

December 2000

# Friends of Warrandyte State Park



## Newsletter

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

### Being a 'Friend'

By Pat Coupar

If you are reading this then you are either a Friend of Warrandyte State Park (FOWSP) or are thinking of becoming one.

Why do people join a 'Friend's' group and in particular FOWSP? For most of us it is a concern for the local environment; it is to learn and educate others about the natural values of Warrandyte State Park and its flora and fauna; it is to meet and mix with other like-minded people.

Currently FOWSP has a healthy membership of over 200. Some members are happy to take on an active role in the organisation and running of the group and are involved in regular activities such as the market, festival and the Thursday propagation group. Understandably, many members do not have the time or inclination to be so involved. Yet simply just being a Fowspian and supporting the organisation by continuing to be a financial member, is one of the most important things anyone can do. Numbers do count.

One of the original aims of the group is to assist the Rangers in the care and protection of the State Park. This has not changed. FOWSP enjoy a close working relationship with the dedicated Rangers who are approachable and supportive of our activities and there are many ways Fowspians as individuals can help them by being watchdogs. However, it is important to know exactly what to report and what not to.

There are some things, that although the Rangers would like to act on, they simply don't have the time, staff or resources to do so. A certain amount of vandalism is inevitable in all public places and Warrandyte is no exception. Most of the time acts of vandalism are noted by the Rangers on their regular patrols of the Park.

But they would be interested to hear of any Park gates left open or padlocks damaged. Significant or serious inappropriate behaviour such as dumping rubbish, collecting or cutting firewood, should also be reported with details of location, date and time and registration of any vehicle (including trail bike) involved.

Trees are sometimes blown down across tracks after storms and this is worth noting, particularly if it is a large eucalypt with ripe seed capsules (gum nuts) in which case the nursery manager would also like to be notified.

Unfortunately serious environmental weeds like blackberry, ivy, angled onion and wandering jew are fairly widespread in the gullies and riparian regions of the Park and although an eradication program is in progress for some, not all the infestations can be targeted. However, there are certain serious weeds that are not yet well-established in the area, but have the potential to spread if not controlled early. (See list on next page for weed species to report). If you are uncertain of the identification of a particular species, then bring a sample with as much of the plant material available (leaves, flowers, seeds etc) down to the nursery preferably on a Thursday morning or at any other time, with details of where and when it was found and by whom.

Foxes, introduced bees and wasps all come under the category of "lack of resources to act on". Rabbits are being tackled with the Rabbit Action Groups and sightings of rabbits in areas where they are down to very low numbers (such as Pound Bend Reserve) are welcome, especially active warren locations. On the positive side there is a fauna sightings book at the Park for

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## Being a Friend contd

unusual observations of any fauna – bird, mammal, reptile etc. These can be rung through or written in person.

So there are many ways Fowspians can assist the Rangers by being the eyes and ears of the Park and so provide an important role in the protection and conservation of our Park.

## What to Report – a Guide

All weeds listed below – YES. All others NO

Paterson's Curse

Ragwort

Chilean Needle Grass

Serrated Tussock Grass

Tutsan

Horehound

Local nurseries selling weeds that are listed under the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (i.e. the old category of noxious weed): Contact Rowan Hore, Catchment Management Officer for the Port Phillip Region of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. Ph: 9296 4617 or e-mail [Rowan.Hore@nre.vic.gov.au](mailto:Rowan.Hore@nre.vic.gov.au)

For environmental weeds there is no legislation, it is up to the person to appeal to the seller/producer to remove the plant from sale due to the environmental impact it has and the values that are going to be affected.

## Fauna

Deer are known in the park, sightings are welcome but will only be filed at this stage.

Snakes around the home – ring Jon Birkett at the Melbourne Zoo (reptile house) on 92859300 or 0411638787 for advice and/or removal

Koalas in suburbs, sightings are welcome.

