

November 2000

# Friends of Warrandyte State Park



# Newsletter

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

## Weekday Workers Rewards

By Pat Coupar

Thursday mornings have never been busier. Not so long ago numbers had dwindled to a handful of 'old' faithfuls, both at the propagation mornings and the monthly Sunday family days. We searched desperately for ways to attract more people and, although sadly the Sunday activities have been dropped due to poor attendance, the Thursday group has positively boomed.

As well as the regular propagation work of sowing seeds, striking cuttings, pricking out, potting on, and dividing roots, in recent weeks the group has been weeding and planting in various areas of the Park.

There have been two Briza (Quaking Grass) weeding mornings, one at Fourth Hill and the other inside a fenced section at Timber Reserve. On both occasions a wildflower walk followed and something special was discovered.

It is a great bonus to have a nursery manager (NM) who is also an orchid guru. Not only does it mean that some species of orchid are now being propagated at the Park nursery with, at certain times, tubers being available to the workers, but rare finds are being made in the Park.

In recent weeks the Thursday group have seen a healthy flowering population of Brown Beaks orchid and new locations for the Salmon Sun-orchid, Wallflower Orchid and the Dwarf Greenhood. Probably the most exciting discovery was a small group of the rare and threatened Mayfly Orchid at Timber Reserve.

The Thursday workers have been taught well and can now work independently, while the NM takes care of the ever increasing stream of

members and non-members who have discovered that the nursery is a great place to obtain indigenous plants for their garden.

A regular segment on what is available each month in the Warrandyte Diary's 'Smokey Joe' has generated much interest in the local plants and resulted in several new members signing up.

The demand is such that we have had to restrict visits to the nursery for plants to Thursday mornings between 10.00am and 12md and the first Sunday of the month between 3.00pm and 4.00pm (see ad. this newsletter).

The success of the Thursday group is due in part to the relaxed, yet industrious atmosphere created by the nursery manager. The work gets done, but there is always time for a chat and a cup of coffee.

Newcomers are made most welcome and need have no prior knowledge or experience of propagation techniques. So if you have never been down to the nursery on a Thursday morning and find you have a spare hour or two, come and

see what it's all about. Rewards are plentiful – perhaps a fern to take home for your garden or one of Warrandyte's beautiful native daisies in full bloom.

Congratulations Thursday workers you have earned your rewards.



# Frog Workshop

Report by Pat Coupar

Last month Ranger David 'Frankie' Farrar arranged for a small group of Fowspians and rangers to attend a special workshop on frogs given by renowned frog expert Gerry Marantelli at the Amphibian Research Centre (ARC).

The ARC is a non-profit organisation concerned with the welfare and conservation of frogs. At the centre they run breeding programs for rare and threatened species such as the Corroboree Frog, are involved in education, and carry out research into diseases like the chytrid fungus that is thought to be involved in the decline of some frog species. As well, the ARC acts as a 'lost frogs home' taking in what they refer to as 'banana box' frogs.

The focus of this workshop was on the identification of frogs that occur in the Melbourne region and more specifically Warrandyte. Gerry illustrated his talk with good quality slides. He explained how to identify frogs using a method that short-cuts the traditional keys. The details of which are given below.

Gerry mentioned the daily and seasonal pattern of frog and tadpole behavior; for example frogs occupy different habitats at different times of the year.

Following the slides we gathered around a table to put into practice what we had just learnt. A selection of frogs and tadpoles, each in a separate container, were produced and using the short-cut keys we had to see how many of them we could identify. Although it seemed simple when Gerry had explained the techniques using photographs, actually seeing the relevant features when the object in question was hopping (or swimming as in the case of the tadpoles) around inside its container was not always easy. However, with some consultation between fellow Fowspians I did manage to identify most of the species correctly.

