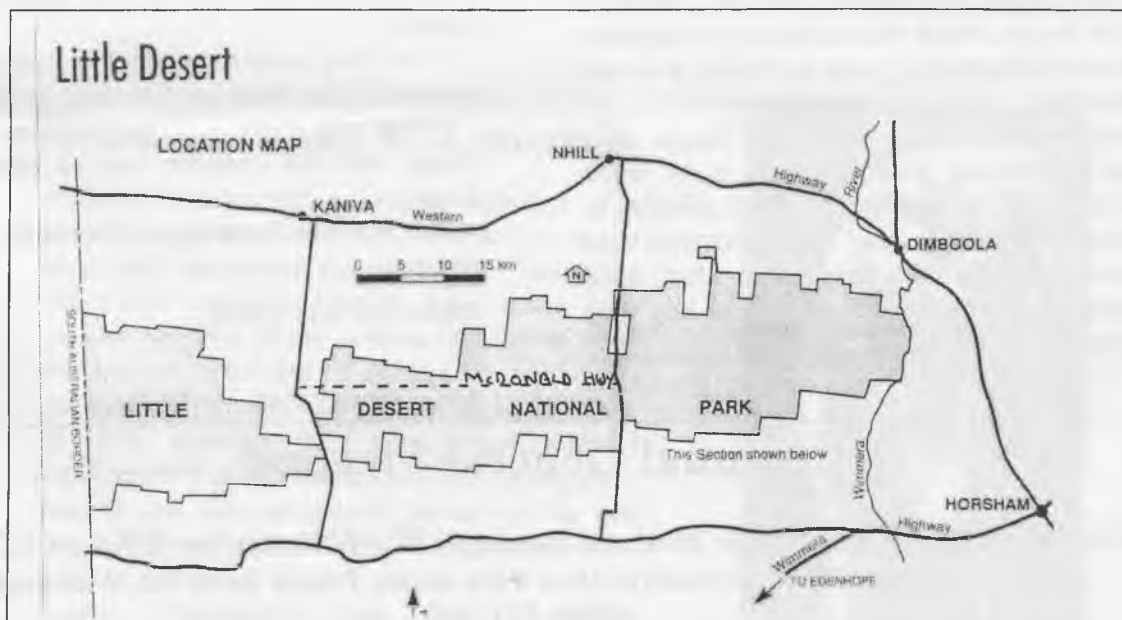
A trip down the ‘highway’ in spring is the ultimate indulgence for a ‘planto’ like me – the wildflowers are spectacular. Sands of marine origin, known as Lowan Sands, support a veritable feast of banksias, tea-trees, heaths, myrtles, mint-bushes, broom-bushes, lilies and of course orchids. A Victorian flower show to which entry is free.



The McDonald Highway is fun to drive (best done in a four wheel drive) with bouncy sand ruts and the occasional deeper patches that require a little more concentration. Depending on the amount of rain, there are boggy bits which can be driven around or if you like a challenge, driven through. It is the kind of four wheel driving I like best, not ‘hard core’, but slow and gentle with minimal impact – seasonal track closures apply to avoid damage to the environment.

If you haven’t got a 4WD it doesn’t matter. It can be just as rewarding taking a walk down the track from either end where it joins the sealed roads. The scenery is all there – the sandstone ridges and plains as far as the eye can see. The flowers, the birds, panoramic skies and a highway that leads to nowhere.

Editor’s Note: Inspired by Lee Speedy’s article on the ‘Great Alpine Road’, I would like to invite members to contribute to this new series and tell us about their favourite road.



SPRING

On June 21st I had the opportunity to participate in the celebration of the winter solstice, a tradition of the Antarctic which farewells winter and welcomes summer. From now on, we can all enjoy a little more light in our day (if only for a few extra seconds!). Soon, the early morning dew and frost will make way for what some consider the best season of the year- Spring.

Spring is a very busy and productive season. Thousands of trees, shrubs and groundcover species will be planted around Victoria by community conservation groups, private landholders, local shires, government and non-government organisations, authorities and schools. Spring is also the best time to see our grasslands come alive with



orchids, peas, daisies, lilies and grasses. Literally millions of flowers will emerge across the State in order to pollinate and set seed to ensure the survival of the species.

Unfortunately, this also applies to environmental weeds (environmental weeds are plants that invade and adversely affect the survival of native ecosystems of indigenous flora and fauna). Here are some things to consider:

- Can you identify the environmental weeds on your property?
- Do you have an environmental weed strategy? (see Land for Wildlife Note 939)
- Do you know your responsibilities in relation to weed control?

If you answered "no" to any of the above and would like to know more, please feel free to call Donna on 9296 4624.

Remember- Spring is a great time to learn more about our native plants and animals, especially the ones that make your backyard their home.