Sick or injured wildlife in Warrandyte or Wonga Park, contact Julie Pryor (Wildlife Shelter) Ph: 9722 1117

Rabbits, foxes, bees, wasps – NO

## Other

Inappropriate behaviour YES

Rubbish dumping (including garden rubbish) – YES

Collecting and cutting firewood – YES

Digging up/picking plants - YES

Trail Bikes – YES

WSP Ph 9844 2659



## A changing of the Guards

Several changes to positions on and off the committee have taken place over the last year. Beginning with the election of Peter Curry to the FOWSP committee of management at the 1999 AGM. Peter was willing to take over the role of secretary from Cathy Willis who had held it for several years and done a wonderful job under difficult circumstances.

Karen Reynolds also came on to the committee in mid-year and like all other committee members agreed to re-elect for 2001.

During the year stalwart Betty Oke resigned from her duties of market roster organiser. We have been extremely fortunate to find an excellent replacement in Marie Krause.

For many years Margaret Dimech has been looking after the membership and printing labels

each month for the newsletter. Committee member Lee Speedy has now taken on this role.

Finally, and most recently, we have a new treasurer in Ray Clarke replacing Anthony Owen. Ant took over as treasurer during a dynamic and challenging era for the FOWSP committee. In a fairly short space of time several years ago we decided to become a cooperative style committee, lost our secretary to motherhood, and our treasurer to a country lifestyle. Ant guided us through the bureaucratic minefield of employing a nursery manager and the introduction of the GST, neither easy jobs for the treasurer of a volunteer group.

We would like to thank all those people who have given their time so generously over the years and supported the group through the good times and bad.



### ***Co-operative Co-ordinator***

Bernice Dowling, Regional Volunteer Co-ordinator (Melbourne Metropolitan Region), was seen 'hands on' in the Park nursery helping with the pricking out of seedlings. Bernice was at Mornington Peninsula NP, then Arthur Rylah Institute, Heidelberg and is now working part time, motivating and increasing participation of volunteers. She aims to enrich the experiences of the whole community contributing to conservation efforts of Parks Victoria. Bernice will visit all Parks and Friends groups in the region.

### ***Successful Study***

Good to see FOWSP member Jenny Hoskin again. Jenny has completed her studies in Natural Resource Management.

### ***Nelson Replaces Nixon***

Joanne Nelson (Team Leader Environment & Marketing) has been 'in the chair' at the Park while Ranger-in-Charge, Andy Nixon, is Acting Chief Ranger in the Central Highlands district.

### ***Roxburgh Returns***

Bill Roxburgh and wife Trudy (of Village Glee Club fame as Mrs Sharpshot) are celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Presently Bill is in a social whirl with his sister Ruth from Perth. Bill is looking forward to returning to seed sorting again soon.

### ***Firefighters***

Three Project Fire Fighters (PFF's) have started at the Park since 20<sup>th</sup> November. Another one starts on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

### ***Marion's Mattias***

Marion King has a new great grandson called Mattias.

### ***Overseas Overture***

Ray Clarke has received a card from Matt (erstwhile Ranger-in-Charge at Warrandyte), Cecilia and Ethan Le Duc, who send wishes from Europe where they have visited National Parks in Holland, Hungary and Slovenia, and are now heading for Austria, Portugal and Crete.

### ***Trust Team***

A team of ten people working with the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers (ATCV) have been working at the Park in a co-operative venture between the Park and Manningham

Council. They have been carrying out revegetation work and the removal of canopies of trees affected by mistletoe.

### ***Work Experience Works***

Paul Skeen has spent time at the Park on work experience. He is in Year 9 at Eltham High. He says "It's been really good, I now really want to be a Ranger".

### ***Roads Review***

"In Victoria, approximately 160,000 kms of roadsides, totalling about half a million hectares contain about 25% of all plant species listed as rare or endangered under the State's Flora & Fauna Guarantee".

*Source: Valley Watch, Oct. 2000*

How will increased road funding affect these plants?

### ***I Spy Spats***

One Ranger reader of this column suggested this column is just gossip! (Luckily he was smiling at the time). Another reader really likes this column and wants it to go on. Any other comments?

### ***Summer Selection***

A Summer Ranger (to be selected soon) will be based at Warrandyte State Park this year.

### ***Fridge Folly***

On Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December Margaret Gotlib will clean out the refrigerator in the 'Folly'. If you have left food or otherwise stored within, please check its viability otherwise it may be discarded.