The group was then treated to a tour of the ARC which basically consists of a couple of large sheds in a back yard full of frog paraphernalia, like old baths and glass tanks which appeared to be fighting a losing battle against a flourishing crop of waist-high weeds. The set up, however, was impressive – with numerous tanks containing eggs, tadpoles and the frogs themselves. Having seen the devastating effects of disease, Gerry is fanatical about hygiene. Frogs are only handled by himself or his staff wearing thin surgical gloves and we were

under strict instruction not to touch or even lean against any of the tanks.

We were shown several species of frogs including the rare Corroboree Frog safely ensconced in plastic snap lock bags. Then we were taken next door to a smaller shed, which accommodated tropical and semi-tropical species in a warm and humid atmosphere. Here there were tanks full of young Green Tree Frogs bred from individuals that had hitched a ride south in fruit boxes – most of these were destined to become pets.

Finally there was Glen, a full sized Green Tree Frog who was an obvious favourite with the staff. And it was not hard to see why. This Kermet-like creature with his permanent broad grin and huge suction pads on the end of his toes epitomises the appeal of these gentle, threatened and unique amphibians.

The following species of frogs may occur in Warrandyte (not all have been confirmed). These key characters are only useful for identification of Victorian frogs.

- **Pupil Shape:**

Cross – Peron's Tree Frog (*Litoria peronii*)

Vertical – Common Spadefoot Toad (*Neobatrachus sudelli*). Additional features include nuptial pads on the thumbs of males.

Horizontal – all other Warrandyte species.

- **Walking Frogs** (i.e. they do not jump) **with smooth-skinned patterned belly**

Areas of red or orange at either end of the contrasting patches on the belly - Southern Toadlet (*Pseudophyrne semimarmorata*)

No red or orange on belly and less colourful contrasting patches - Bibron's Toadlet (*Pseudophyrne bibroni*)

- **White lip**

Unbroken darker rectangular back patch to the line between the eyes – Ewing's Tree Frog (*Litoria ewingi*)  
Darker rectangular back patch to the line between the eyes, broken down the centre - Whistling Tree Frog (*Litoria verreauxi*)

Black pencil line from nostril to eye - Growling Grass Frog (*Litoria raniformis*). Additional information: large, green, warty skin and active during the day.

- **Raised gland along lip**

Spots – Spotted Marsh Frog (*Limnodynastes tasmaniensis*)

Stripes – Striped Marsh Frog (*Limnodynastes peroni*)

Tibial Gland – Banjo (Pobblebonk) Frog (*Limnodynastes dumerilii*)

- **Granular Belly**

Large black and white patches- Common Froglet (*Ranidella signifera* syn. *Crinia signifera*)

- **Smooth Belly**

Black and pink patches on inside of legs - Victorian Smooth Froglet (*Geocrinia victoriana*)



# Searching for Lost Nancy

By J.R

ts not often you get a chance to combine a passion for native plants, a magnificent Spring day and an expertly guided tour of one of Melbourne's most significant National Parks.

The guide: Cam Beardsell

The guests: Cathy and Josh

The place: Kinglake National Park

The motivation: to search for a 'different' Early Nancy (*Wurmbea* species) seen some ten years ago by Cam while on a fauna survey of the area.

We headed into the Park from St. Andrews/Kinglake Rd. and after about three kilometres turned off the track towards our destination - a remote heathy gully. It stretched before us, covered in plants we hadn't encountered before. Broad Gully, a damp (or clay) heathland community rests at the base of Mt. Beggary in the Yow Yow Range. From the ridge line there are magnificent views across Steeles Creek to the east and towards Yan Yean to the west.

Our guide pointed out some familiar plants that we could recognize from Warrandyte State Park, and gave us a brief history of his association with this particular section of Kinglake NP, including butterfly and mammal surveys. We were lucky enough to see a beautiful newly emerged Wood White Butterfly, one of 30 species that breed in the area, but, not suprisingly, did not see either of the two species of Dunnart found there.

We began our search for lost Nancy in the part of the heathland where run-off gathers into soaks creating the ideal habitat for our elusive prey. Although Nancy remained incognito, other gems of the soaks were found. Pygmy Club Moss, Shiny Buttons and Grey Beard-grass appeared in gaps between Wiry Spear-grass, the magnificent Swamp Bush Pea rose above. Blue Squill carpeted the area.