Source: Land for Wildlife supplement vol. 4, no. 6

Killer fungus hits frogs

A deadly frog fungus could threaten a community of rare amphibians in Croydon's Warriem Reserve.

The Victorian smooth froglet and southern toadlet are susceptible to the amphibian disease chytrid fungus, according to frog experts.

The species have been almost wiped out in Melbourne, with Croydon one of their last remaining outposts. Melbourne Amphibian Research Centre founder Gerry Marantelli said tadpoles from any frog species could be a carrier of the killer fungus, which was found only in tadpoles' mouths and did not affect them until they grew into the frog stage.

"Once metamorphosis occurs the fungus takes hold of the young frog and kills it by either releasing toxins or preventing it from drinking or breathing through the skin," Mr. Marantelli said. "Meanwhile, the tadpoles carry spores which infect the water in the creeks and ponds and any frogs living there."

Mr. Marantelli said people were inadvertently helping to spread frog diseases. "People genuinely think they are doing the right thing by putting little lost frogs into the local creek, or bringing tadpoles home to their backyard ponds to help build up native frog populations."

Healesville Sanctuary education officer Craig Cleeland, who identified the smooth froglet and southern toadlet in Croydon, agreed the dwindling local populations were at risk from the fungus spores.

"Any frog population which is isolated and in low numbers, like those in Croydon, is susceptible," Cleeland said. Moving frogs or tadpoles around was illegal, and the quickest way to spread chytrid fungus.

Mr. Cleeland said signs of the fungus should be reported.

Source: The Mail 12/9/00

Annual General Meeting

**The FOWSP AGM will be held on Sunday 19th of November 2000 at 5.30pm
At the 'Friends Folly'. Warrandyte State Park depot, Pound Bend Rd, Warrandyte
(Mel. 23 C10)**

**The meeting will be followed by a BBQ – bring your own food and drink.
This is an opportunity for all members to have their say. Nominations for committee members will be welcome.**

Leafhopper + Bridal Creeper = Lethal Cropper?

Last April, a small insect, the Leafhopper was released in Warrandyte State Park to attack one of Warrandyte's most prolific weeds, Bridal Creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*).

Biological control of pests is not new to Warrandyte State Park. The successful release of the Calici virus has had great success in the eradication of the area's rabbits.

Bridal Creeper, *Asparagus asparagoides* is native to South Africa. It was introduced into Australia during the 1870's as an ornamental garden plant and was popular for use in bridal bouquets, giving rise to its common name. It is now found in all southern states of Australia in a wide range of habitats.



Bridal Creeper is a highly invasive environmental weed and unlike most environmental weeds can establish in undisturbed native vegetation. The climbing stems of bridal creeper form a dense canopy which smothers other vegetation, and the masses of

underground roots can extend to form a thick, dense mat which destroys understorey plants.

Effective treatment of bridal creeper with herbicides or manual removal is expensive and labor intensive. These control methods are not feasible in many areas of Victoria because of the size and inaccessibility of infestations. Biological control is viewed as the preferred management option for bridal creeper infestations of this type. The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service and Environment Australia have approved the release of the Leafhopper as the first biological control agent for bridal creeper.

Bridal Creeper Leafhoppers feed and lay eggs on the under side of bridal creeper leaves. Nymphs tend to remain on the same leaf from egg to adulthood unless they are disturbed or their food is depleted. Adults live for 6 to 8 weeks and the females lay an average of 180 eggs in their lifetime. Eggs are laid just under the surface of mature leaves and hatch after 2 weeks. The nymphs require another 2 weeks to reach adulthood.

This short life cycle enables the bridal creeper Leafhopper to have several generations per year. They breed more quickly at higher temperatures. In areas where bridal creeper grows all year round, either in summer rainfall areas or near watercourses, the Leafhopper will remain on the host and continue to breed.

Results of the Leafhoppers success should be known next spring.

Further information on the Leafhopper can be obtained from the Department of Natural Resources & Environment's web site, www.nre.vic.gov.au

Source: *Warrandyte State Park Newsletter September 2000*

Have you seen this animal?

Amid all the hubbub of recent sightings of a panther in parts of the state, Warrandyte too is abuzz with numerous sightings of a "Tasmanian Tiger-like" creature. Reports have come from various sections of the community, however no one has yet been able to capture the mysterious creature on film. The last Thylacine captured was in 1936, however there were unsubstantiated sightings in Western Australia in the mid-eighties. Should you see an animal similar to the one pictured above, please call Glen Jameson on 9844 2659.

Source: *Warrandyte State Park Newsletter September 2000*





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Imperial White Butterfly (*Delias harpalyce*)

A brightly coloured butterfly with splashes of red and yellow on the underside of its white and black wings.

Look out for the Imperial White butterfly fluttering around clumps of mistletoe, its caterpillars feed exclusively on the dangling leaves of this parasitic plant.

FOWSP Membership Form

Name

Address

.....

Tel. no.

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