### ***Manningham Matters***

Manningham Council has engaged a 'wordsmith' to write a history of the City of Manningham. If you have anything anecdotal, historical, stories or material you might like to pass them on.

### ***Park Person***

Seen at the Park early November was Elaine Thomas, Ranger from Wilson's Promontory NP - one of the group who went to Kruger National Park and one of those addressing a large group of Park Rangers at Box Hill.

### ***Bundle of Boxes***

The ten ATCV people boxed up 63 boxes of seedlings in three hours on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> November at the depot. Great help.

### ***Nature Notes***

A reprint of the Jumping Ck Nature Walk is available at the Park Office.

**Contd next page**

I Spy contd

### ***Warming the World***

"Each half kilometre of road produces the same amount of nitrous dioxide that a factory would need a permit to produce".

*Source: Valley Watch October 2000*

### ***Meeting Matters***

In spite of USA Presidential debacle, the situation in the Middle East, the Business Activity Statement and falling Australian dollar – the Annual General Meeting of FOWSP proceeded in a relaxed and co-operative style. Various reports on the year's activities, grants, finance,

membership, Ranger involvement and future plans were well received.

### ***More Meeting Matters***

The committee for 2001 was elected. Ranger-in-Charge, Andy Nixon reported on rabbit programs, conservation, tuans, Green Corps, Mt Lofty, new information technology for mapping environmental work, the summer interps Ranger, and the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of gold.

The presence of Rangers at the meeting and at the BBQ that followed was appreciated.

The Nursery Manager thanked Park staff and the committee for their assistance, as well as other helpers.

## **Seeds of Summer**

By Pat Coupar

**T**he Silver Wattles that line the river in Warrandyte are impressive trees especially when in bloom. Their crowded bright yellow flowers are cheerful sight that signals the end of winter. Now, from these same trees dangle long slender pods the colour of ripe plums.

The transformation from fluffy flowerhead to flattened seed pod has been dramatic, yet did anyone actually notice it happening? Did anyone notice the bush peas on the dry hillsides as their flame-coloured flowers turned into small triangular packets of seeds? Did anyone see the clouds of creamy clematis flowers become the downy plumes we fondly call 'old mans beard'?

These changes, of course, have not occurred overnight, they have taken place over a number of weeks. Nevertheless, we tend to overlook many of our native plants once they have finished blooming. How often do we bother to look closely at flowers as their petals wither and die and as their ovaries swell with ripening seeds?

The multitude of colourful flowers in our bushland have not evolved merely to please us. They are specifically designed to attract insects, birds and small mammals for the purpose of pollination. The flowers offer rewards to their pollinators in the form of nectar and pollen, which they advertise by bright colours, intricate patterns and sometimes an alluring scent. Usually the colour of a flower is determined by its potential pollinator. For instance birds and small mammals such as possums are attracted to red flowers, while bees and other insects are drawn to blues and purples. Unlike us, many insects can see ultra violet. So a flower that may look rather plain to us may appear quite different to the insect.



Once the flower has been pollinated its delicate petals fade and become shriveled, leaving only the ovary containing the fertilised seeds. Seeds come in a bewildering variety of sizes, shapes, textures and packages. Those belonging to wattles and peas are encapsulated in a pod which hardens and eventually splits expelling the seeds. The seeds may lie hidden amongst the leaf litter for years or they may be carried away by animals such as industrious ants to another part of the bush. In contrast, the seedheads of daisies are light and fluffy, rather like the plumes of clematis and are ideally suited to be transported by the wind.

Now the explosion of spring colour is over, it is the turn of the summer-flowering plants - the tea-trees, cassinias, Tree Everlasting, Burgan and Sweet Bursaria, all of which have white flowers. However, summer is not without colour. There are exquisite tints of cinnamon brown in the pods of the bush peas and wattles, and warm tinges of burnished copper in the swaying spikes of the Kangaroos Grass. Not least the plum-coloured pods suspended from Silver wattles. All, in their own way, every bit as beautiful as the brightly coloured flowers that preceded them.

*First published in the Warrandyte Diary 1992*

# Weed Expo 2000

Report by Flora Anderson

Having recently recovered from involvement in one Expo 2000 (Royal Melbourne Show) I questioned the wisdom of attending another, especially one on weeds!