It was warm and humid so the chance of seeing sun orchids open was good, but so was the possibility of encountering a copperhead or two. Luckily for us it was the Twisted Sun-orchid and Rabbit's Ears (not previously known in the area) we came across.

We searched in vain for lost Nancy, but were delighted with our other discoveries. As our guide described how years before he had been startled by a Barking Owl suddenly appearing from the cover of a Hairpin Banksia, we flushed an owl from probably the same tree. We saw Brown Quail fly off ahead of us, and heard numerous other birds in the stunted mallee-like Broad-leaf Peppermints. The relative isolation of Broad Gully was accentuated by the 'foreignness' of the landscape, which held us in awe. While being so close to civilization we felt we could have been very very far away.

As the sun began to sink it was time to start the long hike to the car. As we reluctantly jumped Broad Gully Creek and began the steep uphill climb, the vegetation community started to become more familiar again, though the carpets of Rosy Baeckea and brilliant blue dots Blue Dampiera are a very different ground storey.

Lost Nancy remains alone and undiscovered for now. We hope when next we visit she will grace us with her presence.

But we had a s...t load of fun looking for her!



## Annual Koala Count

**Date:** Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> November 10.00am to 12md

**Place:** Meet at the 'Folly', Warrandyte State Park depot, Pound Bend Rd, Warrandyte

**Koala counts will take place in several reserves throughout the Park.**

**For more information ring David 'Frankie' Farrar on 9844 2659**

## Port Phillip & Westernport Regional Weed Action Plan - Draft

*From a letter to Executive Officer Port Phillip & Westernport CALP Board written by Flora Anderson on behalf of FOWSP*

We find the document disappointing given the excellence of the Report on Weeds in Victoria which was published in May 1998 following the Inquiry into Pest Plants in Victoria July 1996. The Report offered 22 recommendations, which, in our opinion, were all worthy of immediate implementation.

We offer the following comments: This draft action plan offers few useful recommendations and even the useful one (p.13, No 21) would not be implemented until 2003. Local shire councils should have been included as partners in a "Code of Practice" for prevention of weed spread. It displays no authorship. It reduces the list of environmental weeds to a minimum of the list in the 'Report on Weeds'.

Recommendations such as the following examples conjure up a picture of already overtaxed volunteers with a whip being wielded over them.

- Ensure that community resources are used efficiently.
- Ensure the desired community outcomes are being achieved.
- Modify actions to achieve improved performance.
- Re control of weeds on private land because

'this will not attract significant government funding'... local communities may tackle these weed species as part of an integrated local action plan.

It seems that the actual 'hands on' action is to be done by community groups. As a Friends Group our main interest in this document is in weeds which pose a threat to conservation values of State and National Parks. We found no indication that the level of core funding available for the management of land within the Parks system will be sufficient to ensure that State conservation objectives for management of these lands might be met.

This funding should of course cover the cost of adequate staffing levels. We believe that every State or National Park should have a staff member properly trained to be responsible for weed action within the Park. This would ensure that 'rapid response' to new weeds is effective.

We are pleased to see that the Government will meet the costs of research, but we wonder what is meant by the proviso "where these activities are important components of sustainable resource management." It is very important for example that funding for research at the Keith Turnbull Research Institute is maintained at an adequate level.

It is now four years since the Pest Plant Inquiry. Surely the very least we could have expected was that by now all managers of public land in Victoria should have developed and be implementing Weed Management Plans for land under their management.

What are we doing? We are asked to comment yet again on another weed strategy.

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## Weather Update

From the Bureau of Meteorology

September rains signal wet start to spring.

September 2000 was wetter than average across most of Victoria, according to preliminary Bureau of Meteorology figures. All districts received more than their usual rainfall, with some districts (Lower North-East, Upper North-East, Western Plains and West Coast) receiving about one-and-a-half times their average.

Temperatures were higher than usual, with many places averaging 1 to 2 degrees Celsius above normal at night, and between half and one degree above normal during the day. The state's lowest minimum temperature for the month was -5.2 degrees at Mt Hotham on the 7th. Away from

the alps, the month's lowest minimum was -2.0 degrees at Bendigo on the 6th. Victoria's highest maximum was 29.9 degrees at Mildura on the 25th.

Interstate, a swathe of unusually warm conditions stretched from the centre to the east coast during the last week of the month, with many places, including Sydney, recording temperatures well into the 30s.

In Melbourne, September temperatures were slightly above normal, overnight readings averaging 9.9 degrees (normal 8.7), while daytime maxima averaged 18.3 degrees (normal 17.2). 82 mm of rain fell during the month (normal 53mm). The month's lowest temperature was 6.7 degrees on the 17th, while the month's highest reading was 23.4 degrees on the 28th.

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# My Favourite Road

## The Back Beach Road

By Cathy Willis

**M**y favorite road probably has an official name, but I have never heard it used. It is generally called The Back Beach Road, and very closely follows the edge of Lake King for about two kilometres, from behind Metung village to the Buffalo Patch near Tambo Bluff, on the Gippsland Lakes. It doesn't really have a distinct start or finish point, and is dirt for all but one small section, rebuilt to accommodate a new housing estate in the eighties.

During summer and Easter school holidays the road can get way too busy for my liking, but most of the year it is sees little traffic. On early misty mornings the lake is satin and the swans and pelicans glide eerily. In early spring tiny fluffy cygnets follow their parents closely, though I've never seen pelican chicks so presume they breed elsewhere.

When the winter westerlies howl in you can watch the banksias bending away from the wind without leaving the cocoon of your car. The next day in the aftermath the sand is covered in seagrass that the locals collect to mulch their gardens. The sand washes away over time. Then the road takes a beating from huge semi-trailers dumping more – dredged from the artificial entrance to the lakes by the “April Hamer”.

As a child I was often taken to watch the sun set from the road. We would follow its path as it got bigger and redder, lowering itself over the lake, then disappearing (hear the plop?) behind Raymond Island, which I presumed was Tasmania for many years. Around that time I remember walking the

short distance along the road to the best sandcastle building spot. Some summers my ever patient mother would arm herself with pebbles to aim at the marauding crabs who could inflict a nasty nip on little toes. Sadly the Lakes seem to have lost their crabs, an indictment on our misuse and abuse of a delicate system.

As a young teenager the road gave me one of my first tastes of adulthood. I learnt to drive there, all flat, no handbrake starts, but a bit sandy. Some of the first times I was allowed to stay out late at night were to go floundering beside the road in the lake. Everyone knew all the flounder were across the other side of the lake, but it was a good excuse for a bonfire on the beach.

Nowadays I walk along the road most mornings I am at Metung. I absorb the feel of the glassy lake, soak in the colours of the daisies and lilies on the uphill slope and try to ignore the Bridal Creeper and Shell Grass. Then I store it somewhere in the back of my brain to help counteract stressful days back home. I can fully recommend it.



## Serrated Tussock Infestations

Nillumbik Shire Council has undertaken Serrated Tussock control along roadsides and in Council reserves over the last two years. The program will continue during November this year.

In order to ensure that the small infestation of this weedy grass in the shire is controlled it is essential that all outbreaks are targeted.

If anyone has sighted Serrated Tussock in the Nillumbik shire please contact Tanja Bird at the Environmental Work Section of the Council on 9433 3195 or by email to

[Tanja.Bird@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Tanja.Bird@nillumbik.vic.gov.au).

### Some aids to identification of Serrated Tussock Grass

Tussock up to 50cm high. Leaves are initially erect but droop as they mature. Leaves are distinctly serrated and often bleach as they mature. They are tightly rolled appearing cylindrical in cross-section. The ligule, at the junction of the leaf blade and leaf sheath, is about 1mm long, rounded, white and without hairs.

Flowers or seed head forms an open branched panicle up to 35cm long.