Was it the venue which persuaded me - the Darebin Arts & Entertainment (Entertainment!) or was it the 'opportunity to network'? Perhaps it was the names of the keynote speakers, Environmental Weed Education Co-ordinator Kate Blood and ecologist/author Tim Low.

So, I rang the greatest pessimist about weeds I know, to see if he'd care for some art and entertainment for two days with lunch included in the moderate cost. The answer was positive, and I have to report that we were not disappointed. It was a great show and there's nothing like mingling with like-minded people and learning from challenging speakers to re-vitalize your efforts to battle for the bush. There was plenty on offer to cheer up the pessimist for example:

- Displays including the very latest in applicators of herbicide
- Calico showbags decorated with the catchy slogan 'Don't hesitate ... weeds won't wait'
- Artistic arrangements of environmental weeds most likely to be found in nurseries and domestic gardens. To continue the 'Garden Club' theme there were prizes for the biggest, most potentially aggressive, prettiest or ugliest etc.
- Rights for indigenous plants .... advocated by Richard O'Byrne.
- ID service for gardeners. This had been advertised on 3AW encouraging people to bring in their weeds. Not only identification was given, but advice on how to cope with the problem.
- Kate Blood's realistic guide to staying positive which included gems from the late Dr Jim Willis (Break large tasks into small jobs) and 'Think long term.'
- Researchers at Keith Turnbull Institute are working with Nursery Association. (Cheers!)
- Huge increase in demand for indigenous plants. Nurseries can't keep up with the need.
- Three Universities now have courses in weed management. In New Zealand, importers of new plants are required to pay for costs of assessment as potential weeds.

- Pertinent questions such as "Do land managers have a contingency plan to put in place after a disturbance such as fire?" And finally, "If you're feeling really annoyed/fed up... do something! write to Burke's Backyard!"

## From the Workshops

As the message was: 'If after twenty years weeding the same way the weeds are still there, it's time to change the method' I chose from the tempting list of workshops 'Ecology of Weeds' by Randall Robinson and 'Practical Ecology' by Lincoln Kern. Then, 'Understanding Willows' Geoff Carr, 'Setting Priorities' Gidja Walker 'Early Intervention' John Weiss and finally a trip to the coast with Mark Urquhart Rescuing Hooded Plover Habitat-from Sea Spurge *Euphorbia paralias*. From 'Practical Ecology' we learned that to "*know thine enemy*" is the first step in adopting the best weeding practice. Ask the questions ....

"Is it annual or perennial?" "What is the pollination mechanism - wind, water, bird or insect?" "What is the response to fire?" Montpellier Broom does not sprout after fire, for example.

Some plants such as *Pennisetum clandestinum* (Kikuyu Grass) exude a chemical which suppresses other plants.

Read the label on herbicides. Learn about herbicide resistance. Attack Oxalis and other bulbs at bulb exhaustion stage. *Romulea rosea* (Onion Grass) enjoys soil compaction. *Briza maxima* (Quaking Grass) germinates after the first autumn rain, its seed is stored in leaf litter and is viable for three years. Ideally do not allow it to set seed. Use fire, steam or dilute Fusilade on immature plants. But above all, experiment, observe, until you find an effective method.

Other snippets .... Never allow Ivy to climb as it needs altitude to flower. By the way, it's pollinated by blowflies; drill and fill deciduous trees at the end of summer; spray blackberries after Xmas; Fumaria loves soil disturbance. - never let it seed. The same goes for that 'horror' Panic Veldt Grass. Angled Onion is weakest as flower bud is emerging - time to act. And about those garden thugs going bush - you believe in a cat curfew (Don't you?) well what about a plant curfew? Keep them in your own backyard.

Weedbuster Week was officially launched by Geoff Howard, Parliamentary Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment. He predicted more money for enforcement (presumably for declared noxious weeds). Unfortunately many environmental weeds are not listed as noxious.

Contd on next page



# Worth Repeating

## Wildlife

By Bary Dowling

I was woken by an old smoker clearing throat and lungs with determination. "HOK!" he went, "A-hok-a-hok-a-HAWK!" I woke up properly and realised where I was, a cottage in the bush, no one else within cooee. The noise was coming from a koala. They can growl like a motorbike with a straight-through exhaust, bellow and squeal, mainly at night but sometimes during the day. It is usually a male proclaiming that he is king, or another male challenging the statement.

I have seen one chased along the ground in the Brisbane Ranges. It leapt up a tree and the pursuer followed. Male and female? Even with binoculars it is difficult to get a look at a koala's genitals, but the giveaway is the chest. The female chest is white and soft and clean. Males have a scent gland on the chest, which they rub against trees to mark territory, so their chests become stained and dirty. As with humans, the females are smaller and prettier, males are larger and often have scarred noses and shoulders and torn ears from fighting. A koala with a cub on its back will be female - the fellers don't go in for that.

The chances of seeing a koala doing anything are low; they spend about 20 hours a day sleeping or loafing while they process the not easily digested gum leaves. Which is why they seem half asleep when they look at you - they are half asleep.

The young cub suckles inside the pouch, makes forays outside until, at around 36 weeks, it uses the pouch only to sleep, or to avoid cold weather. After that it rides on mum's back, a good life until at 12 months it is weaned on its own.



Koalas will eat a bit of tea-tree leaves and apple leaves, but they feed almost exclusively on eucalyptus leaves. Their major food species in Victoria are River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), Swamp Gum (*E. ovata*), Manna Gum (*E. viminalis*) and Blue Gum (*E. globulus*), but you will see them up many other eucalypts.

Though dogs and cats kill some, the major threat to Victorian koalas may be koalas. They can multiply dramatically, defoliate and kill their food trees and face starvation. At Mount Eccles National Park 136 koalas were released during the 1970's and bred to 9600 by June 1999. Many have been caught, sterilised and relocated - a massive labor and expense. Currently, koalas may not be culled, but they may be stressed in this way.

Why they favour particular trees over others of the same species is a mystery, but they do, and will browse such trees to death. At Pound Bend, at Warrandyte, staff have put plastic collars on defoliated trees to save them - a shame that there is ugly red ribbon incorporated into the plastic.

Queensland koalas are smaller and lighter than those in Victoria. They get darker and heavier as they move south, a phenomenon they share with Brush-tail Possums.

Source: *The Age* 30/11/00

### Weed Expo contd

Anyway, \$2 million to the Good Neighbour Scheme and \$5 million to Landcare Groups. We would have liked to ask questions about research funding, but there was not the opportunity.

Tim Low's 'food for thought' keynote address was, as expected, one of the highlights. I like his 'think about it' style. These are a few of the things Tim left us to chew over:

- We moved plants across continents, but now the pollinators are catching up - result, viable seeds e.g. figs.
- Can we predict which garden plants will be weeds? For further reading on this fascinating subject turn to p.215 of *Feral Future* in the chapter titled 'Sleepers Wake.'
- What people grow in their gardens is a social issue.

- Ethical gardening is called for.
- More research on profile of weed invaders is needed, as is more and more education.

John Landy, Victorian Governor elect launched the Weed Expo and a knowledge of his subject was highly evident. Marilyn Gray of Karwarra Gardens ran through some very attractive alternatives to weeds in our gardens. We suggested to Kate Blood later that it might be useful to have some of these in the display along side the Garden Thugs at any future Weed Expo.

To summarize .... The Expo was very well worth while. We voted it a great success and a good opportunity to catch up with the latest ideas and of course old friends. New friends too. Hope for the future was renewed in spite of the grim picture which weeds present at the moment and will present for some time yet. We left with a resolve to stay positive. And a final word from the Pessimist..... WORK HARDER!

# Nursery Update

By the NM

**I**t has been a fabulous year for the nursery. We have welcomed many new members to the propagation mornings which, along with the familiar faces, has enabled us to increase the number of plants grown for Warrandyte State Park revegetation and community programs.

As you all know it is not just propagation, propagation, propagation. Some other highlights were: the fungi walk at Jumping Ck led by Bruce Fuhrer; a couple of orchid walks on Fourth Hill and a special look at the Powerful Owl family with Ranger, David Farrar.