# Market Images

Photos by Joan MacMahon



## FOWSP AGM and Wine and Cheese Night

FOWSP Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> November at 5.30pm at the 'Friends' Folly, Warrandyte State Park depot, Pound Bend Rd, Warrandyte (Mel. 23 C10) Wine and cheese tasting will follow the meeting – bring along a bottle of your favourite wine and some of your favourite cheese. BYO BBQ meat and a plate to share.

This is an opportunity for all members to have their say, Nominations for committee members will be most welcome.



*Apologies for the absence of this column last month. My wife Margaret and I had returned from our 'Great (road) Trek' which included Bourke, Longreach, Karumba, Borroloola, Kununurra, Broome, Tom Price, Exmouth, Kalbarri, Mullewa, Perth, many places between, and rail to Adelaide. 86 days, 16,000 kilometres, June 22<sup>nd</sup> to September 15<sup>th</sup>.*

### **Orchid Ogle**

A great turn out to the 'Briza Pull and Orchid Walk' at Fourth Hill on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> September. Thanks go to David Van Bockel, Josh, Marie, Margaret W, Jan, Elizabeth, Betty, Kath, Judy, Elsa, Luke, Ray and two others.

### **Green Group**

Look out for the Green Corp who will be assisting us on Fridays with plant propagation.

### **Ranging Rangers**

Andy Nixon, Ranger-in-Charge, was one of a group of Australian rangers who attended an International Rangers Conference in Kruger National Park (South Africa). Others included Mark Stone, CEO of Parks Rangers and four other Victorian rangers, Matt Le Duc (previously WSP now at Uluru) was also there.

### **'Chair Change'**

And Brendan Sullivan (Plenty Gorge Park) took chair while Andy Nixon was away.

### **Kath's Comment**

Changes of persiflage banter, light raillery etc. have been made against this I Spy column. Any more comments?

### **Potting Area People**

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> October saw 'Friends' at the depot working including Ray, Elsa, Josh, Kath, Geoff L, Geoff S, Ben, Barbara, Marion, Don, Cath (erine), Val, (back from Europe), Pat and a visit by Frankie, also Corinne. All were busy, eleven boxes of plants pricked out, over forty boxes carried from the hot house to the shade house, whilst others resurfaced a hot house wall.

Also several callers needing plants.

### **Quiet Quit**

Ranger Brian Phefley has given up smoking. Three weeks so far.

### **Sugarloaf Sighting**

You may see John and Mick around the traps. They are both rangers from Sugarloaf Reservoir Park who are now working from the Warrandyte State Park depot.

### **Uluru Urge**

Stephen Anderson, Ranger from Kinglake National Park (previously WSP) has taken 12 months leave without pay and is now working at Uluru.

### **Our Own**

Very good reports back about walks at the Mullum Mullum Festival led by Helen Mill and Les Smith particularly in relation to Antonio Park. Why go to Western Australia when you can see beautiful flowers in our own area? Talk to Lee and Geoff Speedy.

### **Identity Issue**

Quite a few people have been given Parks Victoria caps/hats which identify them as volunteers - colours are blue with a brown 'eye shade' or fawn with a green 'eye shade'.

### **Which Walkers**

A group from the Mount St Neighbourhood House (Glen Waverly) will be walking in the Park soon.

### **Name Noted**

Did you know that in a new book 'Victoria's National Parks: a Centenary History' by Ester Anderson, our own Andrew Nixon gets a mention with on the job experiences of current rangers?

### **Margaret Mends**

One of our working team has been in hospital, Margaret Woiwod. We wish her a good recovery.





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**Austral Stork's-bill (*Pelargonium australe*)**

Austral Stork's-bill belongs to the geranium family and is one of two native pelargoniums that occur in Warrandyte's bushland. An attractive perennial herb with soft hairy leaves and purple flowers with darker veins, it can be found in many areas of the Park including the rocky outcrops and river terraces of Pound Bend Reserve.

**FOWSP Membership Form**

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Tel. no. ....

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