We also included revegetation plantings, a small amount of weed work in the Park and our regular surveys of the significant box-stringybark vegetation community along Pound Bend slashbreak. As well there were walks along Pound

Bend ridgeline where we discovered small colonies of two species of rare greenhood orchids.

It's great to see so many people participating in the various Thursday activities and it is a pleasure to be surrounded by so much knowledge and enthusiasm for our local environment.

Thank you to the Warrandyte Parks Victoria staff and the FOWSP committee for their continued support and assistance. Special thanks also to botanist Cam Beardsell for all his time and expertise, and to those who have helped out with sales and after hours tasks. Finally a big, big thank you to everyone involved on Thursday mornings for your time effort and special contributions in making the FOWSP nursery the enjoyable and successful place it is today.

Have a very happy and safe Christmas and I look forward to seeing you all in the New Year.

**Footnote:** The nursery will operate every Thursday through the Christmas/New Year period and during the school holidays.

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## URGENT APPEAL

We would be most grateful if all members who have bought plants from the nursery in the last year could return the forestry tubes to the nursery. We are desperately short of these size pots which are needed for most of the revegetation requirements in 2001.

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## *Habitat Values of a Building Site.*

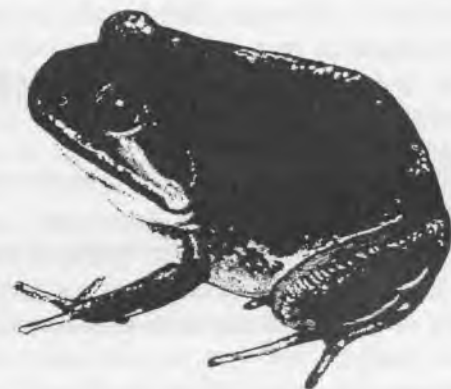
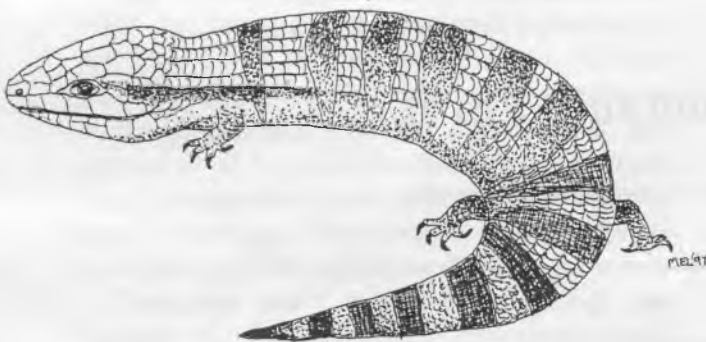
By Geoff Speedy

**I**t's a lucky thing that our house is taking several years to build!! Otherwise North Warrandyte would be short of several important breeding sites for native fauna.

There's the old Pobblebonk in the builder's sand pile. This fat frog, as large as a child's hand, was dug up and very nearly made it into the next mixer-load of mudbrick mortar. She disappeared after the next large rainstorm.

Currently the Grey Shrike-Thrush's have three noisy babies in their nest on an upstairs noggin. I hope the ravens and currawongs stay out of the house. Last year the Shrike-Thrush's nested on a downstairs brick pillar, which was much safer from attack by the larger predatory birds.

Blue-tongue lizards love a pile of fireplace ashes as a convenient spot for egg-laying. I moved a shovel-



load of these when we pulled down the fibro shack, and was gratified to see a young Blue-tongue later that year, in the remains of the Mornington Pier timbers that support our decking.

Spotted and striped Pardalotes just love a disturbed bank. Last year I had to delay filling in a drainage trench until the Pardalote young had left the nest, just inside the trench. It's wonderful to see a circus of young pardalotes chasing each other around the trees, and knowing you played a small part in their housing requirements!!

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If undeliverable please return to  
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Warrandyte, 3113

### Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*)

One of Warrandyte's most distinctive indigenous grasses, particularly when in flower or seed. Often forms extensive swards such as along the Pound Bend Rd firebreak, Russell Rd firebreak and on the slopes of Mt Lofty. It will regenerate vigorously after fire.



## FOWSP Membership Form

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Tel. no. ....

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